

DEAD WEIGHT

It is with the deepest feeling that we record the passing over of our less disciple than colleague, less colleague than bosom friend, the aged saint known on earth as Arthur Edward Waite. "The disciple whom Crowley loved," they called him, and Crowley himself never gave the lie to the tender nickname by forgetting the text, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

However, all that is over now. The beloved disciple, full of age and saintliness, is gone to his reward.

The story of his life has already been told, though, alas! inadequately, in the *Equinox* and in *Who's Who*, but no list of his achievements is given even in *What's What*, or *What Swat*, as we used affectionately to call our premier book of reference. *The Witches' Switch* has only a passing allusion.

The career of Arthur Edward Waite was largely determined by his father's fine perception.¹ "Ned, my lad," said he when the future saint was barely six years of age, "brains are not your long suit, I can see. But it doesn't matter. If you can't be wise, look wise!" These words sank deeply into the mind of the future saint, and only two days later, when his father handed him a work on the Integral Calculus, he looked through it in a steady professional manner, going backwards and forwards several times, knitting his brows, nodding his head and muttering, "H'm! ingenious," now and again. He then closed the volume with a snap, and said in a tone of infinite finality: "Inferentially inadequate data machicholated cerebrothoracically."

"By jingo!" replied his father, "but you're IT!"

In this position there was only one weak point. There are people who understand the Integral Calculus, and there are people capable of disentangling words and sentences. Or rather, at that time, that was so. The art of darkening counsel was in its infancy. The future saint was predestined to change all that.

Arthur were wise, therefore, to find, if possible, a science so abstruse and venerable that no one at all understood it, and whose most respected authors wrote in an indecipherable cryptogram. Such a science was found for little Arthur (the future saint!) in Alchemy.

To establish a reputation was the work of a moment. To be "editor" of Paracelsus, Trithemius, Flamel, Eugenius Philalethes, Ripley, Starkey, Sendivogius, Basil Valentine, and a dozen others is a splendid position in the world of humane letters. To achieve this: obtain copies of their works, and forward carriage paid to a printer, with the remark—worthy of Julius Caesar at his tersest—'Reprint!'

Would God it had stopped there! But (remember!) the future saint wasn't wise, he was only "looking wise," and he made a terrible mistake by accepting a few shillings—all too few!—to whitewash Dr. Wynn Westcott (and English Free-masons generally) in the Diana Vaughan affair.

He corresponded with learned professors from Leipzig to Vladivostock; he bombarded Indian Lieutenant-Governors with long strings of questions: "Did you ever know any one called Ramaswamy² in Madras?" and the like; in short, he turned the world upside down to produce laboured disproof of the statements—themselves impossible in nature—of a Paris penny dreadful of the class of *Nick Carter* and *Deadwood Dick*.

Relentlessly does he demolish his adversary. If Camden is spelt Campden (which might happen to the best of French authors) he shrieks [sic! ! !]. Many other remarks of the future saint display a lack of any sense of proportion or humour which was deplorable, and, by his best friends, deplored.

It was also unfortunate in a way that a book purporting to deal exhaustively with the inmost cabinet secrets of high-grade Freemasonry should be written by one who was not even a craft Mason.

The³ result was that Dr. Wynn Westcott having been made to swear by all his gods that he was *not* Consulting Chemist to the British Government Underground Secret Poison Factory at Gibraltar, and that he had never received at his house a lady whom everybody but himself and the future saint (for in the whirligigs and revenges and, so to speak, *Cochons Volants* of time such was to be!) knew to be the absinthe or galette-begotten image in the mind of a French fumiste who had never in his brightest hours hoped to be taken seriously by as much as a rag-picker—people began to wonder what was the truth

beneath the stories which Westcott was at such pains to deny.

