

THE BALTIMORE SUN
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
29 JULY 1923

The Narcotic Problem.

To the Editor of the Sun—Sir: It was with great pleasure that I read the remarkably sensible contribution to the drug problem by Dr. Lawrence Kolb, of the United States Public Health Service, a summary of which appeared in The Sun Thursday, July 19, 1923. Without denying that America is confronted with a narcotic problem of serious proportions, Dr. Kolb proves, beyond discussion, that the extent of the evil has been vastly exaggerated and that the public has been led astray by absurd statements and inferences found in some of our papers and magazines.

Here in Maryland, in the Penitentiary and the city jail, comparatively few addicts are found, probably about one-half of 1 per cent. of the whole prison population. Of course, at times the figures run up and are alarming and disgraceful conditions are uncovered, but at no time is one forced to admit that "the nation is on the verge of ruin from drugs."

But "dope" using is by no means confined to the criminal class. It is much more prevalent among the foot-loose and free, and evidence is gradually being gathered to the effect that there is an organized underground distribution of narcotic drugs, which is deliberately and satanically forming addicts among the young men and women of our country. I think that the number of addicts among our young people is considerably larger than Dr. Kolb is willing to admit, but I do not think that the number approaches a million, Sidney Howard, Blanche Watson and Dr. Pearce Bailey to the contrary notwithstanding.

In the vast majority of cases the "dope" habit is the result of evil association and bad companions. No matter what the critic might say concerning Aleister Crowley's "Diary of a Drug Fiend" the author at least reveals the true cause of drug addiction. How careful, then, ought parents to be about the nature of the places their sons and daughters visit after nightfall and the character of their companions!

Can the chronic "dope" taker be cured? The answer is yes. No matter, says Dr. Copeland, how long he has had the habit, whether six weeks or 20 years, he can be cured. He can be taken off the drug in less than a month's time. (In one Maryland prison the withdrawal is abrupt.) When off the drug a month or so is required

for building up the body and restoring the shattered nervous system. Good food, plenty of exercise, rest and recreation and the reconning of moral and religious principles and all the other natural and supernatural means for restoring normal health are essential and effective,

Joseph J. Ayd,
Chaplain Maryland Penitentiary,
Department of Sociology, Loyola College,
Baltimore, July 19.