

*The Diary of a
Drug Fiend*

By Aleister Crowley

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Editor's Notes

This work was released in 1922.

Drug Addiction was not a well-known topic when the Occult Icon Aleister Crowley released this shocking book on drug use.

We have not changed the antiquated spellings of words that would today be spelled slightly differently.

TO ALOSTRAEL

Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal in the
Abbey of Thelema in "Telepylus," and to

ASTARTE LULU PANTHEA

its youngest member, I dedicate this story
of its Herculean labours toward releasing
Mankind from every form of bondage.

PREFACE

This is a true story.

It has been rewritten only so far as was necessary to conceal personalities.

It is a terrible story; but it is also a story of hope and of beauty.

It reveals with startling clearness the abyss on which our civilisation trembles.

But the self-same Light illuminates the path of humanity: it is our own fault if we go over the brink.

This story is also true not only of one kind of human weakness, but (by analogy) of all kinds; and for all alike there is but one way of salvation.

As Glanvil says: Man is not subjected to the angels, nor even unto death utterly, save through the weakness of his own feeble will.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

- ALEISTER CROWLEY.

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THE DIARY OF A DRUG FIEND

BOOK I
PARADISO

CHAPTER I

A KNIGHT OUT

Yes, I certainly was feeling depressed.

I don't think that this was altogether the reaction of the day. Of course, there always is a reaction after the excitement of a flight ; but the effect is more physical than moral. One doesn't talk. One lies about and smokes and drinks champagne.

No, I was feeling quite a different kind of rotten. I looked at my mind, as the better class of flying man soon learns to do, and I really felt ashamed of myself. Take me for all in all, I was one of the luckiest men alive.

War is like a wave; some it rolls over, some it drowns, some it beats to pieces on the shingle; but some it shoots far up the shore on to glistening golden sand out of the reach of any further freaks of fortune.

Let me explain.

My name is Peter Pendragon. My father was a second son; and he had quarrelled with my Uncle Mortimer when they were boys. He was a struggling general practitioner in Norfolk, and had not made things any better for himself by marrying.

However, he scraped together enough to get me some sort of education, and at the outbreak of the war I was twenty-two years old and had just passed my Intermediate for M.D. in the University of London.

Then, as I said, the wave came. My mother went out for the Red Cross, and died in the first year of the war. Such was the confusion that I did not even know about it till over six months later.

My father died of influenza just before the Armistice.

I had gone into the air service ; did pretty well, though somehow I was never sure either of myself or of my machine. My squadron commander used to tell me that I should never make a great airman.

" Old thing," he said, " you lack the instinct," qualifying the noun with an entirely meaningless adjective which somehow succeeded in making his sentence highly illuminating.

" Where you get away with it," he said, " is that you have an analytic brain."

Well, I suppose I have. That's how I come to be writing this up. Anyhow, at the end of the war I found myself with a knighthood which I still firmly believe to have been due to a clerical error on the part of some official.

As for Uncle Mortimer, he lived on in his crustacean way; a sulky, rich, morose, old bachelor. We never heard a word of him.

And then, about a year ago, he died ; and I found to my amazement that I was sole heir to his five or six thousand a year, and the owner of Barley Grange ; which is really an awfully nice place in Kent, quite near enough to be convenient for the prosperous young man about town which I had become ; and for the best of it, a piece of artificial water quite large enough for me to use for a waterdrome for my seaplane.

I may not have the instinct for flying, as Cartwright said ; but it's the only sport I care about.

Golf? When one has flown over a golf course, those people do look such appalling rotters! Such pigmy solemnities !

Now about my feeling depressed. When the end of the war came, when I found myself penniless, out of a job, utterly spoilt by the war (even if I had had the money) for going on with my hospital, I had developed an entirely new psychology. You know how it feels when you are fighting duels in the air, you seem to be detached from everything. There is nothing in the Universe but you and the Boche you are trying to pot. There is something detached and god-like about it.

And when I found myself put out on the streets by a grateful country, I became an entirely different animal. In fact, I've often thought that there isn't any "I" at all ; that we are simply the means of expression of something else; that when we think we are ourselves, we are simply the victims of a delusion.

Well, bother that I The plain fact is that I had become a desperate wild animal. I was too hungry, so to speak, even to waste any time on thinking bitterly about things.

