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MORPHINISM AND CRIME

L. L. STANLEY¹

Within recent years the question of morphinism and its relation to social problems has become of great interest and has attracted the attention of the world. Whereas, a decade or two ago the evils of the use of opium and its derivatives were recognized, only recently has this evil been feared and drastic measures taken to eradicate it.

In 1906, China, in which country the peril gripped most tenaciously, realized the demoralizing effect of the drug and decreed that traffic in opium must stop. Although China's efforts at enforcing this decree are energetic and have produced good results, still the traffic is carried on secretly to a very considerable extent.

LEGISLATURE RESTRICTION

The state governments in America, through their state boards of pharmacy, have been quite active in dealing with this curse. In some states the illegal trafficking in opium or morphine has been declared a felony and a number of convictions have been secured.

The federal government has imposed a very heavy import tax on all opium brought into the country. This tax has caused the price of the drug to soar and has opened up new fields for crime, first by creating the necessity for smuggling, and, secondly, by so restricting the use of morphine by those afflicted with the addiction that they commit burglaries and other crimes to secure the necessary means for purchasing their drug.

The latest federal legislation relating to the production, importation, manufacture, compounding, sale, dispensing or giving away of opium, or coca leaves and their salts, derivatives or preparations, is the so-called Harrison law recently enacted by Congress, and which became effective on March 1, 1915. This requires the registration, with payment of a special tax, of all persons who deal in these drugs in any way, and makes failure to adhere to these requirements unlawful. It also declares unlawful, the possession or control of the aforesaid preparation by persons not so licensed unless otherwise provided for in this act. Section 9 declares that any person who violates or fails to comply shall, on conviction, be fined not more than \$2,000.00 or be imprisoned for not more than five years, or both. With this act, therefore, another cause of crime with relation to morphinism is established.

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DISCUSSION OF CASES

Within the past three years, at San Quentin penitentiary, over 100 prisoners have been received who admitted verbally or by their actions that they were confirmed addicts to opium in some of its forms. As soon as these addicts are received at the prison they are measured and photographed according to the Bertillon system, and are then turned over to the medical department for examination and treatment. Most of these men have just come from the various county jails where they had their potion, which usually suffices them until they reach the penitentiary. By this time the so-called "habit" is coming on and the habitue is a pitiable sight. After obtaining from the patient his method of administration and the amount he usually takes, the required dose to ease him is given, and soon his normal attitude and behavior returns.

It is at this time that information regarding his addiction and its relation to crime, in greater detail, is brought from him. All of his answers to the questions asked him are carefully written down, and later tabulated and studied with the purpose in view of learning more about this dreadful affliction.

One of the first questions asked is as to the age at which he commenced the use of "dope." Of the one hundred so questioned:

- One, or 1%, began at eight years;
- One, or 1%, began at thirteen years;
- One, or 1%, began at fourteen years;
- Three, or 3%, began at fifteen years.

It is seen that approximately six per cent began when they were mere children, before they had completed the grammar grades.

- Eight commenced at sixteen years;
- Six commenced at seventeen years;
- Fourteen commenced at eighteen years;
- Nine commenced at nineteen years;
- Eight commenced at twenty years.

Forty-eight began the use of "dope" between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one years. Including the three who commenced before fifteen years it is shown that 51% or over one half of the addictions of this series are formed before the youth reached his majority.

- Five began at twenty-one years;
- Five began at twenty-two years;
- Eight began at twenty-three years;
- Four began at twenty-four years;
- Two began at twenty-five years;

Thus in early manhood, between twenty-one and twenty-five years, twenty-four first succumbed to this evil.

From twenty-five to thirty years twelve began its use, and in the next decade, from thirty to forty years, a like number. After the age of forty, no addictions were formed in this series of cases.

It is seen by these figures that morphinism is usually acquired before the youth is normally away from the guardianship of his parents, and at a time when he should be guided by better influences. It is the time when his mind is relatively plastic and easily moulded.

The second question asked is: "What kind did you use first?" In answer to this, it was learned that fifty-eight began by smoking opium, twenty per cent used morphine hypodermically, eight ate morphine, three ate "yen shee," the ashes of opium, and the remaining cases started by using cocaine and laudanum, or eating opium. This shows that the greatest danger lies in the smoking of opium, for most commence in this way.

Contrast to this the answers to the questions as to the kind they used last:

- Forty-eight use morphine by syringe;
- Eight take morphine by mouth;
- Twenty-eight per cent use both morphine and cocaine;
- Three still smoke opium.

Others use morphine by mouth and syringe together, according to circumstances, while some take heroin and laudanum. In fact, after the habit is well formed, an addict will take anything he can get his hands on.

This shows that although the majority started their addiction by smoking opium, they subsequently changed to using morphine by the hypodermic syringe.

Of course, it is difficult to obtain accurate statements from the addicts as to the amount of drug they use. Some do not know the quantity they take and others use as much as they can secure.

