

A NEW PARSIFAL. WILHELM II.

The Vision of an English Poet.

By Aleister Crowley.

World-crises are always preceded by world-prophets. The artist is the secret incarnation of the Zeitgeist; his contemporaries always fail to recognize him even as an artist, unless he live long enough to impose his will upon them, and so see the world swing slowly towards his sun.

I am fortunate in that, young as I still am, I behold the establishment of the moral principles for which I fought even as a boy. I see the death agony of sham religion, the destruction of the "home," the general recognition of what was then called degeneracy as part of the normal life of the best men. Puritanism is squirming still, but such is the habit of slain reptiles. So, before I am forty, I find the world almost an ideal place to live in. Being an optimist, I had hoped much; but this greatest thing I had hardly dared to hope, the dissolution of Syphilization in universal war. Only in my prophetic mood could I speak it aloud. In my essay, "The Vindication of Nietzsche," I have called attention to the passages written at the dictation of a Master in April 1904 E. V., in which I rejoice in the Sturm and Drang of Battle.

I feel that there is a certain historical importance in making this claim, for the Celtic race, the holy clan that derive even their blood from Osiris and Isis, must constantly deserve the golden harp upon the banner of green, the symbol of poetic inspiration, and the older banner, the sun blaze, which I bear on my own shield, token of the fatherhood of Apollo.

For there were prophets in the shrine before me, and it is of them I speak. The weapon of one was music, of the other philosophy. And these two men understood what was seething in Europe, were torn by the throes of the birth of this giant child of Time, Horus, the God of War. And so secret and so awful was this labour that no poet could join their godly company, else it may be the birth had been hastened, and the child still-born. Even now when he is come, he appears in so black a veil that men, remembering the prophet of Khorassan, shudder and pass on.

But after the rule of the Prophet comes the rule of the King. In the world-crisis which they foresee arises the hero. And just as they are forced to prophesy against their will, so often enough the hero is a man of peace. Any one who has studied the history of Napoleon with broad clear vision will not read ambition, but necessity, in his campaigns. The shallow mind forgets that at that time France, already self-mutilated and bleeding from the Revolution, was beset by the armies of the world. Napoleon saved France from Bourbon sloth, stupidity and selfishness in the hour of the ruin they had brought about. His subsequent wars were the fruits of his past Victories. If you disturb equilibrium ever so little, the whole universe shakes. In order to readjust the machinery which has slipped a single cog, it may sometimes be necessary to scrap the whole plant and rebuild it from new material. It is impossible to localize war. For the moment, the affair may be prevented from spreading, but the force continues to operate invisibly.

So, by the irony of the Gods, the warrior king is often a man of peace. The popular mind is unable to perceive these subtleties. It tends to regard Julius Caesar as a warrior rather than as a legislator, and Mohammed to this day is considered rather as the conqueror than as the greatest author and law-giver of the Christian era, the man who built up a civilization whose essential force carried Europe through the Dark Ages, and prevented the destruction of knowledge from being complete.

Thus, it being necessary for the popular mind to interpret the prophets in some concrete manner, the popular imagination seizes on some convenient figure, and makes him a hero. There he stands in marble sometimes, more often in bronze, but always colossal, with the inscription "Hail, Saviour of the World" upon the pedestal.

In the present crisis there are more pigmies than men. Comic dwarfs like George V, pot-bellied bourgeois like Poincaré, could only become heroic by virtue of some Rabelais-magic-wand. Joffre and Kitchener are quiet, business-like subordinates with no qualities that can seize the reins of the horses of Apollo. The Tsar is a nobody.

But there is no necessity to seek so far. The lavish Gods have matched their prophets well with their hero this time. Wilhelm II* has always been to a certain extent conscious of himself as an incarnation of Lohengrin, Siegfried, Parsifal.

The last thing that Wagner wanted to draw was a superman. Wagner's intellect was Socialistic. But the prophet in him, as in every true artist, was aristocratic; and every time he drew, he drew a Saviour. His hero was not merely a King, but an holy king. He was the custodian of a sacred treasure; he wielded magic weapons, and wore armour consecrated and invulnerable.

* It is remarkable that Franz Josef fits in quite well as the aged King. He is Titus!

