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BOOKS OF THE DAY.

THE DANGERS OF DRUGS.

The Diary of a Drug Fiend. By Aleister Crowley. W. Collins, Sons and Co., London. (7s. 6d. net.)

The habit of taking drugs indiscriminately has assumed such proportions that it is time the effect of "dope"—the danger, the degradation, the disaster—were universally exposed. Cocaine, heroin, and morphine, the drugs usually associated with "dopers," have their uses; but, taken for the momentary pleasures they excite, they are venomous; they arouse cravings which are insatiable; they dull the senses and drag down to wretchedness and misery those who fly to them for temporary relief. Aleister Crowley might have done a service to the community had he dealt principally with this phase of drugs and their effects, but in the sections of this book entitled, "Paridiso" and "Inferno," he has presented facts and fancies (written in indifferent language, sometimes with repulsive details), which would have been better never written. My first impulse was to quote some of the descriptions of the sordid scenes and depraved tastes to which he refers. On second thoughts I determined to forget them and to touch briefly on one or two points which might deter those for whom cocaine, heroin, or morphia may have a fascination. He writes: "Cocaine . . . is merely Dutch courage . . . all caution is utterly abrogated. . . . One becomes absolutely reckless. . . . It is a blind experiment. . . . One's sense of proportion is gone . . . it is impossible to take it in moderation. . . . It destroys one's powers of calculation."

Perhaps one should stress a redeeming feature. The author admits that (under the influence of the drug), "I have described things with absolute confidence which could not possibly have taken place." Read in that light, the book is less harmful. The author continues: "Waves of weakness washed over us as if we were corpses cast up by the sea from a shipwreck. A shipwreck of our souls. And in these hideous hours of helplessness, we drifted down the dark and sluggish river of inertia towards the

stagnant and stinking morass of insanity." The third and last section of the book, "Purgatorio," describes how the craving was overcome, after torture, pain, anguish, and crises. The story, robbed of its vulgarisms is passable; there are some strong characters in the book; but in the hands of some (especially if the first portion only is read) it might become a source of danger.

G. H. H.