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London News Letter

Mr. Aleister Crowley, whose numerous works have mostly been published by himself and are not easily obtainable, has now appeared in the autumn list of one of our best-known and respected publishing houses—Messrs. Collins. The title of his book is "The Diary of a Drug Fiend," and in it Mr. Crowley describes with great minuteness of detail the effects of cocaine, heroin and morphia. His hero, Peter Pendragon, is an airman who finds himself after the war with a knighthood and a fortune, but handicapped by the "disease of thinking." Of this disease he determines to cure himself, and as a first step he takes a sniff of cocaine at a night club. Later, he meets a kindred spirit of the opposite sex and they decide that what they have to do is to lay in a stock of cocaine, get married as quickly as possible and "go away and have a glorious time for ever and ever." With singular lack of originality they go to Paris for their cocaine honeymoon and this is what the drug does for them: "We hardly troubled to eat. We hardly knew what we were eating. We didn't seem to need sleep. We never got tired. . . . I wish to emphasize the fact that cocaine is in reality a local anaesthetic; that is the actual explanation of its action. One cannot feel one's body. . . . Don't imagine that this means that the physical pleasures are diminished. The animal part of one is intensely stimulated, so far as its own action is concerned, but the feeling that this passion is animal is completely transmuted. . . . One becomes absolutely reckless. One is bounding with health and bubbling with high spirits. . . . Until you get your mouth full of cocaine you don't know what kissing is. . . . You're on fourth speed all the time, and the engine purrs like a kitten, a big white kitten, with the stars in its whiskers.

After this they try heroin, which is apparently an enemy of love, and then cocaine and heroin mixed. But Peter has to be redeemed (whether to please the author or to satisfy Messrs. Collin is not certain) and to affect his salvation Mr. Crowley sends him to an ideal spot called Thelema, where the inhabitants live on caviare and Benedictine! This book is decidedly

one of the "Curiosities of literature," and since it is not "improper" in the conventional sense of the word, I suppose it will not occur to any of the authorities to ban it.