

## MESCAL: A NEW ARTIFICIAL PARADISE.

IT has been known for some years that the Kiowa Indians of New Mexico are accustomed to eat, in their religious ceremonies, a certain cactus called *Anhalonium Lewinii*, or mescal button. Mescal—which must not be confounded with the intoxicating drink of the same name made from an agave—is found in the Mexican valley of the Rio Grande, the ancestral home of the Kiowa Indians, as well as in Texas, and is a brown and brittle substance, nauseous and bitter to the taste, composed mainly of the blunt dried leaves of the plant. Yet, as we shall see, it has every claim to rank with haschisch and the other famous drugs which have procured for men the joys of an artificial paradise. Upon the Kiowa Indians, who first discovered its rare and potent virtues, it has had so strong a fascination that the missionaries among these Indians, finding here a rival to Christianity not yielding to moral suasion, have appealed to the secular arm, and the buying and selling of the drug has been prohibited by Government under severe penalties. Yet the use of mescal prevails among the Kiowas to this day.

It has indeed spread, and the mescal rite may be said to be to-day the chief religion of all the tribes of the Southern plains of the United States. The rite usually takes place on Saturday night; the men then sit in a circle within the tent round a large camp-fire, which is kept burning brightly all the time. After prayer the leader hands each man four buttons, which are slowly chewed and swallowed, and altogether about ten or twelve buttons are consumed by each man between sundown and daybreak. Throughout the night the men sit quietly round the fire in a state of reverie—amid continual singing and the beating of drums by attendants—absorbed in the colour visions and other manifestations of mescal intoxication, and

about noon on the following day, when the effects have passed off, they get up and go about their business, without any depression or other unpleasant after-effect.

There are five or six allied species of cacti which the Indians also use and treat with great reverence. Thus Mr. Carl Lumholtz has found that the Tarahumari, a tribe of Mexican Indians, worship various cacti as gods, only to be approached with uncovered heads. When they wish to obtain these cacti, the Tarahumari cense themselves with copal incense, and with profound respect dig up the god, careful lest they should hurt him, while women and children are warned from the spot. Even Christian Indians regard Hikori, the cactus god, as co-equal with their own divinity, and make the sign of the cross in its presence. At all great festivals, Hikori is made into a drink and consumed by the medicine man, or certain selected Indians, who sing as they partake of it, invoking Hikori to grant a "beautiful intoxication;" at the same time a rasping noise is made with sticks, and men and women dance a fantastic and picturesque dance—the women by themselves in white petticoats and tunics—before those who are under the influence of the god.

In 1891 Mr. James Mooney, of the United States Bureau of Ethnology, having frequently observed the mescal rites of the Kiowa Indians and assisted at them, called the attention of the Anthropological Society at Washington to the subject, and three years later he brought to Washington a supply of mescal, which was handed over for examination to Drs. Prentiss and Morgan. These investigators experimented on several young men, and demonstrated, for the first time, the precise character of mescal intoxication and the remarkable visions to which it gives rise. A little later Dr. Weir Mitchell, who, in addition to his eminence as a physician, is a man of marked æsthetic temperament, experimented on himself, and published a very interesting record of the brilliant visions by which he was visited under the influence of the plant. In the spring of the past year I was able to obtain a small sample of mescal in London, and as my first experiment with mescal was also, apparently, the first attempt to investigate its vision-producing properties outside America,\* I will describe it in some detail, in preference to drawing on the previously published descriptions of the American observers.

