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Sixty Years of Song

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S POEMS

"Olla," an anthology of sixty years of song, is a handsome volume (published in a limited edition and with a portrait frontispiece by Augustus John) of poems by the well-known writer, Aleister Crowley, who for the past few years has made his home at Netherwood, The Ridge, Hastings.

The poems cover the period from 1887-1946, and include the opening lines of what the author believes to be his first published effort in verse. Written on many themes and in all parts of the world from Moscow to Granada, New York to Chipping Campden, these works reveal their creator's ability—mentioned by him in his entertaining foreword—to put himself into the soul of various types of men and women and identifying himself "with their inmost creative Word."

Mr. Crowley rejoices in the music, not to say the clangour of words, which he uses sometimes with violence and always with power. He is at his most characteristic when (to borrow his own phrase) "scourging smug piety . . . the stubborn stupor of the Government," but he is not always in a fighting mood. Of his more tranquil style, nothing in the book is a more beautiful example than the sonnet "Logos," written at Netherwood in 1946, and he infuses intense warmth and colour into his love poems, though, as in the last line of the rapturous "La Gitana," he cannot always escape a lapse into bathos.

These poems have tremendous vitality, an Oriental richness of imagery, and many jewel-like passages of description which contrast strangely with the brutal and astringent touches which likewise abound. Satire goes to an amusing extreme in "Panacea," the twelve lines of the word "money," repeated forty-two times. Mr. Crowley will have his bitter little joke.

F.W.G.