

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN  
20 JULY 1910

RECENT VERSE

It is right that Mr. Aleister Crowley—or rather, as the preface to *Ambergris* (Elkin Mathews, pp. viii, 198, 3s 6d. net) tells us, “a committee of seven competent persons sitting separately”—has seen fit to make a selection from his poetical writings. As originally published, wheat and tares were in luxuriant confusion, and one trembled for the task of the harvesting angel. Even here the torrential flow of words and the dim shade of the neo-symbolism of “*The Equinox*” smother and obsess, but merit will out. Mr. Crowley has the precious gift of an unfailing sense of the sheer beauty of rhythmical words:—

Her stature waves, as if a flower  
    Forgot the evening breeze,  
But heard the charioted hour  
    Sweep from the farther seas,  
And kept sweet time within her bower,  
    And hushed mild melodies.

So grave and delicate and tall—  
    Shall laughter never sweep  
Like a moss-guarded waterfall  
    Across her ivory sleep?  
A tender laugh most musical!  
    A sigh serenely deep?

She lifts the eyelids amethyst,  
    And looks from half-shut eyes,  
Gleaming with miracles of mist,  
    Grey shadows on blue skies;  
And on her whole face sunrise kissed,  
    Child-wonderment most wise.

Such lines are full of music; and again,

I would not kiss thee, I!  
Lest my lip's character  
    Ruin thy flower.  
Curve thou one maidenly  
Kiss, stooping from the sky

Of peace and power!  
Thine only be the embrace!—  
I move not from my place,  
Feel the exultant face  
Mine for an hour!

is but one of the many verses that, in their intimate, sensuous delicacy and lyrical tenderness, are reminiscent and not unworthy of Swinburne. Mr. Crowley is too often torn and scattered broadcast or swept into something very like incoherence by a tremendous passion, but he can throw into the scale against such luxuriant violences the calm of the unrhythmed "In Hollow Stones, Scawfell," and the gentleness of

The somber sun  
Shines darkly in her breast  
But makes no joy therein,  
And all his kisses sharp and keen  
Bring only now desire of rest,  
Not their rapture; the warm violet eyes  
Melt into sweet hot tears; subtler the sighs  
Are interfused of death . . .