On Good Friday I found myself entirely alone in the quiet rooms in the Temple which I occupy when in London, and judged the occasion a fitting one for a personal experiment. I made a decoction (a different method from that adopted in America) of three buttons, the

\* Lewin, of Berlin, indeed, experimented with *Anhalonium Lewinii*, to which he gave its name, as early as 1888, and as he found that even a small portion produced dangerous symptoms, he classed it amongst the extremely poisonous drugs, like strychnia. He failed to discover its vision-producing properties, and it seems, in fact, highly probable that he was really experimenting with a different cactus from that now known by the same name.

full physiological dose, and drank this at intervals between 2.30 and 4.30 P.M. The first symptom observed during the afternoon was a certain consciousness of energy and intellectual power.\* This passed off, and about an hour after the final dose I felt faint and unsteady; the pulse was low, and I found it pleasanter to lie down. I was still able to read, and I noticed that a pale violet shadow floated over the page around the point at which my eyes were fixed. I had already noticed that objects not in the direct line of vision, such as my hands holding the book, showed a tendency to look obtrusive, heightened in colour, almost monstrous, while, on closing my eyes, after-images were vivid and prolonged. The appearance of visions with closed eyes was very gradual. At first there was merely a vague play of light and shade, which suggested pictures, but never made them. Then the pictures became more definite, but too confused and crowded to be described, beyond saying that they were of the same character as the images of the kaleidoscope, symmetrical groupings of spiked objects. Then, in the course of the evening, they became distinct, but still indescribable—mostly a vast field of golden jewels, studded with red and green stones, ever changing. This moment was, perhaps, the most delightful of the experience, for at the same time the air around me seemed to be flushed with vague perfume—producing with the visions a delicious effect—and all discomfort had vanished, except a slight faintness and tremor of the hands, which, later on, made it almost impossible to guide a pen as I made notes of the experiment; it was, however, with an effort, always possible to write with a pencil. The visions never resembled familiar objects; they were extremely definite, but yet always novel; they were constantly approaching, and yet constantly eluding, the semblance of known things. I would see thick glorious fields of jewels, solitary or clustered, sometimes brilliant and sparkling, sometimes with a dull rich glow. Then they would spring up into flower-like shapes beneath my gaze, and then seem to turn into gorgeous butterfly forms or endless folds of glistening, iridescent, fibrous wings of wonderful insects; while sometimes I seemed to be gazing into a vast hollow revolving vessel, on whose polished concave mother-of-pearl surface the hues were swiftly changing. I was surprised, not only by the enormous profusion of the imagery presented to my gaze, but still more by its variety. Perpetually some totally new kind of effect would appear in the field of vision; sometimes there was swift movement, sometimes dull, sombre richness of colour, sometimes glitter and sparkle, once a startling rain of gold, which seemed to approach me. Most usually there was a combination of rich sober colour, with jewel-like points of brilliant hue. Every colour and tone

\* I pass lightly over the purely physiological symptoms which I have described in some detail in a paper on "The Phenomena of Mescal Intoxication" (*Lancet*, June 5, 1897), which, however, contains no description of the visions.

conceivable to me appeared at some time or another. Sometimes all the different varieties of one colour, as of red—with scarlets, crimsons, pinks—would spring up together, or in quick succession. But in spite of this immense profusion, there was always a certain parsimony and æsthetic value in the colours presented. They were usually associated with form, and never appeared in large masses, or, if so, the tone was very delicate. I was further impressed, not only by the brilliance, delicacy, and variety of the colours, but even more by their lovely and various texture—fibrous, woven, polished, glowing, dull, veined, semi-transparent—the glowing effects, as of jewels, and the fibrous, as of insects' wings, being perhaps the most prevalent. Although the effects were novel, it frequently happened, as I have already mentioned, that they vaguely recalled known objects. Thus, once the objects presented to me seemed to be made of exquisite porcelain, again they were like elaborate sweetmeats, again of a somewhat Maori style of architecture, and the background of the pictures frequently recalled, both in form and tone, the delicate architectural effects, as of lace carved in wood, which we associate with the *mouchrabieh* work of Cairo. But always the visions grew and changed without any reference to the characteristics of those real objects of which they vaguely reminded me, and when I tried to influence their course it was with very little success. On the whole, I should say that the images were most usually what might be called living arabesques. There was often a certain incomplete tendency to symmetry, as though the underlying mechanism was associated with a large number of polished facets. The same image was in this way frequently repeated over a large part of the field; but this refers more to form than to colour, in respect to which there would still be all sorts of delightful varieties, so that if, with a certain uniformity, jewel-like flowers were springing up and expanding all over the field of vision, they would still show every variety of delicate tone and tint.

