

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE
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NEW NOVELS.

A DRUG WARNING.

"The Diary of a Drug Fiend." By Aleister Crowley. (Collins.) 7s. 6d. net.

Mr. Aleister Crowley is one of those honest novelists who don't mind confessing that their chief end is propaganda—in fact, this book may be said to have two distinct missions to preach. It is not only a ghastly warning against taking drugs just for the fun of them (if we are sure enough of our self-control we may apparently take them for the sake of our minds), but also a tract on the way of salvation in general.

Mr. Crowley bravely calls the three sections of his story Paradiso, Inferno, Purgatorio. During the Paradiso, Sir Peter Pen-dragon and his wife are falling in love with one another and having a honeymoon on heroin and cocaine in Paris. They have, in any case, rather bad taste in life, which naturally is not improved by cocaine, so this section is chiefly a record of night clubs and the relative merits of the two drugs. During the Inferno they lose such moral sense as they ever had, and go through all the notorious agonies of the drug slave who cannot get his dope regularly. During the Purgatorio they are rescued on the brink of suicide and transferred, through the agency of a mysterious being known to his disciples as Big Lion, to a retreat called the Abbey of Thelema. Here they lead the simple life; they are restored to sanity, and learn to live by the law "Do what you will," which is the community's rule.

We are told by Mr. Crowley in a Note to Section III, that the account of the Abbey is founded on fact, and that readers who wish to join such a community should apply to him. We may say, for their benefit, that Big Lion's system of training involves just the same disgusting struggle with oneself as any other method of saving one's soul.

The characters of the tale are nothing but puppets chosen to point a moral, but the horrors of drug-taking are most vividly portrayed, and as a warning against this particular form of vice the book is excellent, because it makes the whole thing so boring.