

# The Emperor Wears No Clothes

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## Chapter 12

### Cannabis Drug Use in 19th Century America

Although by 1839, cannabis hemp products for fiber, paper, nautical use, lamp oil, food, etc., were possibly the largest agricultural and industrial business in the world and America, the hundreds of medical uses of cannabis (known for thousands of years in the Orient and Middle East) were almost entirely unknown in Western Europe and America because of the earlier Medieval Catholic Church's suppression.

However, the 19th Century saw a dramatic re-discovery of the benefits of cannabis drugs, which were the number-one medicine in America prior to 1863. It was replaced by morphine when the new injectable needle became the rage, but not before cannabis brought with it healthful elixirs and patent medicines, luxuriant Turkish Smoking Parlors, and with them a fountain of literary creativity. Cannabis remained the number-two medicine until 1901 when it was replaced by aspirin.

### Marijuana Medicine in 19th Century America

From 1850 to 1937, cannabis was used as the prime medicine for more than 100 separate illnesses or diseases in U.S. pharmacopoeia.

During all this time (until the 1940s), science, doctors, and drug manufacturers (Lilly, Parke-Davis, Squibb, etc.) had no idea of its active ingredients.

Yet from 1842 until the 1890s, marijuana, generally called Cannabis Indica or Indian Hemp extractums, was one of the three items (after alcohol and opium) most used in patent and prescription drugs (in massive\* doses, usually by oral ingestion).

*\* Doses given during the 19th Century to American infants, children, youth, adults, women in childbirth, and senior citizens, in one day, were, in many cases, equal to what a current moderate-to-heavy American marijuana user probably consumes in a month or two, using U.S. government's 1983 guidelines for comparison.*

Violence was equated with alcohol use; addiction to morphine was known as the "soldiers' illness."

And so, during that era, cannabis gained favor and was even recommended as a way of helping alcoholics and addicts recover. Some temperance organizations even suggested "hashish" as a substitute for (wife beating) "demon" alcohol.

However, cannabis medicines had been largely lost to the West since the days of the Inquisition. (See chapter 10, "A Look At The sociology")

Until, that is, W.B. O'Shaugnessy, a 30 year old British physician serving in India's Bengal\* province, watched Indian doctors use different hemp extracts successfully to treat all types of illness and disease then untreatable in the West, including tetanus.

\* "Bengal" means "Bhang Land," literally Cannabis Land.

O'Shaugnessy then did an enormous (and the first Western) study,\* in 1839, and published a 40-page paper on the uses of cannabis medicines. At the same time, a French doctor named Roche was making the same rediscovery of hemp in Middle Eastern medicines.

\* O'Shaugnessy used patients, animals, and himself for his research and experiments. Incidentally, O'Shaugnessy went on to become a millionaire and was knighted by Queen Victoria for building India's first telegraph system in the 1850s.

O'Shaugnessy's medical paper and findings on hemp extracts stunned and swept through the Western medical world. In just three years, marijuana was an American and European "superstar."

Papers written by first-time American users (novices) and doctors using, treating, or experimenting with cannabis, told straight forward accounts of its usually euphoric, and sometimes dysphoric, mind- and time-expanding properties for both child and adult, as well as hilarity and increased appetites, especially the first few times they tried it.

Interestingly, during this whole period of time (1840s to 1930s) Lilly, Squibb, Parke Davis, Smith Brothers, Tildens, etc., had no effective way to prolong its very short shelf life and had great difficulty standardizing dosages.

As noted before, marijuana medicine was so highly regarded by Americans (including some Protestant theologians) during the last century that in 1860, for example, the Committee on Cannabis Indica for the Ohio State Medical Society reported and concluded that, "High Biblical commentators [scholars]" believe "that the gall and vinegar, or myrrhed wine, offered to our Saviour, immediately before his crucifixion, was in all probability, a preparation of Indian hemp [marijuana], and even speak of its earlier use in obstetrics."\*

\* Reprinted from the transcripts of the 15th annual meeting of the Ohio State Medical Society, at White Sulphur Springs, Ohio, June 12-14, 1860, pg. 75-100.

The main reasons that cannabis medicines fell into disuse in America was the difficulty of identifying and standardizing dosage, e.g., in 1964, 27 years after America outlawed cannabis in 1937, Dr. Raphael Mechoulam of Tel Aviv University first discovered the THC delta molecules as the active ingredients in cannabis. Also, doctors in the late 19th

Century could not find a way to inject it into humans with their brand new hypodermic needles and still haven't.

