

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

"The Cocaine Habit in 1895"

Carroll County Times article for 16 July 1995

by Jay A. Graybeal

We tend to think that some of our modern problems, such as drug abuse, are of recent origin. You may be interested to learn that the "cocaine habit" has been around for more than a century. William L. W. Seabrook, editor of the Westminster American Sentinel newspaper, presented the findings of a study by Albert N. Doerschuk, Ph. G., in the July 13, 1895 issue of the paper:

### The Cocaine Habit.

The cocaine habit is a comparatively new addition to the evils by which humanity is beset, and it promises to excel even morphinism in the insidiousness of its growth, in blasting destructiveness and in the number of its victims. Under the influence of cocaine, the subject seems to enjoy a renewal of youth. Capacity for labor is augmented, and the need of sleep much diminished. The occasional use of cocaine leaves a highly illusive impression on the unprofessional mind, producing pleasant sensations, inspiring courage and causing a general feeling of exuberant vitality, with apparently no unpleasant after effects; but while the immediate action of cocaine is more animating and agreeable than that of morphine, it is not nearly so enduring, and the bitter sequel are manifested earlier and in a form far more disastrous than in morphine intoxication. Cocaine habitués are utterly unreliable and disregard all personal appearance, going about unkempt, bedraggled and forlorn. While under the influence of the drug they feel equal to any task, forget the past, cherish hopes for the future, are happy in and oblivious to their sad condition. Without it they are nervous, maniacal, morose and even dangerous. The cocaine habit is a swift road to destruction, and leaves in its wake a blight most terrible to behold.

The growing prevalence of this vice is largely due to the greatly reduced price of cocaine, occasioned by improvements in the process of extracting it from the crude drug. Less than ten years ago, cocaine was worth 75 cents a grain; it can now be bought at the rate of two grains for five cents.

Several distinct causes result in the acquirement of this habit. Prominent among these is the pernicious practice of a certain class of druggists (fortunately small in number) who offer cocaine when asked for something that will relieve toothache, neuralgia and countless other aches and pains. It is impossible to estimate the ruinous effect of such recklessness. To the chronic sufferer, cocaine proves at first an inestimable boon; but the first dose breeds an insatiable and almost insuperable appetite, and with this comes all the trickery and depravity of an experienced victim. Misery and the bitterness of remorse would fill the soul of the druggist who is so rashly indifferent as to incur this responsibility, had he sufficient imagination to see before him a panorama of the degradation, suffering and ruin for which he has become chargeable.

In some way the erroneous notion has come to prevail that, in treating the morphine habit, cocaine is of great value, counteracting the effects of the morphine. Proceeding on this principle, numberless quacks have claimed ability to cure the morphine habit. The unfortunates whom they have succeeded in deluding are perhaps cured of the morphine habit, but in its stead they become cursed with a vice far more ruinous than all their former ills. Cocaine may counteract the effects of morphine, but when the action of the cocaine is exhausted the system demands greatly increased quantities of morphine, and this in turn produces a desire for more and more cocaine. To use cocaine for curing the morphine habit is like jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

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Another class of victims comprises those to whom cocaine has been administered in minor surgical operations, and who, remembering its exhilarating effects, subsequently obtain and use the drug to their ruin.

Some, ignorant of its possibilities for injury, begin this habit voluntarily; others are led into it by what seems to them a necessity; and others, again, are innocently beguiled into it by the influence of environment and friends.

The cocaine habit is apparently incurable, unless the subject possesses a powerful will and renounces the use of the drug ere its vicious effects are manifest. After the habit is once acquired, the system craves the drug very much as the body craves food. When this drug hunger is not gratified, the habitué suffers all the consequences of natural starvation, until his system recovers its normal condition. With overwork or any mental strain the craving for the drug returns, and is repelled only with the utmost difficulty. Each dose creates a demand for a larger dose the next time, and a point is seldom reached where a constant quantity produces uniform results.

A single instance will illustrate the terrible possibilities of this drug. A prosperous young lawyer, being very much overworked and in great demand, sought renewal of his exhausted energies in cocaine. For along time this served him remarkably well stimulating his energies and producing an appearance of renewed vitality. Presently his system failed to respond to the usual quantities of the drug; then began a gradual increase in the dose, with simultaneous reduction in the effect. Finally the drug seemed to lose all potency, and the subject was completely prostrated. Under skillful treatment he recovered after a time and appeared to be restored, but with returning labor and anxiety came the old craving and morbid desire for stimulus. This he resisted with all his energy, but to no avail. An extreme hunger prevailed in his system, and he could have no peace until this was satisfied. Notwithstanding his former experience, one night he stole from his home and satisfied his longing with cocaine. Pleasant thoughts and blissful dreams were the result. And thus he sustained himself from day to day. By stealth his wife obtained some of the drug, and, finding exhilaration in its use, continued to administer it to herself, guarding her secret from her husband. To-day one is a raving maniac and the other is behind the bars, clamorous for cocaine.

Photo Caption: [None]