And then came the letter from the lawyers.

That was another new experience. I had no idea before of the depths to which servility could descend.

" By the way, Sir Peter," said Mr. Wolfe, " it will, of course, take a little while to settle up these matters. It's a very large estate, very large. But I thought that

with times as they are, you wouldn't be offended, Sir Peter, if we handed you an open cheque for a thousand pounds just to go on with."

It wasn't till I had got outside his door that I realised how badly he wanted my business. He need not have worried. He had managed poor old Uncle Mortimer's affairs well enough all those years; not likely I should bother to put them in the hands of a new man.

The thing that really pleased me about the whole business was the clause in the will. That old crab had sat in his club all through the war, snapping at everybody he saw ; and yet he had been keeping track of what I was doing. He said in the will that he had made me his heir "for the splendid services I had rendered to our beloved country in her hour of need."

That's the true Celtic psychology. When we've all finished talking, there's something that never utters a word, but goes right down through the earth, plumb to the centre.

And now comes the funny part of the business. I discovered to my amazement that the desperate wild animal hunting his job had been after all a rather happy animal in his way, just as the desperate god battling in the air, playing pitch and toss with life and death, had been happy.

Neither of those men could be depressed by mis-fortune; but the prosperous young man about town was a much inferior creature. Everything more or less bored him, and he was quite definitely irritated by an overdone cutlet. The night I met Lou, I turned into the Cafe' Wisteria in a sort of dull, angry stupor. Yet the only irritating incident of the day had been a letter from the lawyers which I had found at my club after flying from Norfolk to Barley Grange and motoring up to town.

Mr. Wolfe had very sensibly advised me to make a settlement of a part of the estate, as against the event of my getting married; and there was some stupid hitch about getting trustees.

I loathe law. It seems to me as if it were merely an elaborate series of obstacles to doing things sensibly. And yet, of course, after all, one must have formalities, just as in flying you have to make arrangements for starting and stopping. But it is a beastly nuisance to have to attend to them.

I thought I would stand myself a little dinner. I hadn't quite enough sense to know that what I really wanted was human companions. There aren't such things. Every man is eternally alone. But when you

get mixed up with a fairly decent crowd, you forget that appalling fact for long enough to give your brain time to recover from the acute symptoms of its disease -that of thinking.

My old commander was right. I think a lot too much; so did Shakespeare. That's what worked him up to write those wonderful things about sleep. I've forgotten what they were; but they impressed me at the time. I said to myself, "This old bird knew how dreadful it is to be conscious."

So, when I turned into the cafe', I think the real reason was that I hoped to find somebody there, and talk the night out. People think that talking is a sign of thinking. It isn't, for the most part ; on the contrary, it's a mechanical dodge of the body to relieve oneself of the strain of thinking, just as exercising the muscles helps the body to become temporarily unconscious of its weight, its pain, its weariness, and the foreknowledge of its doom.

You see what gloomy thoughts a fellow can have, even when he's Fortune's pet. It's a disease of civilisation. We're in an intermediate stage between the stupor of the peasant and-something that is not yet properly developed.

I went into the cafe' and sat down at one of the marble tables. I had a momentary thrill of joy-it reminded me of France so much-of all those days of ferocious gambling with Death.

I couldn't see a soul I knew. But at least I knew by sight the two men at the next table. Every one knew that gray ferocious wolf-a man built in every line for battle, and yet with a forehead which lifted him clean out of the turmoil. The conflicting elements in his nature had played the devil with him. Jack Fordham was his name. At sixty years of age he was still the most savage and implacable of publicists. "Red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson said. Yet the man had found time to write great literature ; and his rough and tumble with the world had not degraded his thought or spoiled his style.

Sitting next him was a weak, good-natured, working journalist named Vernon Gibbs. He wrote practically the whole of a weekly paper-had done, year after year with the versatility of a practised pen and the mechanical perseverance of an instrument which has been worn by practice into perfect easiness.

Yet the man had a mind for all that. Some instinct told him that he had been meant for better things. The result had been that he had steadily become a heavier and heavier drinker.

I learnt at the hospital that seventy-five per cent. of the human body is composed of water ; but in this case, as in the old song, it must have been that he was a relation of the McPherson who had a son,

"That married Noah's daughter
And nearly spoilt the flood
By drinking all the water.
And this he would have done,
I really do believe it,
But had that mixture been
Three parts or more Glen Livet."

