

Cannabis Indica Poisoning

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Believing an experience I once had with cannabis indica to be of interest to some of the readers of the *Plexus*, will be my apology for contributing this article.

It has never been the inclination of the writer to indulge the feeling of egotism; and as the pronoun "I" may appear frequently, you will please bear in mind my desire of accurately and truthfully recounting the event as it actually occurred.

Some few years prior to my taking up the study of medicine, I was employed in northwestern Pennsylvania as locomotive engineer on the Bradford, Bordell & Kinzua Railway. My run was to double the road with the way freight.

One day I pulled into Bradford suffering with an attack of acute bronchitis, and, having a few minutes to spare, ran over to a corner drugstore to consult the clerk about my cough. He recommended Piso's Cure for Consumption, and I bought a bottle and returned to my engine.

Taking a mouthful of the cure I completed the shifting of the freight cars in the yard and made up my train for the trip out. This consumed about one-half hour. Before leaving the yard the conductor (George Caswell) came to the engine telling me we had two car loads of cinders in our train and instructed me to stop at "Hard Scoble" that the Italian section hands might unload the cinders.

My cough was very distressing, and so, as we sped along, I made frequent requisition on the bottle. The more I partook the more I had need to partake.

We had covered about seven miles of the road when I

suddenly became aware that I had been dreaming, and that I had forgotten that the responsibility for the safety of the engine and the train rested on my shoulders. The realization of this responsibility shocked me, but did not dispel an illusion that one of my legs was larger than the top of the smoke-stack, my arms like ponderous levers and my hands capable of encircling a flour barrel.

Just then my fireman yelled, "O'Day, what is the matter with you?" and the conductor came clambering over the tender, calling to me to know why I had not stopped at Hard Scrable to allow the unloading of the cinders. About this time I began to realize that I had been imbibing too freely of *Piso's Cure*, and made a desperate effort to concentrate my mind on my work. I reversed my engine and backed away toward the dumping spot. Looking back I was astonished to find that my train appeared to be more than a mile long, and that the Italian shovelers on the loads of cinders were expanding into enormous misty phantoms.

The sight unnerved me, and I again forgot to stop at Hard Scrable. So wrapped up in the novelty of my new surroundings was I that I forgot my place at the lever until the conductor came forward the second time and told the fireman I must be going crazy. This sobered me somewhat and the ashes were at last dumped at the desired place.

Before starting again I began to wander away into a land of giants and monsters, and fearing that some erratic impulse might seize me I told the fireman to watch me closely and to take charge of the engine if he saw anything wrong with me.

As I responded to the signal to go ahead, I noticed the great length of my engine. The telegraph poles shot upward until their cross arms pierced the blue vault above. Dogs as large as Durham bulls ran out and barked at us as we passed. Flocks of English sparrows with spread of wing greater than the condor rose from the road-bed and flew away. I had run over the road day and night for some years, until I knew every whistling post, but things did not have the old familiar look, and I could not tell whether I was running up grade or down, and was curious to see what the next curve would reveal. The cab grew to enormous proportions, and the fireman stood at his post more than one hundred feet away.

After what seemed to be days of running, and when we had covered what seemed hundreds of miles of track, I began

to realize that we were nearing Kinzua Junction, and I slowed up.

The effects of the drug were wearing away and were soon gone, so that I knew how to handle my engine, and persons and objects shrank down to their old proportions.

The intoxication did not last more than three-quarters of an hour.

When a student of medicine in Baltimore, I ran across Prof. H. C. Wood's classic description of cannabis *indica* intoxication, as experienced by himself, and immediately attributed my peculiar sensations and illusions to hemp in the Cure for Consumption.

A medical journal published in India has recently made very free use of Dr. Wood's article in describing the effects of the drug on its habitues, who, it claims, are becoming very numerous in that country.