Weir Mitchell found that he could only see the visions with closed eyes and in a perfectly dark room. I could see them in the dark with almost equal facility, though they were not of equal brilliancy, when my eyes were wide open. I saw them best, however, when my eyes were closed, in a room lighted only by flickering firelight. This evidently accords with the experience of the Indians, who keep a fire burning brightly throughout their mescal rites.

The visions continued with undiminished brilliance for many hours, and, as I felt somewhat faint and muscularly weak, I went to bed, as I undressed being greatly impressed by the red, scaly, bronzed, and pigmented appearance of my limbs whenever I was not directly gazing at them. I had not the faintest desire for sleep; there was a general hyperæsthesia of all the senses as well as muscular irritability, and every slightest sound seemed magnified to startling dimensions. I

may also have been kept awake by a vague alarm at the novelty of my condition, and the possibility of further developments.

After watching the visions in the dark for some hours I became a little tired of them and turned on the gas. Then I found that I was able to study a new series of visual phenomena, to which previous observers had made no reference. The gas jet (an ordinary flickering burner) seemed to burn with great brilliance, sending out waves of light, which expanded and contracted in an enormously exaggerated manner. I was even more impressed by the shadows, which were in all directions heightened by flushes of red, green, and especially violet. The whole room, with its white-washed but not very white ceiling, thus became vivid and beautiful. The difference between the room as I saw it then and the appearance it usually presents to me was the difference one may often observe between the picture of a room and the actual room. The shadows I saw were the shadows which the artist puts in, but which are not visible in the actual scene under normal conditions of casual inspection. I was reminded of the paintings of Claude Monet, and as I gazed at the scene it occurred to me that mescal perhaps produces exactly the same conditions of visual hyperæsthesia, or rather exhaustion, as may be produced on the artist by the influence of prolonged visual attention. I wished to ascertain how the subdued and steady electric light would influence vision, and passed into the next room; but here the shadows were little marked, although walls and floor seemed tremulous and insubstantial, and the texture of everything was heightened and enriched.

About 3.30 A.M. I felt that the phenomena were distinctly diminishing—though the visions, now chiefly of human figures, fantastic and Chinese in character, still continued—and I was able to settle myself to sleep, which proved peaceful and dreamless. I awoke at the usual hour and experienced no sense of fatigue, nor other unpleasant reminiscence of the experience I had undergone. Only my eyes seemed unusually sensitive to colour, especially to blue and violet; I can, indeed, say that ever since this experience I have been more æsthetically sensitive than I was before to the more delicate phenomena of light and shade and colour.

It occurred to me that it would be interesting to have the experiences of an artist under the influence of mescal, and I induced an artist friend to make a similar experiment. Unfortunately no effects whatever were produced at the first attempt, owing, as I have since discovered, to the fact that the buttons had only been simply infused and their virtues not extracted. To make sure of success the experiment was repeated with four buttons, which proved to be an excessive and unpleasant dose. There were paroxysmal attacks of pain at the heart and a sense of imminent death, which naturally alarmed the subject, while so great was the dread of light and dilatation of the pupils that the eyelids had to be kept more or less closed, though it