The slight figure of a young-old man with a bulbous nose to detract from his otherwise remarkable beauty, spoilt though it was by years of insane passions, came into the cafe'. His cold blue eyes were shifty and malicious. One got the impression of some filthy creature of the darkness-a raider from another world looking about him for something to despoil. At his heels lumbered his jackal, a huge, bloated, verminous creature like a cockroach, in shabby black clothes, ill-fitting, unbrushed and stained, his linen dirty, his face bloated and pimpled, a horrible evil leer on his dripping mouth, with its furniture like a bombed graveyard.

The cafe' sizzled as the men entered. They were notorious, if nothing else, and the leader was the Earl of Bumble. Every one seemed to scent some mischief in the air. The earl came up to the table next to mine, and stopped deliberately short. A sneer passed across his lips. He pointed to the two men.

" Drunken Bardolph and Ancient Pistol," he said, with his nose twitching with anger.

Jack Fordham was not behindhand with the repartee.

" Well roared, Bottom," he replied calmly, as pat as if the whole scene had been rehearsed beforehand.

A dangerous look came into the eyes of the insane earl. He took a pace backwards and raised his stick. But Fordham, old campaigner that he was, had anticipated the gesture. He had been to the Western States in his youth ; and what he did not know about scrapping was not worth being known. In particular, he was very much alive to the fact that an unarmed man sitting behind a fixed table has no chance against a man with a stick in the open.

He slipped out like a cat. Before Bumble could bring down his cane, the old man had dived under his guard and taken the lunatic by the throat.

There was no sort of a fight. The veteran shook

his opponent like a bull-dog; and, shifting his grip, flung him to the ground with one tremendous throw. In less than two seconds the affair was over. Fordham was kneeling on the chest of the defeated bully, who whined and gasped and cried for mercy, and told the man twenty years his senior, whom he had deliberately provoked into the fight, that he mustn't hurt him because they were such old friends !

The behaviour of a crowd in affairs of this kind always seems to me very singular. Every one, or nearly every one, seems to start to interfere ; and nobody actually does so.

But this matter threatened to prove more serious. The old man had really lost his temper. It was odds that he would choke the life out of the cur under his knee.

I had just enough presence of mind to make way for the head waiter, a jolly, burly Frenchman, who came pushing into the circle. I even lent him a hand to pull Fordham off the prostrate form of his antagonist.

A touch was enough. The old man recovered his temper in a second, and calmly went back to his table with no more sign of excitement than shouting " sixty to forty, sixty to forty."

" I'm on," cried the voice of a man who had just come in at the end of the cafe' and missed the scene by a minute. " But what's the horse ? "

I heard the words as a man in a dream ; for my attention had suddenly been distracted.

Bumble had made no attempt to get up. He lay there whimpering. I raised my eyes from so disgusting a sight, and found them fixed by two enormous orbs. I did not know at the first moment even that they were eyes. It's a funny thing to say ; but the first impression was that they were one of those thoughts that come to one from nowhere when one is flying at ten thousand feet or so. Awfully queer thing, I tell you-reminds one of the atmospherics that one gets in wireless; and they give one a horrible feeling. It is a sort of sinister warning that there is some person or some thing in the Universe outside oneself: and the realisation of that is as frankly frightening as the other realisation, that one is eternally alone, is horrible.

I slipped out of time altogether into eternity. I felt myself in the presence of some tremendous influence for good or evil. I felt as though I had been born -I don't know whether you know what I mean. I can't help it, but I can't put it any different.

It's like this : nothing had ever happened to me in my life before. You know how it is when you come out of ether or nitrous-oxide at the dentist's-you come back to somewhere, a familiar somewhere; but the place from which you have come is nowhere, and yet you have been there.

That is what happened to me.

I woke up from eternity, from infinity, from a state of mind enormously more vital and conscious than anything we know of otherwise, although one can't give it a name, to discover that this nameless thought of nothingness was in reality two black vast spheres in which I saw myself. I had a thought of some vision in a story of the middle ages about a wizard, and slowly, slowly, I slid up out of the deep to recognise that these two spheres were just two eyes. And then it occurred to me-the thought was in the nature of a particularly absurd and ridiculous joke-that these two eyes belonged to a girl's face.