- Eighteen per cent admit less than five grains a day;
- Thirty-two per cent admit five to ten grains a day;
- Thirty-two per cent admit ten to twenty grains a day;
- Six per cent admit twenty to thirty grains a day;
- Six per cent admit thirty to forty grains a day;

Four per cent claim to use over sixty grains a day, when they can obtain it. When it is realized that one-fourth grain is the adult dosage, it is seen how a tolerance for the drug may be created, and what enormous amounts may be taken without fatal results.

A natural inquiry has reference to the occupation engaged in by these persons when they began their addiction. Of the one hundred, seven each were waiters and sailors, six were tailors, five each were messenger boys, porters and laborers, while four each were showmen, race track followers, prisoners, teamsters, and school boys. Bartenders, gamblers, bookkeepers, cooks and idlers numbered three each. This is as to be expected; seamen, adventurers, actors, gamblers, race track followers; for the most part, the lower stratum of society. Waiters, tailors, and men of like occupations, after a hard day's work, seek relaxation in the peaceful pipe with their associates of like inclinations.

Knowing the relatively tender ages at which this habit is formed, it is of interest to find out just how the use of dope was begun. To this question there were a great many answers.

Fifty, or one-half, began by associating with bad companions at night, frequenting dance halls, saloons, poolrooms, and later "joints," where they were induced to try the pipe. Very few who ever try the pipe have will power enough to refrain from doing the same thing again at some future date when they are importuned to do so by their evil associates. Fifteen per cent were induced and educated to this addiction by women of the underworld, who perhaps took a fancy to the young man and persuaded him to go with her to indulge in this insidious vice. Eleven claim that they learned to smoke opium in jails and penitentiaries.

In the not far remote periods of the two California penitentiaries it was not difficult to have opium smuggled inside the walls, where men not cured of their addiction would use the drug and induce younger prisoners to be "sports and take a shot." At the present time, however, a close watch is kept at the prisons and no contraband is allowed to enter. But at the county jails no such rigid vigilance is in force; and it is said by the prisoners who have come from those jails, that it is a very easy matter for any one who has money to have the drug brought to him. It is in those jails that many a young man is induced to become an addict to this habit because he wishes to show his toughened cell mates that he can be as bad a man as any of them.

Sixteen others claim that they began the use of dope on account of various sicknesses, such as rheumatism, accidents, syphilis and other forms of disease in which there was a high degree of pain. In some of these cases, it might have been the fault of the physician or

of the nurse that the patient found out what he was receiving for his pain and in this way led him on to his addiction.

One patient examined at San Quentin began by taking paregoric for stomach ache, with which he was troubled to a considerable extent. He was given this by his mother when he was at the age of seven years. From this frequent dosage he acquired the habit, the persistence in which finally landed him in jail. A second addict stated that when he was in high school in a certain town in Nevada, it was a fad among the boy and girl students to visit Chinatown regularly, where they smoked opium. Another told that while in the Alaskan fisheries, he, with a number of other men, was given morphine to stimulate him to greater efforts and to work at higher tension so that all of the fish might be taken care of in a limited time without pecuniary loss to the company. At the end of the season, he was, with a number of other men, a confirmed addict.

Messenger boys in large cities are especially susceptible to falling into this habit. One of their chief means of income is derived from female outcasts of the under-world, who send them to obtain the drug. With these associates it is not difficult to be led to the addiction.

The longest period over which any of the hundred had been using morphine was thirty years, and the shortest was eighteen months, with an average of thirteen years.

EFFECTS OF THE DRUG.

Having found out something about the formation of this habit, it is well to know something more about the physical effects produced by the continuous use of this drug. The question is asked: "What are your sensations when you are deprived of dope?" When a drug fiend is deprived of his potion and feels that he must have relief at any price, he will state his condition as that of having a "habit." When a "habit" is coming on, a patient is a most miserable and pitiful sight. He suffers from extreme nervousness, inability to sleep, cold sweats alternating with fever, hot and cold flashes, nausea, head-ache, vomiting, hiccough, diarrhoea, weakness and prostration, cramps in the muscles of the legs, as well as terrific pains in the bones of the whole body, pain in the back of the head and in the eye-balls, with a high degree of lachrymation. Others complain of a sense of cold in the head, a gnawing sensation in the pit of the stomach, rheumatism and melancholia. To some the drinking of water is like the taking of caustic, food tastes like foul medicine, and the teeth become sore and tender. Others claim that they are drowsy, but are in such torment

that they are unable to sleep. They have unnatural emissions, while others are unable even to urinate.

One addict describes his case thus: "Too weak to walk and too nervous to lie down," "case of climb a wall if you could," "or break down a door to get it with no other thought in mind than to secure relief." One said that he had an exhausted feeling which left him so miserable that he would look upon death as a godsend. Others imagine every moment to be their last and state that to be deprived for a short time of the drug, they will age ten years in a single night. Realizing that the victims of this habit undergo such horrible torments and terrible sufferings, can one hesitate to doubt that crimes are committed to procure the drug which will temporarily relieve them?

