

The Great Drug Delusion

By a New York Specialist

PROFESSOR FREUD and M. Emile Coué have both pointed out, in similar language, despite their different techniques, the same fact about the identity of fear and fascination. It is a commonplace in the daily observation of the practising psychologist. As soon as an obstacle is realised as such, we make frantic efforts to avoid it, with the result that we bump into it. Psychical impotence is in the experience of most men; it is the same thing in terms of another problem.

Now the present craze for taking "habit-forming drugs" (so-called) and the suggested remedies, are closely bound up with this curious phenomenon. The will behaves like a mule, and the imagination like a bird in the presence of a serpent.

In the spring of 1914 I had occasion to study the effects of cocaine. As it happened, I had access to all the "fast" or "Bohemian" sets in London. I went through them with a tooth-comb; and in three months managed to discover two girls who were indulging in that drug to a deleterious extent. To-day, one might almost say that no tea-party is complete without it.

My investigations were cut short by the war; I was obliged to return to the United States. I had therefore no opportunity of observing the cause of the change. My English colleagues, however, attribute the present situation to two main factors: (a) the widespread outbreak of psychoses and neuroses due to public anxiety and stress, and the consequent demand for something which would dull the nerves; (b) the D.O.R.A. restrictions on the sale of liquor. I agree that both these factors were potent; they square with our own experience in America. There drug-habits have been common for many years; for the people of the United States are naturally afflicted with the nervous diathesis. This is due partly to the climate,