However, the honour of British Professional Men was (once again) vindicated, chiefly because nobody to speak of saw either attack or defence, and the future saint (for so, strangely enough, had Fate decreed!) had his reward, and was initiated in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The future saint (far indeed from saintship at this time—but the ways of Providence are indeed wondrous!) knew that there was an inner order, but had no idea of its name; he only noticed that he was not invited to enter it. So, to pass the time, he wrote his *Real History of the Rosicrucians*, in which he proved conclusively that there were no Rosicrucians and never had been, and that if any moderns claimed to be Rosicrucians there was "that difference between their assertion and the facts of the case in which the essence of a lie consists." No sooner had he published these remarks (amid general applause) than it was gently broken to the future saint that the liars he had been denouncing were his own occult chiefs, of whom he had been writing (elsewhere) in language which out-Mahatmaed the most eloquent-mysterious Theosophists, and left the sectaries of the Saviour high and dry. A *gaffe* of this sort would have daunted some; not so the future saint (for to this had the Moirae foreordained him!) He produced *Azoth; or the Star in the East*, a pompous rigmarole of God knows how many hundred mortal pages in folio. Like the Absolute, it had neither beginning nor end. Any sentence, if rent sufficiently by expert analysis, revealed either platitudinous banality, a puppet dressed in the rags of mediaeval diction, or refused to be interpreted at all. This was the high-water mark of the future saint's "success" in this evil path; he bought a frock-coat, and has slept in it ever since. He had wished to go down to posterity as the modern Fludd—and would have done so, only this time there were not eight persons saved.

However, this was not the worst. The future saint (as it was written that he should become!) made incursions upon Magic, with the unhappiest results. Fundamentally incompetent to apprehend the very nature of the question, and utterly incapable of humour, the ingenious Lévi pulled his leg to the limit. The future saint⁴ could see only contradictions in the profundities of the master, and in complaining that Lévi was always "stultifying himself" (when he was merely indulging the irony of which he was one of the most brilliant exponents that have ever lived), branded *stultus*, *stultior*, *stultissimus* upon his own mar-morean brow.

He could not even be trusted with a text. His *Book of Black Magic and of Pacts* was not only a monument of misunderstanding, but of garbling and mutilation; nor did the future saint⁴ improve matters by the dishonest trick of reissuing the volume as the *Book of Ceremonial Magic*, or *Book of Magic*, when he tried to make a market in the more benighted agricultural districts of England.

His method of throwing mud at masters naturally resulted in the gate of every occult sanctuary being slammed in his face. The future saint⁴ obtained admission (it is true) to the pseudo-Rosicrucian order of Mathers, but on that order passing, as it did for a week or so, into the control of an honest man, that honest man's first act was to expel the aforesaid Waite with ignominy. Thus excluded, the future saint⁴ could find no better device than to proclaim himself its head. Without warrant or charter of any kind he extracted guineas from would-be "Rosicrucians" of the servant-girl type of intellect.

True to the same policy, he next declared himself possessed of numberless degrees of Masonry, and accordingly issued two portentous volumes on the subject, volumes which betray prejudice and ignorance so nicely balanced that it is next to impossible to determine which is the inspiration in any particular passage, especially as the sentences are themselves couched in the sham mediaeval jargon with which his name has always been associated. His gradual gravitation towards Catholicism has been attributed to the receipt of a subsidy from the Society of Jesus; but this is a calumny upon the shrewdness of the fathers who, glad enough to employ a clever scoundrel like Booth—or somebody else beginning with a B—would hesitate to waste an obolus on such a literary sausage-seller.⁵

The love of obscurantism and mummery is sufficient explanation; to use Latin for English, Greek for Latin, Hebrew for Greek, was the key of his whole literary method of vain forms of observance, of meaningless archaisms and affectations. Your priest does not know why he does so and so any more than your freemason (I have yet to meet an English freemason who knows that the word freemason means, or how it should be spelt) knows why he wears an apron. It is tradition, and the Word of God is thereby made of none effect. But Waite was not content with this. He would take an intelligible living English word and metagabolize it deliberately that he might appear pontifical. Waite would write "Placental amniotes, ultra, fometik vobis, conuterinian masculus" for St. Paul's "Men and brethern" even in his calmest mo-

ments. And while correcting the proofs he would put in some more hints about the Sanctuary he belonged to, the fact being that his only teacher was an ex-Cantab, named Humphreys, who had at one time been tolerated by Crowley in order to analyze the soul (if any) of the kind of man who fills his rooms with the portraits of "actresses" whom he has never seen, and boasts of their devotion to him.