Across the moaning body of the blackmailer, I was looking at the face of a girl that I had never seen before. And I said to myself, "Well, that's all right, I've known you all my life." And when I said to myself " my life," I didn't in the least mean my life as Peter Pendragon, I didn't even mean a life extending through the centuries, I meant a different kind of life-some-thing with which centuries have nothing whatever to do.

And then Peter Pendragon came wholly back to himself with a start, and wondered whether he had not perhaps looked a little rudely at what his common sense assured him was quite an ordinary and not a particularly attractive girl.

My mind was immediately troubled. I went hastily back to my table. And then it seemed to me as if it were hours while the waiters were persuading the earl to his feet.

I sipped my drink automatically. When I looked up the girl had disappeared.

It is a trivial observation enough which I am going to make. I hope at least it will help to clear any one's mind of any idea that I may be an abnormal man.

As a matter of fact, every man is ultimately abnormal, because he is unique. But we can class man in a few series without bothering ourselves much about what each one of them is in himself.

I hope, then, that it will be clearly understood that I am very much like a hundred thousand other young men of my age. I also make the remark, because the

essential bearing of it is practically the whole story of this book. And the remark is this, after that great flourish of trumpets: although I was personally entirely uninterested in what I had witnessed, the depression had vanished from my mind. As the French say,

" Un cku chasse l'autre."

I have learnt since then that certain races, particularly the Japanese, have made a definite science starting from this fact. For example, they clap their hands four times " in order to drive away evil spirits." That is, of course, only a figure of speech. What they really do is this : the physical gesture startles the mind out of its lethargy, so that the idea which has been troubling it is replaced by a new one. They have various dodges for securing a new one and making sure that the new one shall be pleasant. More of this later.

What happened is that at this moment my mind was seized with sharp, black anger, entirely objectless. I had at the time not the faintest inkling as to its nature, but there it was. The cafe' was intolerable-like a pest-house. I threw a coin on the table, and was astonished to notice that it rolled off. I went out as if the devil were at my heels.

I remember practically nothing of the next half-hour. I felt a kind of forlorn sense of being lost in a world of incredibly stupid and malicious dwarfs.

I found myself in Piccadilly quite suddenly. A voice purred in my ear, " Good old Peter, good old sport, awfully glad I met you-we'll make a night of it."

The speaker was a handsome Welshman still in his prime. Some people thought him one of the best sculptors living. He had, in fact, a following of disciples which I can only qualify as " almost unpleasantly so. "

He had no use for humanity at the bottom of his heart, except as convenient shapes which he might model. He was bored and disgusted to find them pretending to be alive. The annoyance had grown until he had got into the habit of drinking a good deal more and a good deal more often than a lesser man might have needed. He was a much bigger man than I was physically, and he took me by the arm almost as if he had been taking me into custody. He poured into my ear an interminable series of rambling reminiscences, each of which appeared to him incredibly mirthful.

For about half a minute I resented him; then I let myself go and found myself soothed almost to

slumber by the flow of his talk. A wonderful man, like an imbecile child nine-tenths of the time, and yet, at the back of it all, one somehow saw the deep night of his mind suffused with faint sparks of his genius.

I had not the slightest idea where he was taking me I did not care. I had gone to sleep, inside. I woke to find myself sitting in the cafe' Wisteria once more.

The head waiter was excitedly explaining to my companion what a wonderful scene he had missed.

" Mr. Fordham, he nearly kill' ze Lord," he bubbled, wringing his fat hands. " He nearly kill' ze Lord."

Something in the speech tickled my sense of irreverence. I broke into a high-pitched shout of laughter.

" Rotten," said my companion. " Rotten ! That fellow Fordham never seems to make a clean job of it anyhow. Say, look here, this is my night out. You go 'way like a good boy, tell all those boys and girls come and have dinner."

The waiter knew well enough who was meant; and presently I found myself shaking hands with several perfect strangers in terms which implied the warmest and most unquenchable affection. It was really rather a distinguished crowd. One of the men was a fat German Jew, who looked at first sight like a piece of canned pork that has got mislaid too long in the summer. But the less he said the more he did ; and what he did is one of the greatest treasures of mankind.