was evident that a certain amount of vision was still possible. The symptoms came on very suddenly, and when I arrived they were already at their height. As the experiences of this subject were in many respects very unlike mine, I will give them in his own words: "I noticed first that as I happened to turn my eyes away from a blue enamel kettle at which I had been unconsciously looking, and which was standing in the fender of the fireplace, with no fire in it, it seemed to me that I saw a spot of the same blue in the black coals of the grate, and that this spot appeared again, further off, a little brighter in hue. But I was in doubt whether I had not imagined these blue spots. When, however, I lifted my eyes to the mantel-piece, on which were scattered all sorts of odds and ends, all doubt was over. I saw an intensely vivid blue light begin to play around every object. A square cigarette-box, violet in colour, shone like an amethyst. I turned my eyes away, and beheld this time, on the back of a polished chair, a bar of colour glowing like a ruby. Although I was expecting some such manifestation as one of the first symptoms of the intoxication, I was nevertheless somewhat alarmed when this phenomenon took place. Such a silent and sudden illumination of all things around, where a moment before I had seen nothing uncommon, seemed like a kind of madness beginning from outside me, and its strangeness affected me more than its beauty. A desire to escape from it led me to the door, and the act of moving had, I noticed, the effect of dispelling the colours. But a sudden difficulty in breathing and a sensation of numbness at the heart brought me back to the arm-chair from which I had risen. From this moment I had a series of attacks or paroxysms, which I can only describe by saying that I felt as though I were dying. It was impossible to move, and it seemed almost impossible to breathe. My speedy dissolution, I half imagined, was about to take place, and the power of making any resistance to the violent sensations that were arising within was going, I felt, with every second.

"The first paroxysms were the most violent. They would come on with tinglings in the lower limbs, and with the sensation of a nauseous and suffocating gas mounting up into my head. Two or three times this was accompanied by a colour vision of the gas bursting into flame as it passed up my throat. But I seldom had visions during the paroxysms; these would appear in the intervals. They began with a spurting up of colours; once, of a flood of brightly illuminated green water covering the field of vision, and effervescing in parts, just as when fresh water with all the air-bubbles is pumped into a swimming bath. At another time my eye seemed to be turning into a vast drop of dirty water in which millions of minute creatures resembling tadpoles were in motion. But the early visions consisted mostly of a furious succession of coloured arabesques, arising and descending or sliding at every possible angle into the field of view. It would be as



difficult as to give a description of the whirl of water at the bottom of a waterfall as to describe the chaos of colour and design which marked this period.

"Now also began another series of extraordinary sensations. They set in with bewildering suddenness and followed one another in rapid succession. These I now record as they occur to my mind at haphazard: (1) My right leg became suddenly heavy and solid; it seemed indeed as if the entire weight of my body had shifted into one part, about the thigh and knee, and that the rest of my body had lost all substantiality. (2) With the suddenness of a neuralgic pang, the back of my head seemed to open and emit streams of bright colour; this was immediately followed by the feeling as of a draught blowing like a gale through the hair in the same region. (3) At one moment the colour, green, acquired a taste in my mouth; it was sweetish and somewhat metallic. Blue, again, would have a taste that seemed to recall phosphorus. These are the only colours that seemed to be connected with taste. (4) A feeling of delightful relief and preternatural lightness about my forehead, succeeded by a growing sensation of contraction. (5) Singing in one of my ears. (6) A sensation of burning heat in the palm of my left hand. (7) Heat about both eyes. The last continued throughout the whole period, except for a moment when I had a sensation of cold upon the eyelids, accompanied with a colour vision of the wrinkled lid, of the skin disappearing from the brow, of dead flesh, and finally of a skull.

"Throughout these sensations and visions my mind remained not only perfectly clear, but enjoyed, I believe, an unusual lucidity. Certainly I was conscious of an odd contrast in hearing myself talk rationally with H. E., who had entered the room a short time before, and experiencing at the same moment the wild and extraordinary pranks that were taking place in my body. My reason appeared to be the sole survivor of my being. At times I felt that this, too, would go, but the sound of my own voice would establish again the communication with the outer world of reality.

"Tremors were more or less constant in my lower limbs. Persistent, also, was the feeling of nausea. This, when attended by a feeling of suffocation and a pain at the heart, was relieved by taking brandy, coffee, or biscuit. For muscular exertion I felt neither the wish nor the power. My hands, however, retained their full strength.