Contrast, if you will, the foregoing with the feelings of the dope fiend when he is under the influence of his opiate. He "feels normal," "at peace with the world," "has relief from pain and discomfort and a sense of well being," "a tendency to look upon the bright side of things," "feels the blood rush from lower limbs to face, feels warm and needs no overcoat," "the world is yours and you care for nothing," "feels as though had just taken five or six whiskys." Adjectives describing this feeling are, "fine, dandy, energetic, talkative, contented, warm, not irritable, and satisfied." Knowing this contrast and what will produce the utopian effects, who, under such circumstances, would not risk danger, disregard penalties and punishments, and jeopardize his all for relief?

Merely for medical and physiological purposes several questions are asked bearing on this phase. In reply to the question as to whether there is itching of the nose or any other part of the body, most claim that the pruritus comes on when they are under the influence of the drug, although ten per cent claim to have no itching at all, and fifteen per cent have it when they are in need of the drug. Almost all addicts claim that they sneeze excessively when the "habit is coming on," that is, when they are in need of the opiate, although about fifteen per cent, either do not sneeze at all, or only when under the effects of the drug.

Regarding the appetite of the habitues, about sixty per cent claim that the appetite is fair or normal, while forty per cent say that it is poor. Fifty per cent state that sweets are craved, while five per cent are ravenous for sour foods. Sixty per cent suffer from constipation when using their drug, although thirty-five per cent have regular bowel movements, or are only occasionally costive. Some of those who suffered from constipation state that at times they have gone as long

as two weeks without defecation. The system certainly is in a highly toxic condition, loaded with this refuse material in addition to the morphine, which is being added in larger doses at frequent intervals. This clogged condition is comparable to the toxic states which frequently produce temporary insanity.

Only twenty-five per cent claim that they have dreams of any sort while using their drug, the remaining number either stating that they have no dreams at all, or that they might have a few pleasant dreams while smoking, just before falling to sleep. This contradicts the popular belief that all drug users have most wonderful dreams. Those who do dream recall most horrible adventures in which they feel that they are being strangled, being pursued by officers, escaping from prison, being burned alive, and suffering all kinds of deaths. Others have more pleasant dreams, such as that of owning the Palace Hotel, having everything that money could buy, or retaining a large number of servants who obeyed his every wish for his own entertainment. A few state that they always dream of being interrupted in administering their dope.

By some authorities it is claimed, that all sexual desires and potentialities are lost after the addiction is firmly established. Most of our group affirmed this claim and stated that their passions were absolutely dead, and that anything pertaining to sexual relations never entered their heads. A few, however, stated that by smoking opium alone their virility was greatly increased, but that a much longer time, than otherwise, was required for them to consummate the sexual act. These few say that prostitutes indulge in smoking opium extensively for this reason. It is noteworthy that those addicts who have been cured of their drug habit while in prison declare that their sexual powers have returned with renewed vigor. In connection with this phase of the question, it is remarkable, that scarcely any prisoners have been sent to San Quentin afflicted with morphinism who have been convicted of sexual crimes or crimes against nature.

A remarkable fact in regard to morphinism is that when the habit is formed, there is very little, if any, desire for spirituous liquors. Men who have been heavy drinkers have taken opium or morphine to help them over a spree, and as soon as dope had fastened its talons upon them, they had cared no more for alcohol. One man who had been a heavy drinker lost his desire for drink when he succumbed to the drug habit, but regained it after having taken a cure in one of the state hospitals. While on a spree since his cure, he committed a lewd

and lascivious act with a minor for which crime he is now serving a five-year sentence.

Considering the foregoing phases of the "dope" question, there is no doubt that opium plays a great part in crime. It is safe to say, that if opium did not have its habit-forming properties, there would be at least two per cent fewer criminals in our institutions, for of all the addicts examined, none laid the cause of his crime to anything other than "dope."

The greater number of felonies committed by "drug habitues" are robbery or grand larceny. It is when the habit is coming on with all its attendant misery that the "fiend" goes forth to procure his drug at whatever cost. They have no fear; only one object in view—"relief."

One colored addict, accompanied by a female consort, herself also a user, stole a motor-cycle in one town and wheeled it to another town five-miles away, where they tried to sell it in order to purchase opium. Another addict is now serving a sentence for peddling "dope." He was a higher-up, and had many under him who disposed of the drug which he procured. He states that many of his former associates are now behind the bars.

One-half hour after having taken twelve grains of morphine, one fiend walked into the front door of a private residence in the day time, and stole jewelry and money.

A tailor, aged twenty-three, burglarized a drug store from which he took the total supply of morphine, and five hundred dollars besides.

Another "hop head," loaded with morphine, went into a room, and "frisked" the sleeping occupant's clothes of six dollars and a half.

One other addict entered a house, which was being newly furnished, and stole the new carpet, making three trips into the house to complete the operation.

Another is serving a sentence for pimping. He says that if it had not been for morphine, he would not have been pimping. His consort taught him the morphine habit.

Still another, in need of morphine, passed one cent pieces of old coinage for ten dollar gold coins. In many cases he was successful. Opium led him into crime once before when he was sentenced to prison for pocket picking.

One other who was a "twilight prowler" is now serving his third term in prison. "Had it not been for dope," he said, "I would never have been a thief."