His only other guide appears to have been a solicitor of the kind that writes you terrible threatening letters, and on being told rudely to do that the Oldest Inhabitant of the Northumbrian Capital actually did (as we are incredibly informed) retires into the Pleroma, and confines his activities to sneaking attacks on you without mentioning your name.

Well, he reached the age of 40 years, and his very sycophants could hardly have called him a physician.

It was not many years after that, like Nicodemus, he came to Crowley secretly by night, and pleaded for initiation. Crowley was moved by his tears, and promised never to divulge the nature of the interview while Waite lived, for it was truly a pitiable thing to see one who had advertised himself as a Master clasping the feet of a man twenty years younger than himself, and begging for the very initiation of which he had boasted himself the dispenser.

It was impossible for Crowley to grant this request; the Dweller on the Threshold would have found Waite scarce a caper in her daily mayonnaise. Initiation for Waite would have meant madness, and the cold portals of the tomb, for one, to follow. It is no use "looking wise" when there is an Abramelin demon gnawing you below the belt, or burbling about the Sanctuary when the Goat of Mendes is threatening you with a 70 h.p. six cylinder, four-speed, gnarled clyster.

All night Waite stayed, and begged; it was in vain. The Master was not to be moved from a resolution both wise and kind. He, however, promised to acknowledge Waite openly as his disciple on condition of good behaviour for the future. It is with pleasure indeed that we record that Waite's lapses have been comparatively few. Waite was no Crippen, be it understood. If Crowley teasingly called him "old lag" in friendly converse round the office fire, too strict a significance, too vital an importance, may easily be attached to the phrase. Crowley may only have been referring to the number of his incarnations. Or some secret meaning may lie hidden in the term. It was at least the fact that Waite was inclined to writhe under its application. So he did when any one said "you and Westcott," or "you and Wilmshurst"; but this was obviously a reference to his early errors, the reopening of an old wound. Still more so Crowley's habitual recitation from Blake—

"Steiger, Steiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand and eye
Framed thy fearful syntaxy?"

And he positively hated to be call "pot of basil," or even "Columbus."

He also disliked puns on his name and allusions to his personal appearance—his close resemblance to the excellent foreman printer at the Ballantyne Press was a constant source of irritation—also to his style of dress, which proven ineradicable; and he used to wince when his familiars called him "Art," as it revived the story of Crowley's epigram on his work, as *Art for Art's Sake*. Again, he objected to references to the "wait-a-bit" thorn in connection with occult style and subject, so that he took what was really quite an unreasonable dislike to Fra. S. P. merely because that worthiest of men had spend some years in Africa.

However, these were small blemishes on a beautiful character. Having given up trying to look wise, he began to be wise; and he never forgot that the fear of Crowley is the beginning of wisdom. To the end he combined an intensity of holy awe with a kind of timid audacity of reverential love for the Master, to which the latter responded with the most gracious condescension, mingled with that peculiar affection which one feels for an old and worthless dog belonging to somebody else. It was an unique and altogether idyllic relation. His motto, "Fides, spes, caritas sunt virtutes ab omnibus Christianis diligendae" had to be shortened for convenience' sake to "Fides," or, more usually, "Fido"; and it was excessively touching to hear the caressing austerity of the tones of the Master when he had occasion to address him.

So, calm and even, passed the autumn of his life. It is now a painful duty to record the passing.

Subject from youth to chronic capitis,⁶ its attacks had diminished both in frequency and severity under the wise and patient treatment of the Master; but they still occasionally recurred.

The shocking accident which resulted in the death of the aged saint was due directly to an access of this malady, whose peculiar danger is that the patient tends to seek relief in the very things which have caused the trouble. Poor Waite was reaching up to a bookshelf in the library of his seat at South Ealing for a copy of his *Strange Houses of Sleep* when his aged but saintly legs gave way. The aged saint clutched at the bookshelf for support, and a copy of *Azoth* fell, and narrowly missing the inflamed organ, struck the nobler portions of his body, bruising both great toes severely.

So critical did the condition of the aged saint become that Sir Coote O. Key Coote was called in, and found himself obliged to resort to amputation, for unluckily a friend of the aged saint had been offered a copy of *Paracelsus* for 3s. 8d., and mortification had set in.

