

Quest for Paradise

Through the ages man's need to escape the mundane reality of his everyday life has led him to search for means of attaining some utopian dream world. Below, various authors describe their experiences in the heightened artificial paradise induced by drugs.

Mescal—A Divine Plant

The renowned American physician S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914) gave the first elaborate and vivid account of an excursion into the artificial paradise produced by taking mescal.

I made a trial of the drug on May 24th, 1896, by taking it as I shall now relate.

At 12 noon of a busy morning I took fully 1½ drachm of an extract of which each drachm represented one mescal button. I had in a half-hour a sense of great gastric discomfort, and later of distension. At 1 P.M. I took a little over a drachm. Between 2 and 3 P.M. I noted my face as flushed; the pupils were dilated midway, the pulse 80 and strong. I had a slight sense of exhilaration, a tendency to talk, and now and then I misplaced a word. The knee jerk and station were normal. Between 2 and 4 o'clock I had outside of my house two consultations, and saw several patients. I observed that with a pleasing sense of languor there was an unusual amount of physical endurance. I went rather quietly, taking two stairs at a time and without pause, to the fourth storey of an hotel, and did not feel oppressed or short of breath. This is akin to the experience, as I learn, of the mescal-eating Indians, and to that of many white men. . . .

About 4:10 P.M. I drove home, and after taking half an ounce of extract in three doses I lay on a lounge and read, becoming steadily more conscious, at first of a left frontal pain (not severe) and soon after of a dull occipital ache felt on both sides and at or about the occipital bosses. Yawning at times, sleepy, deliciously at languid ease,

I was clearly in "the land where it is always afternoon." At 4:30 P.M., rising to make notes, I became aware that a transparent, violet haze was about my pen point, a tint so delicate as at times to seem doubtfully existent.

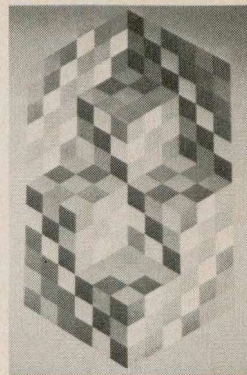
At this stage of the mescal intoxication I had a certain sense of the things about me as having a more positive existence than usual. It is not easy to define what I mean, and at the time I searched my vocabulary for phrase or word which should fitly state my feeling. It was vain.

At this time, also, I had a decisive impression that I was more competent in mind than in my every-day moods. I seemed to be sure of victoriously dealing with problems. This state of mind may be easily matched in the condition of some men when pretty far gone in alcohol intoxication. My own mood was gently flattering—a mere consciousness of power, with meanwhile absolute control of every faculty. . . .

My first vivid show of mescal color effects came quickly. I saw the stars, and then, of a sudden, here and there delicate floating films of color—usually delightful neutral purples and pinks. These came and went—now here, now there. Then an abrupt rush of countless points of white light swept across the field of view, as if the unseen millions of the Milky Way were to flow a sparkling river before the eye. In a minute this was over and the field was dark. Then I began to see zigzag lines of very bright colors, like those seen in some megrims. I tried to fix the place and relation of these tints, but the changes were such as to baffle me. One was an arch of an-

(Continued on page 45)

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gled lines of red and green, but of what else I could not determine. It was in rapid, what I may call minute, motion.

The tints of intense green and red shifted and altered, and soon were seen no more. Here, again, was the wonderful loveliness of swelling clouds of more vivid colors gone before I could name them, and, sometimes rising from the lower field, and very swiftly altering in color tones from pale purples and rose to grays, with now and then a bar of level green or orange intense as lightning and as momentary.

When I opened my eyes all was gone at once. Closing them I began after a long interval to see for the first time definite objects associated with colors. The stars sparkled and passed away. A white spear of gray stone grew up to huge height, and became a tall, richly finished Gothic tower of very elaborate and definite design, with many rather worn statues standing in the doorways or on stone brackets. As I gazed every projecting angle, cornice, and even the face of the stones at their joinings were by degrees covered or hung with clusters of what seemed to be huge precious stones, but uncut, some being more like masses of transparent fruit. These were green, purple, red, and orange; never clear yellow and never blue. All seemed to possess an interior light, and to give the faintest idea of the perfectly satisfying intensity and purity of these gorgeous color-fruits is quite beyond my power. All the colors I have ever beheld are dull as compared to these.

As I looked, and it lasted long, the tower became of a fine mouse hue, and everywhere the vast pendant masses of emerald green, ruby reds, and orange began to drip a slow rain of colors. All this while nothing was at rest a moment. The balls of color moved tremulously. The tints became dull, and then, at once, past belief vivid; the architectural lines were all active with shifting tints. The figures moving shook the long hanging lines of liv-

ing light, and then, in an instant, all was dark. . . .

A knock at my door caused me to open my eyes, and I lost whatever of wonder might have come after.

After dinner I ceased to be able to see any further display of interest. Now and then a purple or pink fragment appeared, but that was all. For a day after I noted the fact that my visions could be easily recalled by a memorial effort, but with less and less sharpness.

These shows are expensive. For two days I had headache, and for one day a smart attack of gastric distress. This came after the first dose, and was most uncomfortable. The experience, however, was worth one such headache and indigestion, but was not worth a second.

(From "Remarks on the Effects of *Anhelonium Lewinii* (The Mescal Button)" by S. Weir Mitchell, M.D. *The British Medical Journal*, Dec. 5, 1896.)

Artificial Paradise

French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) sensitively evokes some of the main psychological reactions experienced by the hashish user.

