

THE ENGLISH REVIEW

which is electrically charged in a way which Europeans cannot possibly understand until they have tried it, and partly to the fact that education is so widespread that the people demand art, literature, and music, which things are denied to them by the benevolence of the spiritual heirs of Cotton Mather. No other hypothesis even attempts to explain the Yellow Press, the dancing manias, the crazed search for amusement—and the resort to the waters of Lethe, beginning with cocktails and ending with cocaine.

But prohibition, ineffective as it is, has intensified the demand for drugs; and I am therefore ready to believe that war-time restrictions on the sale of liquor produced a parallel result in England. I note in passing that the prohibition of absinthe in France has resulted in the manufacture of substitutes, some of which will actually eat their way through a marble table.

There is, however, a third factor to be considered; and, without going over frankly to the theories of Nancy, the Salpêtrière, Vienna, and Zurich, it may well be that it is the most important of all. This factor is the nauseating form of publicity given by the newspapers—some even of those which should know better—to the matter. Indulgence in drugs is described with an unholy leer; it is connected lewdly with sexual aberrations; and the reprobation with which the writers smear their nastiness is obviously hypocrisy of the most oily and venal type. The object is to sell the paper by making people's flesh creep, like the Fat Boy in *Pickwick*.

Now there is in such articles—which began, I regret to say, with a not uninteresting novel called *Felix*, by Mr. Robert Hichens—what Baudouin calls a pernicious suggestion. The reader is invited to gloat on the forbidden fruit. But even worse, from this point of view, is the unanimous assertion that once anybody starts to take a "drug" he cannot possibly stop of his own free will, and is only to be rescued at the cost of unutterable torments. Medical treatises on the subject, with no exception so far as I know, perpetuate this wicked libel on the divine prerogative of man to do what he wills, and, when he wills, to stop doing. Writers of fiction follow the evil precedent. The exception to this rule is *The Hasheesh-Eater*, by