

THE INFERNO. By AUGUST STRINDBERG. Translated by CLAUD FIELD. William Rider & Son.

I HAVE already had to speak to publishers about cheap production. In this case I must protest emphatically against the employment of a translator who makes a solecism nearly every time he touches Paris.

*E.g.* 'northern railway station' for 'Gare du Nord,' 'Lilas brewery' for 'Closerie des Lilas,' 'St. Martin's Gate' for 'Porte St. Martin,' 'Rue de Fleurs' for 'Rue des Fleurs,' 'racecourse' for some unindicated part of the Jardin du Luxembourg, 'churchyard' of Montparnasse for 'cemetery,' 'exhibition of independent artists' for 'Salon des Independents,' 'Bullier's dancing saloon' for 'Bal Bullier,' 'Lyons Bank' for 'Credit Lyonnais,' 'St. Germain des Pres' for 'St. Germain des Pres,' 'Dr. Popus' for 'Dr. Papus,' 'Rue de Madame' for 'Rue Madame,' and so on.

He puts the same place-name—first in translation, then in French, again and again; and as often as not gets both wrong!

The constant chemical absurdities are perhaps Strindberg's own and may have been made intentionally, as the book portrays the ravings of a melancholic with delusions of persecution.

What sublime and septuple ass calls this Strindberg's autobiography? Strindberg was too lazy to find his incidents in other people's lives; that is all.

And yet we find the translator note at the end: "Strindberg never actually entered the Roman Church"!!!

The book is a perfect clinical picture of a typical case. Chapter I describes the irritability, the fantastic dreams. He imagines himself a great author, a great chemist. He has found carbon in sulphur; he will make gold.

In Chapter II he begins to see omens in simple incidents, receives "warnings" from strangers, finds a plot

against him at his hotel, notices remarkable resemblances between his neighbours and some of his "persecutors."

Chapter III develops the persecution-delusions. Roaring in the ears, electric shocks, and other physical symptoms develop. The bedstead has knobs like those of a leyden jar, the spring mattress suggests induction coils, and so on—to the end!

For refuge he ranges from Papus to Swedenborg, and ultimately, as his mental disease increases on him, he clutches at such straws as Péladan, Annie Besant, and the Church of Rome.

In this dementia the book ends. But Strindberg did not end. He went his cheerful and polygamous way as a free-thinker. Persons who pretend otherwise are liars, probably hired liars—unless, of course, they are Englishmen, who are such natural-born fools in all matters of the soul that they not only require no bribe to lie, but can hardly be paid to see truth.

Until Strindberg's life is utterly dissociated from his art, the latter will not be truly valued.

A.C.