

## DRUGS—Are They a Help or a Menace ?

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IT is a paradox that with growing literacy also grows side by side the habit of taking drugs. Civilisation which has given us the various comforts of life has also given us a whole load of headaches in the form of irritations of city life and of society's complex laws of conduct.

This is the age of the all-powerful pill or tablet.

Today you can take a pill to put you to sleep, wake you up, reduce pain, increase your weight or make you slim, give you pep or make calm, boost your confidence.

It is a craze that has entered nearly every home in the so-called advanced countries of the West and the same craze is slowly but surely creeping into our lives in this country.

Feeling fed up? Feeling jittery? Feeling tired? The answer for millions is a tablet.

How is it that an otherwise sensible and intelligent nation like the English has become a nation of pill-takers?

A leading psychiatrist has made this comment: "There is today something in the mental make up of the British man and woman that makes them believe they cannot be really healthy unless they are swallowing a pill or drinking medicine."

But doctors will tell you that the real answer is that insidious enemy of man—WORRY. Today that is the commonest complaint in their consulting rooms.

No surgeon's knife can cure it. Drugs can't either. But they can take the edge

of it and dope the patient to stand the daily strain of modern life.

For almost any state of mind there is a tablet to solve your problem.

A drug cannot tell the time but it can wake you up at six in the morning. A drug cannot talk but it can stop you telling a lie. It cannot laugh but it can make you feel happy.

A drug cannot baby-sit—but it can keep a baby quiet.

Recently a man who took another drug as a regular tonic became a father of a baby girl just before his eightieth birthday. Only a few months ago came news from the United States of yet another new pill.

This one stops you smoking.

Consider the remarkable case of the CONFIDENCE DRUG, methylpentynol, which has now been put on the "poisons list."

You may have read of brides using it to give them confidence as they walk down the aisle; of workers using it when asking the boss for a rise; of college boys and girls taking it when facing their examiners.

But this remarkable drug has also established itself in the doctor's surgery, the dentist's chair, the operating table.

But by far the greatest demand by the civilised public is for SLEEPING TABLETS and SEDATIVES. In this group women are the keenest drug seekers.

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Barbiturates—drugs that can produce any condition from drowsiness to deep sleep—have become as much a part of their daily routine as cleaning their teeth.

Unfortunately they become their own medical advisers and cling to the maxim: double the dose, quicker the results.

The result is that hardly a day passes in a country like England when you do not read of the over-wrought, the over-anxious, the over-worked found suffering from an overdose of sleeping tablets. Britain's hospitals treat six thousand cases of barbiturate poisoning every year. Deaths today average 500 a year as compared with a figure of 40 in 1938—the year before the war.

Barbiturates head the list of methods adopted by people attempting to take their lives.

The so-called PEP PILLS are almost a menace. Students take them in large numbers. They contain the drug amphetamine which has a toning-up effect. It has much the same effect as alcohol. It makes people feel happy when they have little to be happy about, and gives them energy when they have no need to be energetic.

Doctors say that amphetamine addicts—the people who need pep pills—often need to see psychiatrists. They either suffer from a deep-rooted feeling of inferiority or they are trying to push down unpleasant thoughts that they don't want to know about.

The SLIMMING TABLETS are in the same class as the pep pills. Women are the worst culprits in this craze of taking slimming tablets. Their main worry is to prevent getting fat and preserve their 'curves.'

Take any box of any tablets that we have mentioned earlier—the sleeping tab-

lets, the confidence drug, the pep pills or the slimming tablets. The so-called underdeveloped countries don't know what they are. They simply do not need them.

The drug takers are victims of disease peculiar to civilisation called STRESS.

Behind the aches and pains of roughly one-third of these are the troubles that no stethoscope will ever trace. Depression ..... Anxiety ..... Fear ..... Lack of confidence ..... and Loneliness.

West African negroes rarely contract stress diseases such as high blood pressure. North American negroes often do.

Farm labourers rarely get ulcers. But city workers do. They suffer from stress.

What is stress ?

Doctors explain it as the bombardment of the nervous system by various forces—noises, bright lights, other disturbing impulses such as a fast tempo of life.

These forces cause an increased outpouring of ADRENALIN, the mysterious substance in all of us which prepares the body for flight or fight, the substance that makes the heart go pit-a-pat, that makes us sweat; that makes a cat's fur stand on end when it meets a dog.

To combat stress we have fallen on two groups of drugs—those that tone us down and those that tone us up. Many people ask for and are given drugs they don't need.

But you cannot altogether blame the doctors. Are they wrong in helping their patients to bear the stress of life more easily? Are they wrong in giving the relief of sleep to patients so desperately in need of it? This is the problem they

face daily in the privacy of their consulting rooms.

There is of course nothing wrong with the pill or the tablet. But it takes on its Jekyll and Hyde look when :

The Wrong person takes it, or

The Right person takes too much of it. This can happen with any drug.

Where then does the blame for the pill mania lie ? On the increased stresses and strains of life and on the fact that we have failed to find a better way of treating stress than by the pill box.

We—the technologists—have a very great responsibility in being directly instrumental for increasing the stresses and

strains of life. We are responsible for increasing the tempo of life to a pitch where we have no time for leisure and introspection. We have provided the radio and the television which create a form of mental inertia, so much so, that the average person is fast losing the power to think or to sort out his emotions and actions. We are responsible for leading the society heavily on to materialistic pursuits and leading them away from religion and true spirituality.

We must ask ourselves—whither technologist ? We must reverse the pendulum at once if sanity is to be restored. There is no doubt at all that the principal underlying cause of worry, anxiety, fear, is lack of Faith. We must strive hard to see that people develop greater faith in God than in their pill box.