

THE EDUCATION OF UNCLE PAUL. By ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.
Macmillan and Co. 6s.

I read this book on the Express Train from Eastbourne to London (change at Polegate, Lewes, Hayward's Heath, Three Bridges, Red Hill, and East Croydon—they ought to stop to set down passengers at Earlswood), and though it's a beautiful story, and I like Nixie, I must confess to being rather bored. Rather with a capital R and a sforzando *er*. I wanted George MacDonald's "Lilith," and Arthur Machen's "Hill of Dreams"—they have blood in them. And I was not in my library, but in a stuffy, dog-returneth-to-his-vomit-scented microbe-catcher labeled 1st Compo. Then, too, Algernon Blackwood began to remind me of Maeterlinck. There was too much bluebirdiness, and it gave me the blue devils. And then, again, though I've never read J. M. Barrie, I felt sure that he must be responsible for some of the oysters in the stew. And where was Sidney Blow?

Yes: it's a silly book; a book elaborately and deliberately silly; even laboriously silly with that silliness which cometh not forth but by prayer and fasting. . . .

And as I continued to read, it grew monotonously silly. Paul "slipped into the Crack" in several different ways, but there wasn't much difference in the result. I began to wonder if Mr. Blackwood has been drinking from the wisdom-fount of Ecclesiastes and Don Juan!

And oh dear! the conversations. Children don't talk bad metaphysics, nor do repatriated lumbermen. But Mr. Blackwood must dree his weird, I suppose.

And then, on a sudden, the monotony breaks up into a mixture of "La Morte Amoureuse," "Thomas Lake Harris," "The Yoke" (Mr. Hubert Wales' masterpiece), and "The Autobiography of a Flea told in a Hop, Skip, and a Jump."

But I prefer Mr. Verbouc to Uncle Paul, and Bella to Nixie. From the point of view of pure literature, of course.

The book then slobbers off into Gentle-Darwin-meek-and-mild Theosophy.

Victoria at last, thank God! I think I'll slip into the Crack, myself!

ALEISTER CROWLEY