

EXPERIENCES OF A MARIHUANA ADDICT

*La cucaracha, la cucaracha
Ya no puede caminar,
Porque no tiene, porque no tiene
Marihuana que fumar.*

In this lilting little dance-song, Mexican peasants lament that the cockroach cannot march because he has no marihuana to smoke. With no lyrical accompaniment, police officials and doctors have found increasing cause to lament that Americans, particularly young school-children of both sexes, have had plenty of noxious, fascinating drug.

Robert P. Walton, Professor of Pharmacology in Mississippi University, relates in his book how marihuana smoking was introduced to the United States from Mexico by way of Texas and New Orleans. The author was attached to the New Orleans Faculty of Medicine and was one of the first to recognize the menace and study it scientifically.

Marihuana is the resin exuded by the common hemp plant which is freely cultivated for its tough fibre, and the oil from its seed which goes to all quarters of the

globe. The Hindus appreciate the drug as "bhang," the Arabs and Egyptians as "hashish." The Mexicans introduced it in cigarette form to the sensation-seeking younger generations in America.

Variouly nick-named "reefers," "muggles," "Indian hay," "tea" and "goof butts," it was enthusiastically smoked by schoolchildren who clubbed together to raise the necessary quarter which most pedlars charged for a cigarette. This was passed round, the puffs jealously counted. One dealer carried on his trade concealed behind the steps of a girl's high-school.

At risk of arousing dangerous interest in marihuana, the author quotes from many accounts of their experiences, given by addicts and by doctors who tried it on the dog and then on themselves.

Most eloquent of these was a young American schoolteacher named Fitzhugh Ludlow, who became a vicious addict and then conquered the habit, partially by writing an account of his experience at the suggestion of his physician.

Taking 30 grains of hemp extract, out of curiosity, he found: "My sensations began to be terrific . . . Through every thinnest corporeal tissue and minutest vein I could trace the circulation of the blood along each inch of its progress . . . the room was full of a great glory . . . my heart became a great fountain whose jet played upward with loud vibrations, and, striking on the roof of my skull as on a gigantic dome, fell back with a splash and echo into its reservoir . . . I dreaded apoplexy, congestion, hemorrhage, a multiplicity of nameless deaths. . ."

The common experience of the drug-taker is to find that his reason and powers of observation on himself remain unclouded. He knows what is happening, fears it, then becomes so uncontrollably amused at it that he gives way to gales of hysterical merriment. He loses all sense of space and time, so that everything that takes place in his imagination is on a colossal scale, and experiences which actually last five minutes seem to go on for hundred of years.

In contrast to Opium, which gives pleasure at first and horrible depression afterwards, the hashish frequently begins with nightmare

fears and proceeds to a sense of indescribable happiness and self-confidence.

Ludlow's next sensations were to find himself at the top of an infinite flight of stairs which he feared would take him years to descend. The illusions developed, "Now, through the street, with measured tread, an armed host passed by. The heavy beat of their football, and the grinding of their brazen corslet-rings alone broke the silence . . . It was the army of the ages going by into eternity. A godlike sublimity swallowed up my soul. I was overwhelmed in a fathomless barathrum of time . . ."

After this, Ludlow threw himself on his bed and the moment he closed his eyes "a vision of celestial glory" burst upon him. After this there followed a vision of a "quiet, relaxing and recreative character," and he fell asleep.

Next morning he awoke feeling intense relief at the sight of the four plain white walls of his bedroom. There was no trace of bodily weariness nor mental impression, but his memory vividly recalled what he had seen and felt under the drug, and soon he was longing to experience the delight again.

This is the way in which the

drug grips the addict. Ludlow took another dose. Nothing happened for five hours, then suddenly he was "smitten by the hashish thrill as by a thunderbolt," as he was walking in the country with a friend. Immediately the country stretched out into an infinite paradise of colour, and Ludlow leapt into the air and clapped his hands with delight at his "happiness." He reached home with a tremendous thirst, but when he turned the tap on it was not water which flowed "but the most delicious metheglin" which "gleamed with the spiritual fire of a thousand chrysolites."

The rest of the evening was spent in a delicious dream, but the next time Ludlow indulged he took 50 grains. It took effect soon after midnight when the room was dark. This time the first experience was one of "superhuman misery."

Author Walton argues that marijuana does not often produce erotic sensations, but quotes Frenchman Hector France who

was taken into a cave-like den in North Africa, where the Bedouins smoked their pipes filled with "kif" (another name for the hemp drug). At first the pipe was "like a bar of redhot iron" to the touch, but the Bedouins urged him on. He was rewarded.

"The hall was changing into a perfect harem, filling, filling with young and pretty women. Was Constantine sending all her dancing girls, or had the Thaleb brought me to the general headquarters of the profession?"

Thirty-nine of the United States have now imposed penalties ranging from one to 30 years' imprisonment, with proportionate fines thrown in for all those caught trafficking in marihuana.

Though the scientific evidence is not conclusive, most of the experts agree that the "goof butt" if it does not drive the smoker into acts of irresponsible violence, will slowly but surely reduce him to the status of an idle, drivelling idiot.—*Condensed from News Review.*

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Lawyer (helping pedestrian up): "Come with me, my man. You can get damages."

Pedestrian: "Heavens, man, I've got all the damages I want. Get me some repairs."—*Parade.*