"It was painful for me to keep my eyes open above a few seconds; the light of day seemed to fill the room with a blinding glare. Yet every object, in the brief glimpse I caught, appeared normal in colour and shape. With my eyes closed, most of the visions, after the first chaotic display, represented parts or the whole of my body undergoing a variety of marvellous changes, of metamorphoses or illumination. They were more often than not comic and grotesque in character, though often beautiful in colour. At one time I saw my right leg

filling up with a delicate heliotrope; at another the sleeve of my coat changed into a dark green material in which was worked a pattern in red braid, and the whole bordered at the cuff with sable. Scarcely had my new sleeve taken shape than I found myself attired in a complete costume of the same fashion, mediæval in character, but I could not say to what precise period it belonged. I noted that a chance movement—of my hand, for instance—would immediately call up a colour vision of the part exerted, and that this again would pass, by a seemingly natural transition, into another wholly dissimilar. Thus, pressing my fingers accidentally against my temples, the fingertips became elongated, and then grew into the ribs of a vaulting or of a dome-shaped roof. But most of the visions were of a more personal nature. I happened once to lift a spoonful of coffee to my lips, and as I was in the act of raising my arm for that purpose, a vision flashed before my closed (or nearly closed) eyes, in all the hues of the rainbow, of my arm separated from my body, and serving me with coffee from out of dark and indefinite space. On another occasion, as I was seeking to relieve slight nausea by taking a piece of biscuit, passed to me by H. E., it suddenly streamed out into blue flame. For an instant I held the biscuit close to my leg. Immediately my trouser caught alight, and then the whole of the right side of my body, from the foot to the shoulder, was enveloped in waving blue flame. It was a sight of wonderful beauty. But this was not all. As I placed the biscuit in my mouth it burst out again into the same coloured fire and illuminated the interior of my mouth, casting a blue reflection on the roof. The light in the Blue Grotto at Capri, I am able to affirm, is not nearly as blue as seemed for a short space of time the interior of my mouth. There were many visions of which I could not trace the origin. There were spirals and arabesques and flowers, and sometimes objects more trivial and prosaic in character. In one vision I saw a row of small white flowers, one against the other like pearls of a necklace, begin to revolve in the form of a spiral. Every flower, I observed, had the texture of porcelain. It was at a moment when I had the sensation of my cheeks growing hot and feverish that I experienced the strangest of all the colour visions. It began with feeling that the skin of my face was becoming quite thin and of no stouter consistency than tissue paper, and the feeling was suddenly enhanced by a vision of my face, paper-like and semi-transparent and somewhat reddish in colour. To my amazement I saw myself as though I were inside a Chinese lantern, looking *out through my cheek* into the room. Not long after this I became conscious of a change in the visions. Their *tempo* was more moderate, they were less frequent, and they were losing somewhat in distinctness. At the same time the feeling of nausea and of numbness was departing. A short period followed in which I had no visions at all, and experienced merely a sensation of heaviness and torpor. I found that I was able



to open my eyes again and keep them fixed on any object in the room without observing the faintest blue halo or prism, or bar of glowing colour, and that, moreover, no visions appeared on closing them. It was now twilight, but beyond the fact of not seeing light or colour either without or within, I had a distinct feeling that the action of the drug was at an end and that my body had become sober, suddenly. I had no more visions, though I was not wholly free from abnormal sensations, and I retired to rest. I lay awake till the morning, and with the exception of the following night, I scarcely slept for the next three days, but I cannot say that I felt any signs of fatigue, unless, perhaps, on one of the days when my eyes, I noticed, became very susceptible to any indications of blue in an object. Of colour visions, or of any approach to colour visions, there was no further trace; but all sorts of odd and grotesque images passed in succession through my mind during part of the first night. They might have been the dreams of a Baudelaire or of an Aubrey Beardsley. I would see figures with prodigious limbs, or strangely dwarfed and curtailed, or impossible combinations such as five or six fish, the colour of canaries, floating about in air in a gold wire cage. But these were purely mental images, like the visions seen in a dream by a distempered brain.