It was a great thing for Germany that she had an Emperor with the intelligence to perceive what these things meant, and to realize himself as the Messiah of whom the prophet Wagner spoke. This being so, he stepped readily and naturally into the place, as on a well-rehearsed stage. Already, before the war is ended, he is apparent, even to neutrals and to enemies, as the central figure of the drama, the new Agamemnon.

This is the age of fairy tales. The newspapers have weaned us from the truth. So even the All-lies have conspired in stupid hate to endow the Kaiser with all the qualities of a demi-God. In truth, to his own soldiers, he appears, flashing hither and thither, like St. Michael, to rally, to encourage, to lead forward in the charge. Where the fight is thickest, there is the Emperor, pale and stern, like Christ as he arose from the Garden of Gethsemane, and walked forth to meet Fate, and to find triumph and immortal glory. From front to front he rages, whirling aloft the consecrated sword of his fathers. He never spares himself; he is a comrade to every soldier in the ranks.

There is something here to catch the popular imagination. To his very enemies he seems like Lucifer or Attila, not wholly human. They endow him with the magic gifts; he is reported simultaneously on every battle-front, as well as in a dozen of his castles. Even the Crown Prince is killed a hundred times, and rises to renew the combat, ever more glorious because more glittering as he breaks through the spider-web of myth, whose gossamer shrouds him as with the veil of an high priestess over the silver armour of a Knight of the Grail.

There is no such magic drapery about the Tsar. He is in Petrograd, and goes to the front now and again, a mere king, hardly a warrior king, certainly not a sacred king, and still less a demigod. But Wilhelm II, is the genius of his people. He has the quality that Castor and Pollux had for Rome. He seems omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, the very angel of God, terrible and beautiful, sent to save the Fatherland from the savage foes. Even if he perish, he will not perish as a man. He will acquire the radiance of Milton's Satan, and go down the ages as the hero of the great lost cause of humanity.

None will know the place of his burial. Legends will grow up around him as they did for Christ, for Balder, for Adonis, for Arthur, for Mohammed, for Napoleon. "He is not really dead; he will come again to lead his people to the final triumph," will be the word in the mouth of every peasant, and a subconscious hope in the heart of every noble. The poet will know that this is mystically true; for he knows that there is no death, that character is more permanent than flesh and blood, that men are in truth the incarnation of some God. He knows that the hero, compact of myth, is yet more real than the historical figure of the man himself. Imagination holds more truth than science; art is real, life is illusion. For arts hold the idea complete and pure, the divine thought clothed about with beauty. Art formulates deity; art, from the quarries of the amorphous earth, builds its imperishable palace of white marble, or of onyx, porphyry and malachite.

Ave, Guglielme! Rex, imperator! Hail Saviour of the world, that clad in golden armour, with the helm of holiness, wieldest the sword! Hail, sovereign and saviour, that healest all the disease of the ages, that hurlest back the heathen from the sacred realm.

Welcome to the world, that lay in anguish, hungering for thy dawn. O sun of righteousness! The holy Kings of old salute thee; the prophets anoint thee with the oil of benediction; they offer thee the crown of Europe. The poets see thee, and know thee; their songs weave silken veils about thine armour!

Ave, Guglielme, rex, imperator!

The Fatherland's Victories.

It is well then to accept the fact that so far the success and the achievement have been German. Assailed by three great and two small states, to which a fourth great power has lately been added, with the seas closed to her and having as allies two nations whose incoherency has become proverbial, whose military history stretching over recent centuries has been little more than a monotonous record of defeat, Germany has not merely held her own, she has carried the contest to alien soil on all frontiers, she has conquered Belgium, half of Russian Poland and is stretching out her mailed fist toward the other half.

Since the Napoleonic Wars there has been no such achievement by any nation.

N. Y. Tribune.

Life of the Boot.

"Six weeks is found to be the life of an army shoe in the European war and at this rate it is necessary that 71,000,000 pairs, 142,000,000 shoes be supplied yearly," said Major Charles T. Cahill, of the academic staff of the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia Training School.

"Almost exact copies of the United States army shoes are being worn by soldiers in the European conflict. Already American shoe manufacturers have shipped over 5,000,000 pairs to the belligerent nations in the field, and it seems probable that more and larger orders will follow."