Then there was a voluble, genial man with a shock of gray hair and a queer twisted smile on his face. He looked like a character of Dickens. But he had done more to revitalise the theatre than any other man of his time.

I took a dislike to the women. They seemed so unworthy of the men. Great men seem to enjoy going about with freaks. I suppose it is on the same principle as the old kings used to keep fools and dwarfs to amuse them. " Some men are born great, some achieve greatness, some have greatness thrust upon them." But whichever way it is, the burden is usually too heavy for their shoulders.

You remember Frank Harris's story of the Ugly Duckling ? If you don't, you'd better get busy and do it.

That's really what's so frightful in flying -the fear of oneself, the feeling that one has got out of one's class, that all the old kindly familiar things below have

turned into hard monstrous enemies ready to smash you if you touch them.

The first of these women was a fat, bold, red-headed slut. She reminded me of a white maggot. She exuded corruption. She was pompous, pretentious, and stupid. She gave herself out as a great authority on literature ; but all her knowledge was parrot, and her own attempts in that direction the most deplorably dreary drivel that ever had been printed even by the chattering clique which she financed. On her bare shoulder was the hand of a short, thin woman with a common, pretty face and a would-be babyish manner. She was a German woman of the lowest class. Her husband was an influential Member of Parliament. People said that he lived on her earnings. There were even darker whispers. Two or three pretty wise birds had told me they thought it was she, and not poor little Mati Hara, who tipped off the Tanks to the Boche.

Did I mention that my sculptor's name was Owen ? Well, it was, is, and will be while the name of Art endures. He was supporting himself unsteadily with one hand on the table, while with the other he put his guests in their seats. I thought of a child playing with dolls.

As the first four sat down, I saw two other girls behind them. One I had met before, Violet Beach. She was a queer little thing-Jewish, I fancy. She wore a sheaf of yellow hair fuzzed out like a Struwel-peter, and a violent vermilion dress-in case any one should fail to observe her. It was her affectation to be an Apache, so she wore an old cricket cap down on one eye, and a stale cigarette hung from her lip. But she had a certain talent for writing, and I was very glad indeed to meet her again. I admit I am always a little shy with strangers. As we shook hands, I heard her saying in her curious voice, high-pitched and yet muted, as if she had something wrong with her throat

" Want you to meet Miss--"

I didn't get the name; I can never hear strange words. As it turned out, before forty-eight hours had passed, I discovered that it was Laleham-and then again that it wasn't. But I anticipate-don't try to throw me out of my stride. All in good time.

In the meanwhile I found I was expected to address her as Lou. "Unlimited Lou" was her nickname among the initiate.

Now what I am anxious for everybody to understand is simply this. There's hardly anybody who understands the way his mind works; no two minds are alike, as Horace or some old ass said; and, anyhow,

the process of thinking is hardly ever what we imagine.

So, instead of recognising the girl as the owner of the eyes which had gripped me so strangely an hour earlier, the fact of the recognition simply put me off the recognition-I don't know if I'm making myself clear. I mean that the plain fact refused to come to the surface. My mind seethed with questions. Where had I seen her before ?

And here's another funny thing. I don't believe that I should have ever recognised her by sight. What put me on the track was the grip of her hand, though I had never touched it in my life before.

Now don't think that I'm going off the deep end about this. Don't dismiss me as a mystic-monger. Look back each one into your own lives, and if you can't find half a dozen incidents equally inexplicable, equally unreasonable, equally repugnant to the better regulated type of mid-Victorian mind, the best thing you can do is to sleep with your forefathers. So that's that. Good-night.

I told you that Lou was " quite an ordinary and not a particularly attractive girl." Remember that this was the first thought of my " carnal mind " which, as St. Paul says, is " enmity against God."

My real first impression had been the tremendous psychological experience for which all words are inadequate.

Seated by her side, at leisure to look while she babbled, I found my carnal mind reversed on appeal. She was certainly not a pretty girl from the standpoint of a music-hall audience. There was something indefinably Mongolian about her face. The planes were flat ; the cheek-bones high ; the eyes oblique ; the nose wide, short, and vital; the mouth a long, thin, rippling curve like a mad sunset. The eyes were tiny and green, with a piquant elfin expression. Her hair was curiously colourless ; it was very abundant; she had wound great ropes about her head. It reminded me of the armature of a dynamo. It produced a weird effect - this mingling of the savage Mongol with the savage Norseman type. Her strange hair fascinated me. It was that delicate flaxen hue, so fine -no, I don't know how to tell you about it, I can't think of it without getting all muddled up.

