

The earlier information regarding inorphia in India is somewhat fragmentary. Action was taken in the direction of suppressing the use of the drug, except for strictly medicinal purposes, at first by some of the provinces in which the habit first appeared, and afterwards by all provinces at the instance of the Government of India when their attention was called to the matter in 1904. The following are some of the isolated facts bearing on the subject.

The use of morphia pills was noticed in Akyab in the Burma Province in 1888, and attention was called by the local Government to the illegality of the trade. In 1898 it was found that there was a trade in morphia pills from Calcutta to Burma. The habit of injection appears to have been first observed in Burma in 1902. Numerous morphia dens had sprung into existence whose proprietors have been able to a considerable extent to evade or defy prosecution. It is understood that all the parts of an efficient syringe can be locally made except the needle.

The morphia habit was noticed in Madras in 1904. It was also in existence in Bombay about this time, though not to any large extent. Subsequent correspondence showed that household medicines containing morphia were freely sold in the city, and no doubt to some extent legitimately. It is not clear when the habit first appeared in Calcutta.

A number of authorities have at one time or another expressed the opinion that inorphia was actually taking or was likely to take the place of opium, especially in Burma where the price of opium is higher than elsewhere. It is not clear, however, that this aspect of the question has been studied with precision. The general tendency of the facts brought to notice is to indicate that the habit of morphia injection readily takes hold among the dissipated classes in large towns. It does not appear, however, that it spreads in the interior with anything like the rapidity experienced in the case of cocaine, a drug against the importation of which severe repressive action has been taken, though not, it is feared, with complete success.

The most recent information about the situation in regard to morphia is given in the reports on excise administration in 1907—08. The Bengal report remarks that reliable data regarding the use of morphia for other than medical purposes are wanting, but that there seems to be no reason to believe that the habit is spreading; and also that morphia pills have been found in use in nine districts of the province, but only in extensive use in one.

The report from Burma in the same year mentions among other seizures, one of two ozs. imported from Calcutta, and states that the use of the drug is at present confined to criminals and diseased persons and others of the lowest classes. It is added that there has been a decrease in the habit of consuming and injecting morphia in Rangoon and that many of the

dens have been closed. A few isolated captures have been made in the interior of the province.

As regards the standing rules on the subject of morphia, the restrictions now generally in force throughout India limit possession to the amounts, not exceeding five grains in Burma or ten grains in other provinces, which are required for bond fide medicinal purposes. Medical practitioners and druggists dispensing morphia must be licensed, and the rules on this point in force in Burma are specially strict in excluding altogether the doctor or chemist who does not possess European qualifications. Experience in India in regard to morphia and cocaine indicates that smuggling, and not the abuse of a license granted for the use of morphia in medical work, is the main difficulty to be met ; and particularly smuggling through the agency of the post.

The imports of morphia were not till recently separately classified by the Customs authorities, and figures are only available for the last two years, and even so are approxi-mate, the figures for one port representing imports by calendar years and for the others imports by official years. The amounts are 15,162 ozs. imported in 1906-07 and 14,34.4. ozs. imported in 1907—08. Import duty is levied at the general rate of 5 per cent. ad valorem.