

A BOOK OF MYSTERY AND VISION. By A. E. WAITE. William Rider and Son. 7s. 6d.

The Introduction. Mr. Waite speaks of a "kind of secret school, or united but incorporate fraternity, which independently of all conventional means of recognition and communication do no less communicate and recognise one another without hesitation of hindrance in every part of the world. . . . Of this school the author may and does claim that he is the intimate representative and mouthpiece," &c. &c.

Good.

"This mystic life at its highest is undeniably selfish."

Hullo, what's this?

"It is a striking fact that so little of any divine consequence has been uttered by poets in the English Language."

Really?

"The inspiration of it (the sense of sacramentalism) at certain times saturated the whole soul of Tennyson . . . there is scarcely a trace or tincture of this sense in Shelley."

Poor Shelley!

"In the eighteenth century there was none found to give it Voice."

Poor Blake! (William Blake, you know! Never heard of William Blake?)

"For this school it is quite impossible that Shakespeare, for example, should possess any consequence."

Poor Shakespeare!

And then—

"This book is offered by the writer to his brethren, *ut adeptis appareat me illis parem et fratrem*, as proof positive that he is numbered among them, that he is initiated into their mysteries, and exacts recognition as such in all houses, temples, and tarrying-places of the fraternity."

An adept trying to prove that he is one! An adept with thoughts of his own rank and glory!! An adept exacting recognition!!!

What about the instant recognition all over the world of which you prated above? Mr. Waite, you seem to me to be a spiritual Arthur Orton!

Mr. Waite, we have opened the Pastos which you say contains the body of your Father Christian Rosencreutz—and it's only poor old Druce!

The Book. This is the strange thing; the moment that Mr. Waite leaves prose for poetry, there is no more of this bunkum, bombast, and balderdash; we find a poet, and rather an illuminated poet. We have to appeal from Philip sober to Philip drunk! *In vino veritas.*

Good poetry enough all this: yet one cannot help feeling that it is essentially the work of a scholar and a gentleman. One is inclined to think of him as Pentheus in a frock-coat.

A MYSTERY-PLAY.

DIONYSUS. I bring ye wine from above
From the vats of the storied sun—
MR. WAITE. Butler, decant the claret carefully!
DIONYSUS. For every one of ye love—
MR. WAITE. Ay, lawful marriage is a sacrament.
DIONYSUS. And life for everyone—
MR. WAITE. And lawful marriage should result in life.
DIONYSUS. Ye shall dance on hill and level—
MR. WAITE. But not the vulgar cancan or mattchiche.
DIONYSUS. Ye shall sing through hollow and height—
MR. WAITE. See that ye sing with due sobriety!
DIONYSUS. In the festal mystical revel,
The rapturous Bacchanal rite!
MR. WAITE. If Isabel de S should approve!
DIONYSUS. The rocks and trees are yours—

MR. WAITE. According to Laws of Property.
DIONYSUS. And the waters under the hill—
MR. WAITE. Provided that you pay your water rate.
DIONYSUS. By the might of that which endures—
MR. WAITE. Me, surely, and my fame as an adept.
DIONYSUS. The holy heaven of will!
MR. WAITE. Will Shakespeare was not an initiate.
DIONYSUS. I kindle a flame like a torrent
To rush from star to star—
MR. WAITE. Incendiarism! Arson! Captain Shaw!
DIONYSUS. Your hair as a comet's horrent,—
MR. WAITE. Not for a fortune would I ruffle mine.
DIONYSUS. Ye shall see things as they are.
MR. WAITE. Play fair, god! do not give the show away!

[*The Mænads tear him limb from limb, and MADAME DE S tries to brain DIONYSUS with a dummy writ.*

This is a great limitation, yet Mr. Waite is a really excellent poet withal. All the poems show fine and deep thought, with facility and felicity of expression. "The Lost Word" is extraordinarily fine, both dramatically and lyrically. It seems a pity that Mr. Waite has no use for William Shakespeare! The fact is (whatever George Hume Barne may say) that Mr. Waite is (or has) a genius, who wishes to communicate sacred mysteries of truth and beauty; but he is too often balked by the mental and moral equipment of Mr. Waite. Even so, he only just misses. And I will bet George Hume Barne a *crème de menthe* that if Mr. Waite (even now) will ride on a camel from Biskra to Timbuktu with an Ouled Nail and the dancer M'saoud, he will produce absolutely first-rate poetry within six months.

Enough. But buy the book.

A. QUILLER, JR.