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BOOKS AND BOOKMEN.

“Diary of a Drug Fiend”

The Diary of a Drug Fiend by Aleister Crowley: E. P. Dutton and Co., publishers, New York.

A book that possesses the very qualities of the drugs that it describes is Aleister Crowley's "The Diary of a Drug Fiend." Dazzling, exhilarating, fascinating, insidious, agonizing, terrible beyond words except those of a master writer, and dangerous. A book that you wouldn't miss reading yourself for anything, and yet the kind that you feel ought to be suppressed, if you are one of the believers in censorship.

It is a true story disguised as a novel, and it is a story with a purpose. The story itself isn't dangerous, it is the avowed purpose that is a bit staggering to any but those who are extremists in the personal liberty theory. This purpose is to create supermen by the process of encouraging the use, perhaps the abuse, and the final conquest of habit forming drugs. It is the story of a newly wedded pair, darlings of the gods in every material sense, so pampered that one has failed to find, and the other has drifted away from the fulfillment of their "true wills." They slip thoughtlessly into the indulgence in a little cocaine. They are swept off their feet by the ecstasy of it. There follows a "cocaine honeymoon" which carries the reader with a rush up in the clouds through days of hectic joy. Then the other side of the picture, when they have returned London, physical wrecks, deprived of both cocaine and heroin; the unspeakable suffering and degradation into which they sink; their utter surrender to drugs: and their demonical efforts to procure them; and finally comes the cure.

It is the last part of the volume devoted to the story of the cure that Aleister Crowley airs his theories and his philosophies. It is here that you get to know the author. Frank Crowninshield, editor of Vanity Fair writes of him that he is "one of the extraordinary Britishers—poet, explorer, mountain climber, adept in esoteric philosophy. As a naked yogi he has sat for days un-

der the Indian sun begging his rice. . . . Like every true magician he has experimented with hundreds of strange poisons." And in this colorful, exotic, incense-laden, portion of the book, a great deal that Mr. Crowley has lived, is experienced vicariously by the reader.

The young people of the story are cured, not so much by the material method of diminished doses, but by the orientation of their inner selves to a goal, an ideal in life: by the building up of purposes, and the will to do the things that they discover they were meant to do. So far so good. But when they are about to leave the abbey where their cure has been effected, they receive the following advice—

"The taking of a drug should be a carefully thought out, a purposeful religious act. Experience alone can teach you the right conditions in which the act is legitimate, that is when it assists you to do your will. . . . A golfer would be very foolish to leave his mashie out of his bag because at one time he got too fond of it and used it improperly, and lost matches in consequence. Now in regard to you and Lou, I can't see that she has any particular occasion for using these drugs. She can do her will perfectly well without them. But there may be occasions in your work when a little more could be added to your energy by a judicious dose of cocaine and the cumulative forces of inertia overcome by a little heroin. . . ." This is probably the part that made "The Diary of a Drug Fiend" a storm centre in London, and caused some critics to cry "Burn the Book" while others call it a work of genius that will rank with DeQuincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater."