

THE NORTHERN WHIG AND BELFAST POST
BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND
22 OCTOBER 1929
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BOOKS OF THE DAY.

MAGIC AND MOONSHINE.

THE MOONCHILD. By Aleister Crowley. London: The Mandrake Press. 10s 6d net.

This is hardly a book that will appeal to the general public, though the general public reads and will continue to read books that are much less clever and amusing. But "The Moonchild" makes too great a demand upon the intelligence, and, besides, it assumes a knowledge (which two centuries ago was general) of the main principles of astrology and magic. People will believe in spiritualism which insults their intelligence, while they prove that they are intelligent by refusing to consider the much stronger evidence (so far as it goes) for magic and astrology. But the author has an enemy to castigate, a writer well known to students of occult literature. He is pilloried in this book under the name of Edwin Arthwait. This voluminous and murky writer, who is forever fluttering upon the edge of making a definite statement but never making it, because he has never made up his mind as to what he really wishes to say, is satirised and parodied with immense gusto. But the parody will appeal only to those readers who have sounded the hollow caverns of the original.

The book is a story of a young Englishman who wished by means of magic, not the black magic of the sorcerer, but the philosophic magic of the Neo-Platonists, to produce a child who shall be as completely as possible under the astrological influence of the moon. He goes off ostensibly for this purpose with a young woman to Naples. But he has the usual enemies, the members of a Black Lodge of Sorcerers, whose object is to spoil the experiment and get hold of the young woman. The story of how he tries to elude them, succeeds for the time, is pursued, besieged, and confounds his enemies, only to lose the young woman in the end, forms an entertaining tale. At the last it turns out that the real child and its mother were not the unborn

child and its mother who was decoyed away from him, but quite another young woman who had gone off somewhere else to have her child before he went off to Naples.. In the latter part of the book there is a really bloodcurdling chapter or two about the Black Lodge of Sorcerers in Paris, not to be commended to persons of weak nerves, but very good for all that. The hero ends up by joining the British Army during the retreat from Mons. The unlucky "Edwin Arthwait" is not the only contemporary or lately deceased person upon whom the author employs his powers of sarcasm; and it is quite amusing, though sometimes a little too easy, to pick out the originals.

A book as clever as this is about international crooks would have sold by the thousand. One doesn't know how many will be sold of "Moonchild," but the people who buy it, and who can appreciate its wit and see the point of a reference, will not feel that they have wasted their half-guinea.