

THE GREAT DRUG DELUSION

order to get the "mazuma" for the "dope." (The "addict" is notoriously fertile in expedients for obtaining supplies of his drug.) Abominations of this sort are only possible when the course of nature is violently diverted by pious Puritans and profiteering policemen. Nobody troubled about heroin when it was almost as easy and as cheap to buy as butter. To-day, despite repressive legislation, there is an international industry making its many thousands per cent. on an enormous turnover, and occasionally throwing some peddling Jonah overboard when some brainless dancing girl happens to kill herself. What better could she do? And the police want "additional powers." Of course they do. They envy the Beckers of New York, the arbitrary irresponsible gangs of uniformed grafters, in league with every form of criminal, from the white slaver to the gambler and the gunman. If the people of England want to see their cities in the hands of petty tyranny patting the paunch of corruption, well and good, "strengthen the Act!" *

There has been so much delirious nonsense written about drugs that sane men may well despair of seeing the light.

But it ought to be obvious that if England reverted to pre-war conditions, when any responsible person (by signing his name in a book) could buy drugs at a fair profit on cost price, cocaine (say) at 16s. and heroin at 20s. the bottle of 10 grammes—instead of as many pounds—the whole underground traffic would disappear like a bad dream.

It is possible, perhaps even probable, that for a month or two there would be an increase in the number of fools who killed themselves in their folly, though personally I doubt it. But I have no shame in saying that, after a war in which we sent our sturdiest sons as sheep to the slaughter, we should not miss a few score wasters too stupid to know when to stop. Besides this, we see, on the one hand, that the people who want the drugs manage to get them in one way or another, at the cost of time, trouble, and money which might be used more wisely, and on the other that

* [Our distinguished contributor may be pardoned for seeing our country through alien eyes. It is needless to say that the suggestion here made by him about the Metropolitan Police—certain ugly rumours with regard to the toleration of certain notorious establishments notwithstanding—is the wildest nonsense.—Ed.]