

THEY THIRST FOR COCAINE.

Soda Fountain Fiends Multiplying.

Slaves to the "Coca Cola" Habit.

Los Angeles Physician Says it is as Dangerous as Any "Dope."

Soda-fountain proprietors struck a bonanza when the drink known as coca cola was introduced, for of all the beverages sprung on a public desiring variety and change it stands first in favor, and its popularity, instead of waning, is on the increase.

That is what the men behind the marble counters in Los Angeles say. They even go farther and claim for the brown beverage qualities peculiar to those potions which make habitués or "fiends" of their drinkers.

YESTERDAY'S ILLUSTRATION.

A well-dressed business man yesterday dropped into a Spring-street ice-cream parlor, where soda water may be had in all its alluring variety of concoctions. As soon as he had entered the door, one of the white-coated attendants said to another, "There comes one of our coca cola fiends."

After the gentleman had quaffed the coffee-colored draught in evident appreciation, one of the drink-dispensers volunteered some interesting information regarding coca cola "victims."

According to his statement and those of several others who are in a position to observe, a great many people in Los Angeles have contracted the coca cola habit.

It is advertised to cure you of "that tired feeling" and is said by its habitués to have medicinal virtues that soothe the over-worked mind and nerves. Stimulating qualities are also claimed for it.

It is perhaps not statistical, but the statement is made that three-fourths of the men who drink soda-fountain concoctions call for coca cola. Also, that of these, a large percentage are brain workers.

A young politician of this city, who occupies a responsible position, drinks his coca cola twice a day regularly. He declares that it has become very attractive to him and almost necessary on account of the relief it gives his nervous system. He admits that he has the "habit," but thinks it a very good one, both because of its essential virtues and its cheapness.

THE COCAINE DOES IT.

Two or three of the largest sellers of soft drinks in the city were interviewed on the subject yesterday and they stated that a great many of their patrons call regularly and often for the drink, and it is conceded by those who understand its nature that coca cola contains a small percentage of cocaine. This accounts, they say, for the hold it has upon its drinkers. It is also claimed that very few women indulge to any great extent.

To determine, if possible, whether the small amount of cocaine in the beverage may be injurious or not, and, if so, to what extent, an interview was had with a prominent physician of this city, who is considered by his professional brethren as an expert on questions relating to kindred drugs used as anesthetics.

WHAT A DOCTOR SAYS.

He claims that the coca cola "habit" is a dangerous one to contract. "If coca cola contains even the smallest percentage of cocaine," said he, "no one should allow himself to become a victim of it, for its effect will be similar in nature, though in a lesser degree, perhaps, to that noticed in confirmed cocaine and morphine users.

"If I am not misinformed, the beverage contains extracts from the kola nut and the cocoa leaf, and must therefore contain cocaine, or caffeine, which is an alkaloid of cocaine. It is a dangerous drink."