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REVIEW OF THE WINGED BEETLE

THE WINGED BEETLE. Poems by Aleister Crowley. London: Privately Printed. Price 10s. net. (Copies can be obtained at The Equinox, 124, Victoria Street, S.W.)

In the face of the whole horde of reviewers, critics, and in the face of the British public, I declare that Aleister Crowley is among the first of English living poets. It will not be many years before this fact is generally recognized and duly appreciated. "Rosa Coeli" and "Rosa Decidua" are two magnificent poems. The latter is no "tragedy of little tears," but the utterance of a god-like grief. "The Princess of Panormita" is an extremely fine work of art; the right of selection has been exercised to the utmost, there are no superfluous words, no vague images; everything is precise, clear-cut, and strong. I quote two verses—

"But—God! I was not content
 With the blasphemous secret of years,
The veil is hardly rent
 While the eyes rain stones for tears.
So I clung to the lips and laughed
 As the storms of death abated,
As the storms of the grievous graft
 By the swing of her soul unsated.

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"Nay! let him fashion an arrow
 Whose heart is sober and stout!
Let him pierce his God to the marrow!
 Let the soul of God flow out!
Whether a snake or a sun
 In his horoscope Heaven hath cast,
It is nothing: every one
 Shall win to the moon at last."

"Bathyllus" is a beautiful poem; the following four lines contain some extraordinary thought-pictures—

"My head is an ocean in anger
With sleek and fantastical curls;
My lips like a sunset for langour,
My skin like a moonrise of pearls."

And the verse below is exquisite—

"Then, O if my pain were to kill me!—
In the garden of music and musk
Tough thou—and the thoughts of it thrill me—
The poppy that flowers in the dusk!
Poppy whose blossom is furled
Deep in the breasts of the world—
Ah! but the heart is impearled!"

"The Ladder" is a fine lyric describing the ascension up the middle pillar of the Tree of Life from Malkuth to Kether. "Telepathy," "The Opium-Smoker," "The Muse," are all poems which will grip and hold the soul of the reader. "The Muse" is quoted in its entirety—

"O Thou who art throned by the well
That feeds the celestial streams!
O daughter of heaven and hell!
O mother of magical dreams!
O sister of me as I sit
At thy feet by the mystical well
And dream with the web of my wit
Of the marriage of heaven and hell!"

"O Thou who art mad with the Muse
That delights in the beauty of form!
O desire of the dream of the dews!
O Valkyrie astride of the storm!
I am thine as we ride on the blast
To exult in the mystical Muse,
As there drip on the desert at last
The immaculate Delian dews.

"I am thine, I am thine, I am thine, —
How it slashes the skies as a sword!
How it blinds us and burns us with wine
Of the dread Dionysian Lord!
Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!"

Iacche! thy chrism of wine!
Evoe! Evoe! Evoe!
I am thine! I am thine! I am thine!"

What is not least remarkable in Crowley's poetry is his amazing variety. Frequently he is reminiscent of Swinburne. In some respects he is not unlike William Blake, but he is free from Blake's metrical deficiencies while retaining all the sublimity of his conceptions. The range of his subjects is almost infinite, and the majority of his poems are literally ablaze with the white heat of ecstasy, the passionate desire of the Overman towards his ultimate consummation, re-union with God.

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