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SOME RECENT VERSE.

"Songs of the Spirit." By Aleister Crowley. London: Kegan Paul.

That three out of eight volumes taken at random from the stack of recent books of minor verse should have the root of the matter in them, and one of the three in high degree of excellence, is a very large proportion indeed. So far as the mere form goes, the ephemeral verse of the day is undoubtedly on a high level. Most of its professors can at least write smoothly, many even musically; and though the volume of poetry was probably never so great as now, the proportion of mere doggerel was probably never so small. It is when we pass from the test of mere form and take the greater test of substance that its insufficiency stands revealed. It is a fairly common thing for educated people to be able to write smooth verse; it is one of the rarest of human attainments to have a direct personal knowledge and experience of life coupled with the imaginative force that can transfigure that knowledge into insight. That is the endowment of the poet as distinguished from the easy practice of the versifier; and to find evidence of it in any degree, however slight, in three volumes out of eight is an unaccustomed proportion of grain to chaff.

We must ruthlessly exclude the first three authors on our list from any part or lot in the poet's endowment. They are hopelessly commonplace; Mt. Hunt Jackson undisguisedly so, and Mr. Crowley under a veil of mysticism that, being lifted, never by any chance reveals a meaning worth the trouble of finding out. For some of his verses we confess that we can find no meaning at all, worthy or otherwise. Such conundrums as:

Apart, immutable, unseen,
Being, before itself had been,
Became. Like dew a triple queen
Shone as the void uncovered.

may have the weight of deep philosophy in them, but to us they are uncommonly like nonsense verse, reminding us more than anything else of Lewis Carroll's

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gymble in the wabe—

taken seriously.