

## MARIHUANA

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Marihuana (*Cannabis sativa*) is an attractive plant that grows in neglected back yards, vacant lots, on the roadside, in river bottoms where there is waste, uncultivated land; in fact anywhere in a temperate climate. It grows luxuriantly in every state in the Union. In many places it grows so luxuriantly that it crowds out other weeds such as ragweed and others of large size. It reaches maturity in about three months and attains a height of from four to sixteen feet or more. The stalk is from a quarter of an inch to two inches thick, and is very fibrous and tough. It is from the fiber that the plant derives the name hemp.

The leaves are of a rich, dark green color on the upper surface and light green beneath. They vary in width up to an inch and are sometimes more than eight inches long. The leaves are long, narrow and definitely pointed, having saw-tooth edges. The leaf surface is covered with numerous hairs which secrete an amber-colored resin, containing cannabine, or cannabinol, which is supposed to be the narcotic that causes the intoxication.

The greenish flowers are nearly an eighth of an inch in diameter. They give off a characteristic odor and are unattractive. The fruit, called hemp seed, is smooth and globular. It is a little larger than common birdseed. A light colored oil is obtained from it.

Under various names, marihuana has been known ever since the time of Homer and Herodotus, both of whom mention it in their writings. In Africa, central Asia, and India it has been known for many centuries. The variety from India (*Cannabis indica*) is known as Indian hemp. The name Indian hemp, however, is now applied to marihuana in general.

Marihuana, under the name Indian hemp, was brought to New England by the early settlers about three centuries ago. They grew it for its fiber from which they made rope, hats, and sometimes clothing. Later, when manila was introduced, Indian hemp fell into disuse and was no longer cultivated.

The Spanish conquerors brought it to Mexico about a century earlier than it

was introduced into New England. The Mexicans took it up readily. It was from Mexico that marihuana spread across the border into Texas and the Southwest. It is only during the last ten years that it has spread to the extent that it has become a recognized national menace. Now it grows in every State and it has spread even to Canada.

The dried leaves and seed are made into cigarettes that look very much like the ordinary cigarette, except that the ends are tucked in so the contents will not fall out, as it is much finer than tobacco. Sometimes it is introduced to the victim by mixing it with the tobacco of the ordinary cigarette; and sometimes the marihuana is placed in the middle of the cigarette, the ends being filled with tobacco. These are some of the devices resorted to by those who sell marihuana for profit.

The marihuana cigarette is sold only by peddlers; no regular dealer would dare to sell it in any form, for he would soon be arrested and punished according to law. The law is very severe. The peddlers sell mostly to the underworld in the large cities; but, during the last five years they have increasingly infested high school communities until now these peddlers may be found around high schools in any part of the country.

It is in the high school community that it is easiest for the peddler to work. The pupils receive little or no instruction on narcotics of any kind. They see older people indulging narcotic habits of one form or another every day, and observe no immediate resulting harm. They reason that they should get their share of the pleasures of life also. This is especially true of those who have already become victims of the ordinary cigarette habit. Since these cigarettes do not satisfy, boys and girls who smoke them are always ready to try something new, especially when the new cigarette is described in glowing terms and is given to them free.

A common practice of the peddler is to approach a boy or girl who is smoking the common cigarette, and to ask for a light for the cigarette he wants to smoke.

Of course the request is readily granted. Then the peddler offers his victim one of his 'special' cigarettes describing it in fascinating words. The peddler usually gives his victim several marihuana cigarettes free so the habit will become established. In a few days the ordinary cigarette no longer satisfies as it did, and the victim hunts up the peddler. This time the peddler sells them for whatever he can get. Usually, he gets from ten cents to a half a dollar apiece for them. In this way the peddler establishes his trade.

Since everything that is done is personal, he is not easily found out and he sometimes continues in business a long time. The profits are enormous. The customary price of marihuana is from \$50 to \$150 a pound wholesale. In cigarettes, it brings several times this price.

One not informed naturally wonders why it is that a thing as common and as easily grown as marihuana, should sell for so high a price. The one who is just introduced to the habit seldom knows what the plant looks like. Besides, the plant is available only during its growing season which is but three months during the year; but the smoker must have his cigarettes regularly. Furthermore, after the marihuana habit is followed for a short time, it no longer satisfies and the victim turns to morphine or heroin with but little further interest in marihuana and the peddler plies his trade with new victims.

The marihuana addict is enslaved just as truly as is any other narcotic addict. The effect, however, is very different. Instead of the narcotic peace and contentment so characteristic of many of the other forms, marihuana has the opposite effect. Its victim is fully as much disturbed over his condition as is the alcoholic victim in the last stages of delirium tremens. Usually, before he reaches the extreme condition of discomfort, he is an easy victim to morphine and heroin. The dope peddler, who sells marihuana cigarettes, knows that this is true, and that he can make more money from his victim by shifting him over to the morphine habit; for this will make him a customer for the rest of his life. The course of the narcotic trail begins with tobacco or alcohol passing on to marihuana, morphine, and finally to heroin. It is a very dangerous thing at its source,

and it becomes more dangerous farther on. The end, no matter where it may stop, is always death itself.

The effects of marihuana smoking follow soon after the first indulgence. The effects vary considerably, depending on the amount of indulgence, and on the temperament of the individual. The earlier effects are in the nature of foolish fancies and fascinating hallucinations. This is followed by mental depravity which ends in madness, if the extent of indulgence be sufficient.

The addict does some of the most unaccountable things. If driving a car, he greatly underestimates his speed; also the distance of an approaching car. Thus, without being aware of it, he takes chances that are nothing short of madness itself. He continues in his course until he meets with an accident that is usually fatal. Accidents of this kind are seldom reported in connection with the real cause. Usually, the officers do not suspect the true cause, and of course overlook it in the investigation.

Socially, the victim has his friends as usual; but suddenly he imagines that even his most intimate companion is his worst enemy planning to kill him. The addict imagines further that for his own protection he must kill his enemy first. In this way, he commits some of the most atrocious murders that have ever been known. Or, he may commit other crimes of the very worst kind. Afterward it often occurs that he has no recollection whatsoever of what he did, and is even surprised when told of his deed. To him it appears impossible that he should ever have done what he is accused of.

Most of the unbelievable crimes committed within the last few years are directly traceable to marihuana. Bandits bent on desperate deeds usually prepare by indulging in marihuana, or some similar narcotic in order to 'get up courage' that would not otherwise be possible.

The problem must be gotten under control, or the results will become far more serious than at present. It is true that we have drastic laws; but they are not effective because of a police force insufficient in numbers, training, and experience. This back-yard weed that has so suddenly become a national menace must be brought under control soon if the nation is to be safeguarded.