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**The Bookfellow
(Written for the "Auckland Star"
by a G. Stephens.)**

Aleister Crowley

You may call this poem "Wedded."

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.
An has me in her breast
No song this happy night be beard!—
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 so 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 wakening,
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This night shall never be withdrawn—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 from the poems of Aleister Crowley" (Elkin Mathews), the most interesting volume of new 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, which runs thus:

"In response to a widely spread lack of interest in my writings, I have consented to publish a small and unrepresentative selection from the same. With characteristic cunning, I have not included any poems published later than the third volume of my collected works.

"The selection has been made by a committee of seven competent persons, sitting separately. Only those poems have been included which obtained a majority vote.

"This volume, thus almost ostentatiously democratic, is therefore now submitted to the British public with the fullest confidence that it will be received with exactly the same amount of acclamation as that to which I have become accustomed."

The little volume of 200 pages, at 3/6, is commended as a pleasure to every amateur of poetry. If you would have more, the author flaunts his opulence in two pages of final advertisement, where twenty-eight published items are offered in Japanese vellum wrappers, and in green camel's hair wrappers, and in blue wrappers and orange wrappers, at £2.2/ each or less—a poetical bargain counter. "Rosa Inferni," for instance, in 8pp. Royal 4to and an orange wrapper, costs only 16/, or 2. per page; although a lithograph from a water-colour by Rodin is added. Crowley is a devotee of Rodin, and deserves to be. One does not remember any verse so plastic as some in the earlier pages of "Ambergris." Crowley writes shapes, beautiful shapes, beautiful coloured shapes like chryselephantine statuettes. 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 ear. His ivory shapes go singing themselves golden

tunes. In particular he has a gift of good beginnings, he attacks admirably:

Rain, rain, in May. The river sadly flows.
Sing, happy nightingale, sing:
Past is the season of weeping. . .

In middle music of Apollo's corn
She stood, the reaper, challenging a kiss. . .

She fades as starlight on the stream,
As dewfall in the dell.

If form were all! Crowley fails in emotion; his verse does not yield that keenest ecstasy that adds the last drop to the brimming vase of poetry; he is always evident, never ineffable. Nor, although original, is he highly, compellingly original; he does not lead us to unfooted fields of dreams; 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 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, so slip,
Cool fragrance from thy lip
To melt on mine;
One kiss, a white-sail ship,
To laugh and leap and dip,
Her brown divine;
One kiss, a starbeam faint,
With love of a sweet saint,
Stolen like 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 moon, and dawn,
Dew, flower, and moon!

Crowley has travelled, and written harmonious stanzas for Hawaii, for Egypt, even for Hong Kong. Perhaps after Ferhaeren (for we catch an echo here and there) he cries:

To sea! before we leap the waves;
The wild white combers follow.
Invoke, ye melancholy slaves,
The morning of Apollo!

The ship is trim: to sea to sea!
Take life in either hand,
Crush out its wine for you and me,
And drink, and understand!

Or:—

The spears of the night at her onset,
Are lords of the day for a while,
The magical green of the sunset,
The magical blue of the Nile.
Afloat are the gales,
In our slumbrous sails,
On the beautiful breast of the Nile.

A little precious, Crowley must not be deemed to pose, despite *his* preface; often it is the excess of exulting vitality that is called a pose by timid little people. Admit, though, that this excess here and there arouses the Comic Spirit, as when the poet reviles his Muse in face of his Lady:

Ye unavailing eagle-flights of song!
O wife! these things do thee wrong.

Thou knowest how I was blind;
How for mere minutes thy pure presence
Was nought; was ill defined;
A smudge across the mind,
Drivelling in its brutal essence,
Hog-wallowing in poetry,

Incapable of thee.

Yet, a few lines below:—

O thou! did'st thou regret?
Wast thou asleep as I?
Did'st thou not love me yet?
For, know! The moon is not the moon until
She has the knowledge to fulfil
Her music, till she knows herself the moon

There are many such 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 bards, if ay!

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 has 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.