"Of the many sensations of which my body had been the theatre during three hours, not the least strange was the feeling I experienced on coming back into a normal condition. The recovery did not proceed gradually, but the whole outer and inner world of reality came back, as it were, with a bound. And for a moment it seemed strange. It was the sensation—only much intensified—which every one has known on coming out into the light of day from an afternoon performance at a theatre, where one has sat in an artificial light of gas and lamps, the spectator of a fictitious world of action. As one pours out with the crowd into the street, the ordinary world, by force of contrast with the sensational scenes just witnessed, breaks in upon one with almost a sense of unreality. The house, the aspect of the street, even the light of day appear a little foreign for a few moments. During these moments everything strikes the mind as odd and unfamiliar, or at least with a greater degree of objectivity. Such was my feeling with regard to my old and habitual self. During the period of intoxication, the connection between the normal condition of my body and my intelligence had broken—my body had become in a manner a stranger to my reason—so that now on reasserting itself it seemed, with reference to my reason, which had remained perfectly sane and alert, for a moment sufficiently unfamiliar for me to become conscious of its individual and peculiar character. It was as if I had unexpectedly attained an objective knowledge of my own personality. I saw, as it were, my normal state of being with the eyes of a person who sees the street on coming out of the theatre in broad day.

"This sensation also brought out the independence of the mind during the period of intoxication. It alone appeared to have escaped the ravages of the drug; it alone remained sane during a general delirium, vindicating, so it seemed, the majesty of its own impersonal nature. It had reigned for a while, I now felt, as an autocrat, without ministers and their officiousness. Henceforth I should be more or less conscious of the interdependence of body and brain; a slight headache, a touch of indigestion, or what not, would be able to effect what a general intoxication of my senses and nerves could not touch."

I next made experiments on two poets, whose names are both well known. One is interested in mystical matters, an excellent subject for visions, and very familiar with various vision-producing drugs and processes. His heart, however, is not very strong. While he obtained the visions, he found the effects of mescal on his breathing somewhat unpleasant; he much prefers haschisch, though recognising that its effects are much more difficult to obtain. The other enjoys admirable health, and under the influence of mescal he experienced scarcely the slightest unpleasant reaction, but, on the contrary, a very marked state of well-being and beatitude. He took somewhat less than three buttons, so that the results were rather less marked than in my case, but they were perfectly definite. He writes: "I have never seen a succession of absolutely pictorial visions with such precision and such unaccountability. It seemed as if a series of dissolving views were carried swiftly before me, all going from right to left, none corresponding with any seen reality. For instance, I saw the most delightful dragons, puffing out their breath straight in front of them like rigid lines of steam, and balancing white balls at the end of their breath! When I tried to fix my mind on real things, I could generally call them up, but always with some inexplicable change. Thus, I called up a particular monument in Westminster Abbey, but in front of it, to the left, knelt a figure in Florentine costume, like some one out of a picture of Botticelli; and I *could not* see the tomb without also seeing this figure. Late in the evening I went out on the Embankment, and was absolutely fascinated by an advertisement of 'Bovril,' which went and came in letters of light on the other side of the river; I cannot tell you the intense pleasure this moving light gave me, and how dazzling it seemed to me. Two girls and a man passed me, laughing loudly, and lolling about as they walked. I realised, intellectually, their coarseness, but visually I saw them, as they came under a tree, fall into the lines of a delicate picture; it might have been an Albert Moore. After coming in I played the piano with closed eyes, and got waves and lines of pure colour, almost always without form, though I saw one or two appearances which might have been shields or breastplates—pure gold, studded with small jewels in intricate patterns. All the time I had no unpleasant

feelings whatever, except a very slight headache, which came and went. I slept soundly and without dreams."

