

THE MORPHO-MANIAC

OUR modern civilized life has done more, perhaps, than anything else to encourage and promote liquor and drug habits, for where in former times the drinking of liquor was merely a pledge of good fellowship, it has now become necessary to use these stimulants and the much stronger drugs to give a false strength to the weaker ones in the rush of social and business life. The constant struggle for existence among the poor; and the equally constant round of dissipation and amusement among the rich combine to put a severe and continuous strain upon both. This the weaker ones must be prepared to resist or go to the wall. They have not the vitality to keep up physically nor the nerve force which, in their stronger-minded companions, acts as a spur to the physical powers when these are failing. Where the physical and nervous powers are both failing under the strain imposed, we find that a much stronger nerve stimulus is required to keep the body at work, and this, too, at a time when the nervous energy is itself in an exhausted condition; as the stimulus cannot come from within, the only resource is from without.

Now, our weaklings, in order to produce that condition of *bien faisance* which they so much desire, usually procure this foreign stimulus from one of two sources—either they abuse alcoholic liquors or indulge in narcotics. The former act as a direct irritant to the nervous system combined with a certain amount of hallucination which enables the victim to perform comparatively great feats of strength and argument, meanwhile totally unaware that his co-ordinating centres are functioning in anything but a proper manner. The narcotics, on the contrary, produce this feeling of *bien d'être* by dulling the nervous system so that it is not affected by the ordinary sensory stimuli. Uneasiness and fatigue are replaced by a temporary sense of rest and comfort.