

**POPULAR DRUGS:  
THEIR USE  
AND ABUSE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649676873

Popular Drugs: Their Use and Abuse by Sydney Hillier

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**SYDNEY HILLIER**

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# POPULAR DRUGS

THEIR USE AND ABUSE

BY *e*  
SYDNEY HILLIER, M.D.



BRENTANO'S  
NEW YORK  
1910

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# POPULAR DRUGS.

## CHAPTER I.

IN these days of "strenuous life" and its consequent nerve strain and worry, most of us are interested in discussions upon the moderate and immoderate use of drugs. This interest is aroused, not only on account of very many people who now treat themselves for their various aches and pains, but also because there are so many instances of the drug habit that the baneful influence of excess is often apparent to us in a most realistic and painful manner.

In this book the term "drug" will be employed in its widest sense, and will include alcohol in its various forms, as well as other classes of drugs more especially used by the public, such as the sedatives, opium and tobacco, and the sleep-producers or hypnotics, such as chloral, sulphonal, and paraldehyd.

Whilst the consumption of alcohol, according to the latest statistics, shows some slight relative decrease per head of the population, the number of

persons sentenced to detention under the Inebriates' Acts in 1907 was considerably in excess of the number during any previous year.

No statistics are available relating to morphinism or other drug habits; but there is a very general consensus of opinion, amongst those who are best able to judge, that there is an increase in the number of persons addicted to one form or another of drugging. We must consider this serious question from various points of view, avoiding the alarmist attitude while we admit the grave peril.

Some of the causes of the growing custom of resorting to drugs that benumb or stimulate the brain are easily discovered. One important source of alcoholic intemperance and the use of drugs, such as morphia and chloral, is unquestionably the increasing prevalence of ailments affecting the nervous system. This is true especially in regard to the psychical side of the nervous organisation, and is exemplified by the increase of insanity, neurasthenia, and its allied conditions, hypochondria and hysteria.

Lecturing before the Royal College of Physicians Dr Savage, late lecturer on Mental Diseases at Guy's Hospital, states :—

“There is sufficient evidence to show that there is a steady increase in the numbers of the insane in England, Ireland, and Scotland. . . .”

"The increase is shown by my tables to be very large in 50 years . . . In 1906 there was one lunatic to 283 sane persons, the proportion being 35·31 per 1000 of population, whereas in 1859 it was 18·64 per 10,000. . . .

"There is doubtless a growing nervousness, which means less ability to stand the strains of life; but it appears to me that the indication is rather to do all we can, not very much perhaps, to reduce these strains, and thus prevent mental breakdowns."!

In 1859 there were 36,762 certified insane persons in England and Wales. According to the last report of the Lunacy Commissioners for the year 1908, the total for England and Wales amounted to 128,787, an increase altogether out of proportion to the increase in population in these two countries in the same period. This is a matter of the utmost gravity.

But fortunately the increase in insanity is not as great as statistics appear to indicate. Many more people are diagnosed and treated for mental disease than was the case some years ago. The men and women who would fifty, twenty, or even ten years ago have been considered merely eccentric, feeble-minded, or prone to moods of melancholy, are now

<sup>1</sup> British Medical Journal, 30th March, 1907.