The results of music in the case just quoted—together with the habit of the Indians to combine the drum with mescal rites, and my own observation that very slight jarring or stimulation of the scalp would affect the visions—suggested to me to test the influence of music on myself. I therefore once more put myself under the influence of mescal (taking a somewhat smaller dose than on the first occasion), and lay for some hours on a couch with my head more or less in contact with the piano, and with closed eyes directed towards a subdued light, while a friend played, making various tests, of his own devising, which were not explained to me until afterwards. I was to watch the visions in a purely passive manner, without seeking to direct them, nor was I to think about the music, which, so far as possible, was unknown to me. The music stimulated the visions and added greatly to my enjoyment of them. It seemed to harmonise with them, and, as it were, support and bear them up. A certain persistence and monotony of character in the music was required in order to affect the visions, which then seemed to fall into harmony with it, and any sudden change in the character of the music would blur the visions, as though clouds passed between them and me. The chief object of the tests was to ascertain how far a desire on the composer's part to suggest definite imagery would affect my visions. In about half the cases there was no resemblance, in the other half there was a distinct resemblance which was sometimes very remarkable. This was especially the case with Schumann's music, for example with his *Waldscenen* and *Kinderscenen*; thus "The Prophet Bird" called up vividly a sense of atmosphere and of brilliant feathery bird-like forms passing to and fro; "A Flower Piece" provoked constant and persistent images of vegetation; while "Scheherazade" produced an effect of floating white raiment, covered by glittering spangles and jewels. In every case my description was, of course, given before I knew the name of the piece. I do not pretend that this single series of experiments proves much, but it would certainly be worth while to follow up this indication and to ascertain if any light is hereby thrown on the power of a composer to suggest definite imagery, or the power of a listener to perceive it.

It would be out of place here to discuss the obscure question as to the underlying mechanism by which mescal exerts its magic powers. It is clear from the foregoing descriptions that mescal intoxication may be described as chiefly a saturnalia of the specific senses, and, above all, an orgy of vision. It reveals an optical fairy-land, where all the senses now and again join the play, but the mind itself remains a self-possessed spectator. Mescal intoxication thus differs from the other artificial paradises which drugs procure. Under

the influence of alcohol, for instance, as in normal dreaming, the intellect is impaired, although there may be a consciousness of unusual brilliance; haschisch, again, produces an uncontrollable tendency to movement and bathes its victim in a sea of emotion. The mescal drinker remains calm and collected amid the sensory turmoil around him; his judgment is as clear as in the normal state; he falls into no oriental condition of vague and voluptuous reverie. The reason why mescal is of all this class of drugs the most purely intellectual in its appeal is evidently because it affects mainly the most intellectual of the senses. On this ground it is not probable that its use will easily develop into a habit. Moreover, unlike most other intoxicants, it seems to have no special affinity for a disordered and unbalanced nervous system; on the contrary, it demands organic soundness and good health for the complete manifestation of its virtues.\* Further, unlike the other chief substances to which it may be compared, mescal does not wholly carry us away from the actual world, or plunge us into oblivion; a large part of its charm lies in the halo of beauty which it casts around the simplest and commonest things. It is the most democratic of the plants which lead men to an artificial paradise. If it should ever chance that the consumption of mescal becomes a habit, the favourite poet of the mescal drinker will certainly be Wordsworth. Not only the general attitude of Wordsworth, but many of his most memorable poems and phrases cannot—one is almost tempted to say—be appreciated in their full significance by one who has never been under the influence of mescal. On all these grounds it may be claimed that the artificial paradise of mescal, though less seductive, is safe and dignified beyond its peers.

At the same time it must be remembered that at present we are able to speak on a basis of but very small experience, so far as civilised men are concerned. The few observations recorded in America and my own experiments in England do not enable us to say anything regarding the habitual consumption of mescal in large amounts. That such consumption would be gravely injurious I cannot doubt. Its safeguard seems to lie in the fact that a certain degree of robust health is required to obtain any real enjoyment from its visionary gifts. It may at least be claimed that for a healthy person to be once or twice admitted to the rites of mescal is not only an unforgettable delight but an educational influence of no mean value.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

\* It is true, as many persons do not need to be reminded, that in neurasthenia and states of over-fatigue, symptoms closely resembling the slight and earlier phenomena of mescal intoxication are not uncommon; but in such cases there is rarely any sense of well-being and enjoyment.