

Pleasures of the Heart

Description: an elderly book, seemingly indifferently bound, 250 pages of good but old-quality paper. The text is printed in an unknown type and written in a variant of English that seems closest to the 18th Century, albeit one with considerably more Middle-Mongolian loan words. The book is profusely illustrated, in a manner that can only be described as incredibly soothing. For that matter; merely holding the book is a remarkably refreshing and relaxing experience.

Pleasures of the Heart started showing up in the more disreputable London literary circles in the early Edwardian period. Nobody knows where the book came from or who wrote it, which only contributed to its reputation as a -- well, it's complicated. You know how some books corrupt men utterly? *Pleasures of the Heart* more or less does the opposite.

Whatever the actual process is, it's definitely eldritch: the text of *Pleasures of the Heart* is seemingly simple enough pablum about the best ways to express generosity and follow the Golden Rule, with an extra helping on the need to use power responsibly and without cruelty. Most of the

people who look through the book don't quite see the point. But if the right (or perhaps, wrong) kind of mind reads it, well: the text insinuates itself into the unwary victim.

The process is subtle, but inexorable. At first the receptive reader is just obsessed with the book. Then he'll try to act out little bits from the book. The more innocuous ones; well, at least, at first, because Soon he'll be trying harder and harder bits, and his personality will change to match. Typically, the average reader of *Pleasures of the Heart* ends up a disgustingly well-adjusted, pleasant, and well-scrubbed person, always ready to do his best to benefit his neighbors and mankind. And he will be so totally, remarkably, and invulnerably *happy* about it, too. But not smug! That would be rude.

This sort of thing is appalling to your average misanthropic occultist, particularly when it becomes clear that this is an **imposed** state -- and once you walk down this path, there's no going back. The only safe way to withstand *Pleasures of the Heart* is to never, ever read it. And that really *is* the only safe way, mind you; people have tried to burn the book. It always ended nicely for them -- which is to say, they couldn't make themselves burn the book, and

soon the entire idea seemed appalling. Burn books? Burn **books**? The very thought.

All in all, it's not the sort of thing one wants to show up at an estate sale. And yet, here it is. One hopes one is wearing gloves. I mean, they probably won't help, but having them on might make you feel better.

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