

THE
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The Drug Panic

By a London Physician

It is a long while since I was at school, and I may have forgotten some things, but I remember well that I was taught there to beware of a certain type of fallacy called *non distributio medii*; and this fallacy is at the base of all the recent most baneful, most mischievous, most wasteful and most insolent legislation which we see on all hands, but nowhere more than in the matter of such follies as the Dangerous Drugs Act.

The present writer agrees entirely with the thesis expounded by a New York Specialist in the June issue of THE ENGLISH REVIEW. In this matter of the Dangerous Drugs Act Parliament seems to have been inspired by ignorance made deeper by the wildest ravings of that class of newspaper which aspires to thrill its readers—if reading it can be called—with blood-curdling horrors.

And here is where the fallacy I mentioned comes in. We are all laudably busy in “cleaning up” Sin in its hydra-headed and Protean forms. Very good: we hear that a woman abuses morphine, or a man goes mad and destroys his family with an axe.

We then argue that as the morphine and the axe can injure society, it must be made as difficult as possible for any one to buy these engines of atrocity. No! we do not do so in the case of the axe, because it is obvious to everybody that there is a large class of very poor men whose livelihood would be taken away if they could not get axes.

Then why does not the same argument apply in the case of the morphine? Because the public is ignorant of the existence of “a large class of very poor men” who would die or go insane if morphine were withheld from them.

Bronchitis and asthma, in particular, are extremely