

Aleister Crowley's Introduction to
The Whirlpool, by Ethel Archer

In the waste horror of the Bralduh Nala, just before it opens out into the valley of Askole, is the hot spring. A perfect circle; water like a beryl, crowned with light sulphurous steam, the wall a mound like the breast of a woman of purest white, an efflorescence.

It is the hell of sterile passion glowing in the heart of the hell of desolation.

So also is this book. The intricacy of faery pattern which the witch weaves is the flowered marble. We find such rime-webs as *abaaab-babbba* and *AaBCcAaBCcAaBC* and *bAbAcBcBAcCDaADA*, more exquisite than all the arabesques of the Alhambra.

The limpidity of thought and expression alike is the aquamarine of the pool: "Like foam-flowers falling from the breasts of Sleep their Lotus-kiss is," languid as Sappho writhing to the breeze of Leucadia, under a rain of roseleaves.

The hot angry famine and pestilence of the soul is the sulphur of the spring and the poisonous mist that plays upon it. "Come, Love, nor list to tired dreams that twist thy lithe long limbs in fierce abandonment," fierce as Pasiphae in Edmond d'Haraucourt's secret masterpiece; all the joyous torture of the damned in a phrase.

Dear lady, when this flask of perfume comes from the bookseller, you shall tire your hair, and paint your face, and gild your nails; you shall anoint yourself with the witch-ointment, and in the rosy twilight touch with a flame the pastilles of musk and ambergris. Then you lie upon the leopard's skin before the fire of sandalwood and read, and read.

And you shall know strange devils; even, it may be, strange gods.

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