



The Hasheesh Eater: being passages from the Life of a Pythagorean

Fitz Hugh Ludlow

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The secret lies in the use of hasheesh. A very few words will suffice to tell what hasheesh is. In northern latitudes the hemp plant (*Cannabis Sativa*) grows almost entirely to fibre, becoming, in virtue of this quality, the great resource for mats and cordage. Under a southern sun this same plant loses its fibrous texture, but secretes, in quantities equal to one third of its bulk, an opaque and greenish resin. Between the northern and the southern hemp there is no difference, except the effect of diversity of climate upon the same vegetable essence; yet naturalists, misled by the much greater extent of gummy secretion in the latter, have distinguished it from its brother of the colder soil by the name *Cannabis Indica*. The resin of the *Cannabis Indica* is hasheesh. From time immemorial it has been known among all the nations of the East as possessing powerful stimulant and narcotic properties; throughout Turkey, Persia, Nepaul, and India it is used at this day among all classes of society as an habitual indulgence. The forms in which it is employed are various. Sometimes it appears in the state in which it exudes from the mature stalk, as a crude resin; sometimes it is manufactured into a conserve with clarified butter, honey, and spices; sometimes a decoction is made of the flowering tops in water or arrack. Under either of these forms the method of administration is by swallowing. Again, the dried plant is smoked in pipes or chewed, as tobacco among ourselves. Used in whatever preparation, hasheesh is characterized by the most remarkable phenomena, both physical and spiritual. A series of experiments made with it by men of eminent attainments in the medical profession, principally at Calcutta, and during the last ten years, prove it to be capable of inducing all the ordinary symptoms of catalepsy, or even of trance.

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