

WHAT'S ON
circa August 1907
(This reviews comes from the appendix
to Crowley's Konx Om Pax)

Review of The Star in the West

This work is called "a critical essay of the writings of Aleister Crowley." Yet it is, in truth far more than this, being a highly original study of morals and religion by a new writer, who is as entertaining as the average novelist is dull. Nowadays human thought has taken a higher place in the creation; or emotions are weary of bad baronets and stolen wills; they are now only excited by spiritual crises, catastrophes of the reason, triumphs of the intelligence. In these fields Captain Fuller is a master dramatist, and we have no hesitation in predicting hat modern readers, weary of the sordid and tawdry tediousness of gutter realism and Utopia idealism, will find in this book a satisfaction of many a heartache.

Happy the minor poet who can secure so exhaustive an examination of his writings as that contained in this extraordinary volume. If we adopt the author's estimate, Mr. Crowley is no longer to be termed a "minor" poet, but stands in the ranks of the immortals. Captain Fuller, it is true, deals more in eulogy than in criticism, and would be a more convincing interpreter if he did not write as a Qabalist, an adept in ceremonial magic, occult Buddhism, and "all that sort of thing." His knowledge is weird and remarkable, his ethics unfettered by the shackles of convention, and his style frequently eccentric, sometimes in doubtful taste, and sometimes, like that of his master, rushing onward in a torrent of bold and magnificent images. Here, for instance, is a piece of "fine writing" which, of its kind, is excellent, though its meaning we presume not to fathom:

O Dweller in the Land of Uz, thou also shalt be made drunken; but thy cup shall be hewn from the sapphire of the heavens, and thy wine shall be crushed from the clusters of innumerable stars; and thou shalt make thyself naked, and thy white limbs shall be splashed with the purple foam of immortality. Thou shalt tear the jewelled tassels from the purse of thy spendthrift Fancy, and shalt scatter to the winds the gold and silver coins of thy thrifty Imagination;

and the wine of thy Folly shalt thou shower midst the braided locks of laughing comets, and the glittering cup of thine Illusions shalt thou hurl beyond the confines of Space over the very rim of Time.

After two or three pages of this the reader may well echo the chapter's concluding cry: "Wine, wine, wine!"

The first half of Captain Fuller's book is a tolerably sober and often penetrative elucidation of the meaning of Mr. Crowley's fine poems. This we understand and like. It has certainly brought home to us more vividly the great beauty and insight of the poet's work. But in the latter part of the book, consisting of one long chapter entitled "The New Wine," and in which the philosophy of "Crowleyanity" is expounded at dire length, our admiration for Captain Fuller's judgment is somewhat abated. "Aleister Crowley," we are told, "is the artist Elias" of whom Paracelsus prophesied:

the marvellous being whom God has permitted to make a discovery of the highest importance in his illuminative philosophy of Crowleyanity, in the dazzling and flashing light of which there is nothing concealed which shall not be discovered.

It has taken 100,000,000 years to produce Aleister Crowley. The world has indeed laboured, and has at last brought forth a man. . . . He stands on the virgin rock of Pyrrhonic Zoroastrianism, which, unlike the Hindu-conception, stands on neither Elephant nor Tortoise, but on the Absolute Zero of the metaphysical Qabalists. . . . And he shall be called "Immanuel"—that is, "God" with us, or, being interpreted, Aleister Crowley, the spiritual son of Immanuel whose surname was Cant.

The author must have felt a good deal better after writing that.

It is claiming much for Mr. Crowley that he embodies and completes the highest philosophy of Hume, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel; that Crowleyanity is the scientific illuminism which reconciles the vision of God with the hard facts of natural law. But if the reader accepts this, he had better do so on the authority of the interpreter rather than on an intelligent understanding of the message, for at this he will have difficulty in arriving. We frankly confess that this part of the exposition baffles our comprehension.

The quaint symbolical frontispiece to the book is a sort of picture-puzzle to the uninitiated. Captain Fuller's task has apparently been a labour of love, and he has certainly expended great pains and ability in dragging Mr. Crowley up the steep slopes of Olympus.