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THE TALK OF LONDON

All Magic.

The Foyle Luncheon at the Grosvenor was unusually crowded to-day, as everybody was anxious to hear what that erratic genius, Aleister Crowley, whose career I summarized the other day, had to say about magic. I have considerable doubts whether anyone was much wiser when he had finished. I was not. He certainly told us that what is magic to-day is science to-morrow, and that to put right the present out of joint times we needed the prophets of old. But beyond that I think most of the lunchers were pleasantly bewildered.

Incidentally, Mr. Crowley has nothing of a Merlin look about him. His magic seemed to have had some effect on the microphone, for that beneficent instrument rather let us down when Mr. Arthur Rackham, the famous book illustrator, was speaking. It was kinder, fortunately, to Mr. J. D. Beresford, the novelist, who, although owing to ill-health, had to rely on crutches to support him while he stood, gave us some very bright thoughts on literature. He quoted with relish the remark of Augustine Birrell that when a new book came out Mr. Birrell always read an old one. "That means I have made him read 40 old books," Mr. Beresford said amid laughter, and added that as the Book Society discovered a masterpiece every month, and another organ discovered one a week, Mr. Birrell must be busy.

I liked his definition of what constitutes literature. "If you get something out of a book, if you respond to that book, then it is literature." He scorned those people who tried to like a thing because someone else had told them they ought to like it; and his final word of advice was, "Read the books you like, but don't forget to read more books."