

EVENING POST
17 December 1910

Written for the Post by A. G. Stephens.

ALEISTER CROWLEY.

You may call the poem "Wedded," and choose some stanzas:

The roses of the world are sad,
 The water-lilies pale,
Because my lover takes her lad
 Beneath the moonlight veil.
No flower may bloom this happy hour—
Unless my Alice be the flower.

So silent are the thrush, the lark!
 The nightingale's at rest,
Because my lover loves the dark,
 And has me in her breast.
No song this happy be heard—
Unless my Alice be the bird.

The sea that roared around the house
 Is fallen from alarms,
Because my lover calls me spouse,
 And takes me to her arms.
This night no sound of breakers be—
Unless my Alice be the sea.

Of man and maid in all the world
 Is stilled the swift caress,
Because my lover has me curled
 In her own loveliness
No kiss be such a night as this—
Unless my Alice be the kiss.

This night—O never dawn shall crest
 The world of waking,
Because my lover has my breast
 On hers for dawn and spring.

This night shall never be withdrawn—
Unless my Alice be the dawn.

This is extracted from "Ambergris, a selection of poems of Aleister Crowley" (Elkin Mathews)—the most interesting volume of English verse seen this year. Crowley was met years ago in "The English Critical Review," and has occurred here and there since, seeming always extraordinary. He is extraordinary—in his work, in the fine portrait affixed to his work, and in his preface.

The little volume of 200 pages, at 3s 6d, is commended as a pleasure to every amateur of poetry. One does not remember any verse so plastic as some of the earlier pages of "Ambergris." Crowley writes shapes, beautiful shapes, beautiful coloured shapes like chryselephantine statuettes. All readers of verse know that there is ear-poetry and eye-poetry—poetry that sounds well and looks ill and poetry that looks well and sounds ill. Crowley makes an unusual appeal both to eye and to ear. His ivory shapes go singing themselves golden tunes. In particular he has a gift of good beginnings, he attacks admirably. If form were all! Crowley fails in emotion: his verse does not yield that ecstasy that adds the last drop to the brimming vase. He is always evident, never ineffable. Nor, although original; he does not lead us to unfooted fields of dream; at most he finds a new path in the familiar territory. Yet to call him "minor" is to do him injustice; he has the voice, though not the great imagination; and his skill with lines and rhymes, words and phrases, is more than craft. He is not "minor" because he has a pulse and a strong pinion; he does not flutter, he soars. Soars best when closest to earth: his abstractions are empty: he needs the living model to inspire his art. Then, with a puff from swollen Eros:

One kiss, like snow, to sip,
Cool fragrance from thy lip
 To melt on mine;
One kiss, a white-sail ship
To laugh and leap and dip
 Her brows divine;
One kiss, a sunbeam faint
With love of a sweet saint,
Stolen with a sacrament
 In the night's shrine!

One kiss, like moonlight cold
Lighting with floral gold
 The lake's low tune;
One kiss, one flower to fold,
On its own calyx rolled
 At night, in June!
One kiss, like dewfall, drawn
A veil o'er leaf and lawn—
Mix night, and morn, and dawn,
 Dew, flower, and moon!

There are many Shakespearian touches in Crowley, and not so many Shakespearian lapses. If you stress the lapses, he gives a line for maltreating—

Smite! but I must sing on. . .

What a motto for our Australian bards, ifray!

Accept Crowley or refuse him, he brings his own atmosphere, and captivates you, and finally captures: there is such a tide of life in him, though it does not rise through the finest poetic brain (nor did Shakespeare's tide). And for closing, let the Star-Goddess sing a stanza of Orpheus dead—and risen.

For brighter from age unto age
 The weary old world shall renew
Its life at the lips of the sage,
 Its love at the lips of the dew.
 With kisses and tears
 The return of the years
Is sure as the starlight is true.

There is one that hath sought me and found me
 In the heart of the sand and the snow:
He hath caught me, and held me, and bound me,
 In the lands where no flower may grow,
 His voice is a spell.
 Hath enchanted me well!
I am his, did I will it or no. . .