What do you feel? What do you see? Are there wonderful things, extraordinary visions? Is it very beautiful? and very terrible? and very dangerous?—Such are the usual questions that the uninitiated put to the experienced user, prompted by a curiosity mixed with fear. They seem to have a childlike impatience for knowledge, like that of people who have never left their own hearthside, when they find themselves in the presence of a man who has just returned from distant, unknown lands. They imagine hashish intoxication as a wondrous land, a vast theater of magic and juggling where everything is miraculous and unexpected. That is a preconceived notion, a total misconception. And since, for the average reader and enquirer, the word *hashish* carries

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by Jacques M. May, M.D.

Director, Medical Geography Department,
American Geographical Society, New York

This book encompasses the study made by a world-famous medical geographer and ecologist of the occurrence of transmissible diseases as they arise among human groups throughout the world, through the combined workings of climate, biotics, and social and economic factors. This remarkable book discusses the most important transmissible diseases under the basic framework of agent, vector, reservoir, host, and geographical distribution.

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Beautiful in design, format, and artistic typography, *The Ecology of Human Disease* is an elegant and worthy addition to the library of every physician, anthropologist, social scientist, and human geographer.

352 pp. Bound in cloth. Price \$7.50.

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with it the idea of a strange and topsy-turvy world, and the expectation of wondrous dreams, (it would be better to say "hallucinations," which are, moreover, less frequent than one would suppose,) I will here and now indicate the important difference which separates the effects of hashish from the marvels of sleep. In sleep, that nightly voyage of adventure, there is something positively miraculous; it is a miracle whose regularity has dulled the edges of its mystery. Man's dreams are of two kinds. The first, filled with details of his ordinary life—his preoccupations, his desires, his vices—combine, in a more or less bizarre manner with things glimpsed during the day, which have been imprinted at random on the vast backdrop of his memory. That is natural dream; it is the man himself. Ah, but the other kind of dream! The absurd, unexpected dream, that lacks bearing or connection with the character, the life and the passions of the dreamer! *this* dream, which I will call "hieroglyphic," evidently represents the supernatural side of life, and it is precisely because it was absurd that the ancients believed in its divinity. As it was inexplicable in terms of natural causes, they attributed an extra-human cause to it; and even today, dream interpreters aside, there is still a philosophical school which sees in dreams of this type sometimes reproach, sometimes counsel; in short, a moral and symbolic tableau generated in the very soul of the sleeping man. It is a dictionary that must be studied, a language whose key may be had by the wise.

In hashish intoxication, there is nothing like this. We will not leave the province of natural dream. It is true that, throughout its duration, the intoxication will be nothing but one immense dream, thanks to intensity of color and the rapidity of conceptions; but it will always preserve the particular tonality of the individual. A man has sought to dream, and dream will overcome him; but the dream will certainly reflect its dreamer. The idle fellow

has contrived to introduce the unusual into his life and thoughts by artificial means; but after all, and in spite of the accidental vitality of his sensations, he is only the same man grown larger, the same number raised to a very high power. He has been dominated, but by his ill luck, it was only by himself—that is to say, by the part of himself that was *already* dominant. He wanted to play the angel, he has in point of fact become a beast, momentarily very powerful, if, at any rate, one may refer to an extreme sensitivity, without the control to moderate or exploit it, as "power."

Let it be known, then, by both sophisticate and *ingénu* out to find exceptional pleasure, that in hashish they will find nothing miraculous, absolutely nothing but the natural to an extreme. The mind and body upon which hashish operates will yield only their ordinary, personal phenomena, increased, it is true, in amount and vitality, but still faithful to their original. Man will not escape the fate of his physical and mental nature: to his impressions and intimate thoughts, hashish will be a magnifying mirror, but a *true* mirror, nonetheless.

Here is the drug beneath your eyes: a bit of green jelly, equal in bulk to a walnut, strange-smelling, to the point that it arouses a certain repulsion and a faint hint of nausea, as, moreover, would any subtle—even agreeable—odor, brought to its maximum force and density, as it were. Let me remark, in passing, that this proposition may be reversed, such that the most repugnant, the most revolting odor might become a pleasure, were it reduced to the slightest possible amount and expansiveness.—This, then, is happiness! It occupies the volume of a little spoon! Happiness with all its intoxication, all its folly, all its childishness! You may swallow without fear; it won't kill you. Your bodily organs will be done no harm by it. Later on, perhaps, your strength of will may be diminished by too fre-

(Continued on page 51)

Brief Summary

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D. pneumoniae—Upper and lower respiratory tract infections of mild to moderate degree.

M. pneumoniae—In primary atypical pneumonia due to this organism.

Treponema pallidum—As an alternate treatment in patients allergic to penicillin.

C. diphtheriae and *C. minutissimum*—As an adjunct to antitoxin. In the treatment of erythrasma.

Entamoeba histolytica—In the treatment of intestinal amebiasis.

L. monocytogenes—Infections due to this organism.

Establish susceptibility of pathogens to erythromycin, particularly when *S. aureus* is isolated.

Contraindications: Known hypersensitivity to erythromycin.

Warnings: Safety for use in pregnancy has not been established.

Precautions: Exercise caution in administering to patients with impaired hepatic function. Surgical procedures should be performed when indicated.

Adverse Reactions: Dose-related abdominal cramping and discomfort. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea infrequently occur. During prolonged or repeated therapy, there is a possibility of overgrowth of non-susceptible bacteria or fungi. Mild allergic reactions such as urticaria and other skin rashes may occur. Serious allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, have been reported.

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