One wondered how she was there. One saw at a glance that she didn't belong to that set. Refinement, aristocracy almost, were like a radiance about her tiniest gesture. She had no affectation about being an artist. She happened to like these people in exactly the same way as a Methodist old maid in Balharn

might take an interest in natives of Tonga, and so she went about with them. Her mother didn't mind. Probably, too, the way things are nowadays, her mother didn't matter.

You mustn't think that we were any of us drunk, except old Owen. As a matter of fact, all I had had was a glass of white wine. Lou had touched nothing at all. She prattled on like the innocent child she was, out of the sheer mirth of her heart. In an ordinary way, I suppose, I should have drunk a lot more than I did. And I didn't eat much either. Of course, I know now what it was-that much-derided phenomenon, love at first sight.

Suddenly we were interrupted. A tall man was shaking hands across the table with Owen. Instead of using any of the ordinary greetings, he said in a very low, clear voice, very clear and vibrant, as though tense with some inscrutable passion:-

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

There was an uneasy movement in the group. In particular, the German woman seemed distressed by the man's mere presence.

I looked up. Yes, I could understand well enough the change in the weather. Owen was saying-

" That's all right, that's all right, that's exactly what I do. You come and see my new group. I'll do another sketch of you-same day, same time. That's all right."

Somebody introduced the new-comer-Mr. King Lamus-and murmured our names.

" Sit down right here," said Owen, " what you need is a drink. I know you perfectly well; I've known you for years and years and years, and I know you've done a good day's work, and you've earned a drink. Sit right down and I'll get the waiter."

I looked at Lamus, who had not uttered a word since his original greeting. There was something appalling in his eyes ; they didn't focus on the foreground. I was only an incident of utter insignificance in an illimitable landscape. His eyes were parallel; they were looking at infinity. Nothing mattered to him. I hated the beast !

By this time the waiter had approached.
" Sorry, sir," he said to Owen, who had ordered a '65 brandy.

It appeared that it was now eight hours forty-three minutes thirteen and three-fifth seconds past noon. I don't know what the law is; nobody in England knows what the law is-not even the fools that make the laws. We are not under the laws and do not enjoy the liberties which our fathers bequeathed us; we are under a complex and fantastic system of police administration nearly as pernicious as anything even in America.

" Don't apologise," said Lamus to the waiter in a tone of icy detachment. " This is the freedom we fought for."

I was entirely on the side of the speaker. I hadn't wanted a drink all evening, but now I was told I couldn't have one, I wanted to raid their damn cellars and fight the Metropolitan Police and go up in my 'plane and drop a few bombs on the silly old House of Commons. And yet I was in no sort of sympathy with the man. The contempt of his tone irritated me. He was in-human, somehow; that was what antagonised me.

He turned to Owen.

" Better come round to my studio," he drawled; I have a machine gun trained on Scotland Yard." Owen rose with alacrity.

" I shall be delighted to see any of you others," continued Lamus. " I should deplore it to the day of my death if I were the innocent means of breaking up so perfect a party."

The invitation sounded like an insult. I went red behind the ears; I could only just command myself enough to make a formal apology of some sort.

As a matter of fact, there was a very curious reaction in the whole party. The German Jew got up at once-nobody else stirred. Rage boiled in my heart. I understood instantly what had taken place. The intervention of Lamus had automatically divided the party into giants and dwarfs ; and I was one of the dwarfs.

During the dinner, Mrs. Webster, the German woman, had spoken hardly at all. But as soon as the three men had turned their backs, she remarked acidly: -

" I don't think we're dependent for our drinks on Mr. King Lamus. Let's go round to the Smoking Dog."

Everybody agreed with alacrity. The suggestion seemed to have relieved the unspoken tension.

We found ourselves in taxis, which for some in-scrutable reason are still allowed to ply practically

unchecked in the streets of London. While eating and breathing and going about are permitted, we shall never be a really righteous race !

We hope you enjoyed this Sample Version of The Diary of a Drug Fiend.

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