By the 1890s, some of the most popular American marriage guides recommend cannabis as an aphrodisiac of extraordinary powers no one ever suggested a prohibition law against cannabis. And while there was talk of an alcohol prohibition law, a number of women's temperance organizations even suggested "hashish" as a substitute for "demon" alcohol, which they said led to wife beating.

### **A Popular Inspiration of the 19th Century Literary Greats**

From the early 1800s on, some of the world's foremost romantic and revolutionary writers on individual freedom and human dignity extolled cannabis use. We study their works in school today as "classics": Victor Hugo: *Les Miserables*, 1862, *Notre Dame de Paris* (*Hunchback of*), 1831; Alexandre Dumas: *The Count of Monte Cristo*, 1844, *The Three Musketeers*, 1844; Coleridge, Gautier, De Quincey, Balzac, Baudelaire, and John Greenleaf Whittier (*Barbara Fritchie*), etc.

Cannabis and mushroom imagery influenced Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865, and *Through the Looking Glass*, 1872. In the early 1860s, Mark Twain's best friend and mentor was the already-famous best-selling writer and advocate of cannabis, the young (mid-20s) Fitz Hugh Ludlow (*The Hashish Eater*, 1857). Ludlow extolled hashish eating as a wondrous mind adventure but warned strongly against over-indulgence of it and all drugs.

These authors' stories usually had several things in common: A complete love of individual freedom; respect for the dignity of each human's search for individual consciousness; and humorous contempt for the establishment, beliefs, bureaucracies, and injustices of their day (for example, *Les Miserables*).

The science of psycho-pharmacology started in France circa 1845 with Doctor J.J. Moreau DeTours, and cannabis became one of the first drugs used to treat the insane and depressed.

Moreau was best friends with Dumas, Hugo, and Gautier, and in 1845 co-founded with them in Paris the first cannabis club in the Western World: *Le Club Des Haschischins*.

### **Maple Sugar Hashish Candy**

Starting in the 1860s, the Ganja Wallah Hashish Candy Company made maple sugar hashish candy, which soon became one of the most popular treats in America.

For 40 years, it was sold over the counter and advertised in newspapers, as well as being listed in the catalogs of Sears-Roebuck, as a totally harmless, delicious, and fun candy.

## **Turkish Smoking Parlors**

World Fairs and International Expositions from the 1860s through the early 1900s often featured a popular Turkish Hashish Smoking exposition and concession. Hashish smoking was entirely new for Americans; its effects came on much faster. However, smoking hashish was only about one-third as strong or long lasting as orally ingesting the cannabis extract medicines that even American children were regularly prescribed.

At America's giant 100-year 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, fair goers took their friends and family to partake (smoke) at the extremely popular Turkish Hashish Exposition, so as to "enhance" their fair experience.

By 1883, similar hashish smoking parlors were legally open in every major American city, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, and so on.

The Police Gazette estimated there were more than 500 hashish smoking parlors in New York City in the 1880s and it was estimated by the NYPD that there were still 500 or more hashish parlors in N.Y.C. in the 1920s. There were more of these parlors than there were "speakeasys" during the same 1920s alcohol prohibition period.

## **As American as Apple Pie**

By the start of this century almost four generations of Americans had been using cannabis. Virtually everyone in this country was familiar from childhood on with the "highs" of cannabis extract yet doctors did not consider it habit forming, anti-social, or violent at all after 60 years of use.

This leads us to an important question: If it was not fear of health or social consequences that led to the eventual ban of cannabis use in America (and later forced on the rest of the world), what did?

## **The Smear Campaign**

What socio-political force would be strong enough to turn Americans against something as innocent as a plant let alone one which everyone had an interest in using to improve their own lives?

Earlier, you read how the first federal anti-marijuana laws (1937) came about because of William Randolph Hearst's lies, yellow journalism, and racist newspaper articles and ravings, which from then on were cited in Congressional testimony by Harry Anslinger as facts.

But what started Hearst on the marijuana and racist scare stories? What intelligence or ignorance, for which we still punish fellow Americans to the tune of 14 million years in jails and prisons in just the last 60 years, (390,000 arrested in 1990 for marijuana;

410,000 arrested in 1993 for marijuana; 642,000 arrested in 1997 alone for marijuana, almost twice as many as 1990) What brought this all about?

The first step was to introduce the element of fear of the unknown by using a word that no one had ever heard of before: "marijuana."

The next step was to keep the maneuverings hidden from the doctors, scientists, and hemp industries who would have defended hemp. This was done by holding most of the hearings on prohibition in secret.

And, finally, prohibitionists set out to stir up primal emotions and tap right into an existing pool of hatred that was already poisoning society: racism.