

**LITERATURE**  
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**Recent Verse.**

Jephthah; and Other Mysteries, Lyrical and Dramatic.

Though still, as in his previous work, a disciple of Mr. Swinburne, in his new book Mr. Crowley not infrequently launches out upon somewhat sustained flights marked, if not by originality, by, at least, an increased individuality of their own. It is not impossible that in days to come he may himself possess a following. All the more necessary is it that he should divest himself once and for all of the many irresponsibilities of thought and expression that still cloak his poetry. If Mr. Longstaff need blot his lines Mr. Crowley (albeit that he is far the better poet) should manfully take his pen and blot his tens of thousands, if he would produce a single slender volume of unsullied worth. That he could do so we are inclined to believe, for at times he is visited by sweet and excellent thoughts, while his singing comes naturally, and is often (just for a note or two) exquisite. Yet it is hard to find more than a few pages unspoiled either by the sacrifice of sense to sound, or a too great tendency toward sensuality. His faults and virtues lie closely intermingles, as will be found in the two following quotations. We select the first of them for the beauty of the last few lines rather than to call attention to the obscurity of the fourth and fifth lines of the passage. It occurs in the poem called "The Five Kisses"—

"No smallest cloud between me and my bride  
Came like a little mist; one tender fear  
Too sweet to speak of, closed the dying year  
With love more perfect, for its purple root  
Might blossom outwards to the snowy fruit  
Whose bloom to-night lay sleeping on her breast,  
As if a touch might stir the sunny nest.  
Break the spell's power, and bid the spirit fly  
Who had come near to dwell with us. But I  
Bend through long hours above the dear twin life,  
Look from love's guerdon to the lover-wife,  
And back again to that small, small face so sweet,

And downwards to the little rosy feet,  
And see myself no longer in her eyes  
So perfectly as here, where passion lies  
Buried and re-arisen and complete."

The next quotation incidentally and partially illustrates Mr. Crowley's singing power, but we give it as instancing what in our judgment constitutes a rather bad lapse of judgment. The poet is in the woods with a volume of Shelley and writes fifteen stanzas in the ecstasy begotten of the book and the place. Here are the last two—

"I have had hope in the spring—  
Trust that the God who has given  
Flowers, and the thrushes that sing  
Dawnwards all night, and at even  
Year after year will be true now we are speaking of  
heaven."

Why not end there? The thing is done. It is not at all necessary to go on to\_\_

"Breezes caress me and creep  
Over the world to admire it;  
Sweet air shall sigh me to sleep  
Softly my lips shall respire it,  
Lying half closed with a kiss ready for all who desire it."

Why come back to earth at all? Why not keep the purer heaven, if one can attain to it? It is indeed so very hard to get there that coming back seems to be a foolish sort of proceeding. "Jephthah," the longest poem in the book, appears to us on the whole to reach a higher level of general excellence than anything else he has done so far.