The operation was fortunately a complete success, and the physicians announced that their distinguished patient might very well live for another four-and-twenty hours. The aged saint's one desire was of course to see Crowley, to offer the last homage, to confess his ingratitude for the benefits with which the Master had loaded him, and to receive the final benediction.

Needless to say Crowley responded to the call. To an explorer of the Himalayas the perils of a journey to South Ealing are as nothing: had they been everything, he would still have come.

It was half a day later that the writer arrived, owing to his Daimler backfiring, missing a dead-centre, and eventually trying to climb a tree on Clapham Common.

After being announced, he was ushered into the death-chamber. The dying saint, his head safe in the arms of Crowley, safe on his gentle breast, whose tears mingled with his own, strove hard against the approach of the Grim Reaper. Dr. Wynn Westcott was in a corner sharpening (in the worst of taste) his knives for the inevitable post-mortem on the dying saint.

Mr. Wilmshurst was reading through the will in which the dying saint had left everything to Lady S—, and could find no flaw, though he had drawn it up himself. Mr. Battiscombe Gunn was rapidly revising the funeral arrangements of the dying saint, which he proposed to found on some unedited documents of the Second Dynasty, which showed conclusively that the sacred lotus was in reality a corset, and the Weapon of Men Thu a button-hook.

Neuburg was improvising (for soothing of the last moments of the dying saint) a crooning lay to the tune (and the words, *mutato mutando*) of

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,"

the bass accompaniment being an obbligato by Wilfred Merton. Mr. E. S. P. Haynes (to the horror of Ada Lakeman and Col. Gormley) was reading Morrison's *Red Triangle* to conceal his emotion. Mr. Austin Harrison, Veli Bey, Madame Strindberg, the Editor of the *Equinox*, and some others, were avoidably absent from the death-bed of the dying saint.

Transfusion of blood having been suggested, Crowley readily lent himself to the operation, Neuburg thoughtfully changing to *There is a fountain.*"

But the physicians had made a fatal error. Blood was altogether too strong for a circulation which even in its most robust days had been supplied solely by Horlick's Malted Milk: only the kind of ink they use in France could have saved the dying saint, for no other ichor could have mingled freely with the liquor of his veins. Thrombosis supervened; with one last gasp of "Rabboni, that is to say, Master!" the dying saint clenched his moribund grasp on Crowley's neck; the word "periphrasticalism" burst rather than sobbed from his labia, and the thanatogenous hagio-cratist halated his ultimate.

Neuburg, as one inspired, uttered his *Morte d'Arthur*.

Poor old Waite is gone to hell.
He will soon begin to smell:
We must meddle with him, *statim*.⁷
Let us not incinerate him!
Let us not be anthropophagous!

Let us build him a sarcophagus
Let us bury him in state
Worthy of our wobled⁸ Waite!
Find a weed whose tangled mazes
May metaphorize his phrases,
Find a bunch of camomile
Fit to represent his style,
Waxen flowers to symbolize
His archaicologies,
Dandelions as a chrism
Of his dole of euphemism

Mangroves for the intervening
Lucid intervals of meaning
When we saw the modern Fludd
Merely a malarious mud.

Woe is me! I fear death's darticles
Close our "Quiller's" brilliant articles.
Requiesces Waite in pace,
Gone thine occupation, A. C.!

A. QUILLER, JR.

NOTES:

1. Also, of course, by Karma.—Ed.
2. Waite quotes the commonest name in all South India as if it were something too fantastic for belief.
3. Please make paragraph read clearly.—Printer's Reader. Heaven forgive you!—Ed. Can't you see that I'm trying to write like Waite?—A.Q.
4. As will presently appear, he became such. *Gloria Crowleiae!*
5. In actual life he sold Horlick's Malted Milk, but was for all practical purposes a T—totaller.
6. He had also chronic diffuse meningo-encephalitis, but only on the astral plane.
7. [Did he mean *passim*?—Ed.]
8. Cf. *Hamlet*, "mobled queen." Wobled is part mobled, part noble, and party wobbly.