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Jephthah and Other Mysteries

"Jephthah and Other Mysteries," lyrical and dramatic, is dedicated to Mr Swinburne. Not only by this token, but by much also in the book does Allister Crowley hint at his indebtedness to the great lyricist. He has drunk deeply at the Swinburnian fount, and the draught has made him "heady," with the result that his poetry is confused and clamorous. It reads like a dictionary let loose, and only at intervals do the words seem to arrange themselves into sane sentences. One is reminded of a cloudy day, when in sudden moments the sun streams through the rifts and golden beams play for a little space on the otherwise shadowed world. The title poem, a tragedy in rhyme, has a certain dignity of mien, and there are passages in it of considerable beauty, but the story proper is choked with words. "The Poem," a drama in four scenes, is elevated in style, pathetic, yet rampantly melodramatic. One reader may weep over it, another laugh uproariously. Mr Crowley is too mystical. What he writes is vapourish. It is quite apparent that his is a thoughtful mind, vastly impressed by the supreme things of life, and with these he wrestles manfully and as a poet should. His scholarship is evident. But he should leave Swinburne and Shelley alone. He has enough elemental poetry in his own soul to enable him to do without them. As it is they have led him into writing some splendid nonsense. Outside their doubtful company his thought becomes sweeter and saner and his poetry altogether fresher and finer. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co., Limited. 7s 6d.)