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Review of the Book of Lies

Liber CCCXXXIII. The Book of Lies, which is also falsely called Breaks. The Wanderings or Falsifications of the one Thought of Frater Perdurabo, which Thought is itself untrue. 5 in. x 3 1/2 in., pp. 116. London: Wieland and Co., 33, Avenue Studios, S. Kensington. Price 21s. net.

I am not at all sure what is the meaning (assuming there to be one) of this fantastic book by Mr. Aleister Crowley. Some of its chapters (of which there are ninety-one, varying in length from one word to a page and a half) seem entire nonsense, but in others I can discern something of a philosophy which is the negation of philosophy—a philosophy (if it may be so termed) which regards thought as the excrement of mind and symptomatic of disease, and reason as foolishness, and whose ethics may be summed up in two sentences: (i) Do as you please, (ii) Strive to be annihilated, for therein only is lasting bliss to be found. Certainly such philosophy as this is a lie, if that is the meaning of the title.

But, indeed, I am inclined to regard the book rather as a fantastic and elaborate joke; and I can imagine its author laughing at the thought of its readers striving to extract a profound meaning at the following: "Asana destroys the static body (Nama). Pranayama destroys the dynamic body (Rupa). Yama destroys the emotions (Vedana). Niyama destroys the passions. Dharana destroys the perceptions (Sañña). Dhyana destroys the tendencies (Sankhara). Samhadi destroys the consciousness (Viññanam). Homard à la Themindor destroys the digestion. The last of these facts is the one of which I am most certain." But I do not think Mr. Crowley's humour is always in the best taste, nor can I always see the point of his jokes, and at times his words and suggestions seem quite deliberately and unnecessarily blasphemous and objectionable. I regard sexual symbolism as a valid method of expression; but I like it unperverted. And certainly the joke is not on the side of the reader who, purchasing this book, finds that he has paid for it at the rate of over fourpence per leaf. There is an errata slip inserted at the page from which I have just quoted correcting

the spelling of "Themindor" to "Thermidor," which commences by informing us that "It seems absurd [to have an errata slip], as the whole of the book is a misprint: however—Shall we let the book pass as that? Perhaps the price is also a misprint!

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