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Aleister Crowley

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From “The Giant’s Thumb,” Foreword.

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ALL delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.

IT is eleven of the clock on the night of August 28, in the 1914th year of the Christian Era, and the news of the annihilation of the British Army has not yet reached London. It will come.*

The cause is cant and hypocrisy, and the cause of the War was cant and hypocrisy, the strange, the pathetic, the craven determination to admit no fact for truth which all the men of science and all the poets of the reign of Queen Victoria did so little to shake. The demonstrations of Darwin and the sonorities of Swinburne reached only the thinking classes, if one may use so plural a noun for the remnant that refused to bow the knee to the Baal of Respectability and the Golden Calf of Commercialism.

Entrenched in the morass of bibliolatry, crouching in the bastions of Fort Grundy, the old Guard of Victorianism died and did not surrender. But as the Old Testament God fell before Paine and Ingersoll, as the sanguine and sacrificial Christ was emasculated by Renan and Edwin Arnold, the ruin of orthodoxy left even the manhood of Puritanism eunuch. Havelock with his bloody sword blowing 14,000 Sepoy prisoners from the muzzles of his guns in a morning became no longer thinkable. Hypocrisy surpassed itself, denounced its own virtues for vices. As the Goddess Reason once presided in Paris over panic, so the neuter deity Progress was worshipped by all those whom sloth, ease, security, prosperity had rotted. And the attendant demon-in-chief, Broken-Reed-in-Waiting to Its Majesty, was Humanitarianism.

We had Progressed. Lady Pyjama Noisette had a headache to the tune of a paragraph — 10 lines. Sandsugar v. Sandsugar and Pintpot — a column. A piddling little quack doctor poisons his bitch of a wife and runs off with his fool of a typist — the business of the world is suspended until he is cinematographically hanged.

A prominent writer calls attention to himself by the device of calling atten-

* P. S. It came; and was censored. But England will yet find out.

P. P. S. It was not until after Victory had been proclaimed that men began to realize that it was Defeat. For the corruption of Christianity made them cowards even in conquest, refusing to assume the responsibility of Mastership.

tion to the pangs of slaughtered oxen; another affirms his brotherhood with the Chicago Pig. Countless thousands turn Vegetarian, and then quarrel as to whether it is or is not True Vegetarianism to eat eggs. The war between the Fruitarians and the Nut-foodists nearly came to a cross word! I knew a “man” who refused to eat bread because it was a fermented drink! A friend of mine knew an Anarchist who refused cocoa because it excited his animal passions!

“And all the while the shark in southern seas!”

as the authoress of *The Placid Pug* so tragically counters.

For there were one or two reprobates who happened to have read History, and to have observed Humanity.

Of these Nietzsche was the chief. But even in England, independently of him, and ignorant of his teaching, was found a man who actually endeavoured — and, is still endeavouring* — to found a New Religion on such texts as these:

“For these fools of men and their woes care not thou at all! They feel little; what is, is balanced by weak joys; but ye are my chosen ones.”

“But to love me is better than all things: if under the night-stars in the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with a pure heart, and the serpent flame therein, thou shalt come a little to lie in my bosom. For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all; but whoso gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour. Ye shall gather goods and store of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels; ye shall exceed the nations of earth in splendour and pride; but always in the love of me, and so shall ye come to my joy. I charge you earnestly to come before me in a single robe, and covered with a rich head-dress. I love you! I yearn to you! Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!

“At all my meetings with you shall the priestess say — and her eyes shall burn with desire as she stands bare and rejoicing in my secret temple — To me! To me! calling forth the flame of the hearts of all in her love-chant.

“Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love you! I love you!

“I am the blue-lidded daughter of Sunset; I am the naked brilliance of the voluptuous night-sky.

* P. S. Dec. 1923 E. v. He has perduced with dogged dauntlessness through distress and disaster of every kind: and his Truth is subtly infiltrating the whole Body of the World's Thought, Every year marks an advance — irrefutable & automatic — towards acceptance.

The quotations are from Liber AL the “Book of the Law”. Vide *The Equinox* I VII & X et al.

“To me! To me!”

“These are dead, these fellows; they feel not. We are not for the poor and for the sad; the lords of the earth are our kinsfolk.

“Is a God to live in a dog? No! but the highest are of us. They shall rejoice, our chosen: who sorroweth is not of us.

“Beauty and strength, leaping laughter and delicious languor, force and fire, are of us.

“We have nothing with the outcast and the unfit: let them die in their misery. For they feel not. Compassion is the vice of kings: stamp down the wretched and the weak: this is the law of the strong: this is our law and the joy of the world. Think not, O king, upon that lie: That Thou Must Die: verily thou shalt not die, but live. Now let it be understood: if the body of the King dissolve, he shall remain in pure ecstasy for ever. Nuit! Hadit! Ra-Hoor-Khuit! The Sun, Strength and Sight, Light; these are for the servants of the Star and the Snake.

“I am the Snake that giveth Knowledge and Delight and bright glory, and stir the hearts of men with drunkenness. To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet, and be drunk thereof! They shall not harm ye at all. It is a lie, this folly against self. The exposure of innocence is a lie. Be strong, man! lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this.”

“Ye are against the people, O my chosen!

“If Will stops and cries Why, invoking Because, then Will stops and does nought.

“If Power asks Why, then is Power weakness.”

“Pity not the fallen! I never knew them. I am not for them. I console not: I hate the consoled and the consoler.”

“There is a veil; that veil is black. It is the veil of the modest woman; it is the veil of sorrow, and the pall of death: this is none of me. Tear down that lying spectre of the centuries: veil not your vices in virtuous words: these vices are my services; ye do well, and I will reward you here and hereafter.”

“Beware therefore! Love all, lest perchance is a King concealed! Say you so? Fool! If he be a King, thou canst not hurt him.

“Therefore strike hard and low, and to hell with them, master!”

“Now let it be first understood that I am a god of War and of Vengeance. I shall deal hardly with them.

“Choose ye an island!

“Fortify it!

“Dung it about with enginery of war!

“I will give you a war-engine.

“With it ye shall smite the peoples; and none shall stand before you.”

“Worship me with fire and blood; worship me with swords and with spears. Let the woman be girt with a sword before me: let blood flow to my name. Trample down the Heathen: be upon them, O warrior, I will give you of their flesh to eat!”

“Mercy let be off: damn them who pity! Kill and torture; spare not; be upon them!

“Them that seek to entrap thee, to overthrow thee, them attack without pity or quarter; and destroy them utterly. Swift as a trodden serpent turn and strike! Be thou yet deadlier than he! Drag down their souls to awful torment: laugh at their fear: spit upon them!”

“I am in a secret fourfold word, the blasphemy against all gods of men.

“Curse them! Curse them! Curse them!

“With my Hawk’s head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross.

“I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed and blind him.

“With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist, Mongol and Din.

“Bahlasti! Ompehda! I spit on your crapulous creeds.

“Let Mary inviolate be torn upon wheels: for her sake let all chaste women be utterly despised among you!

“Also for beauty’s sake and love’s!

“Despise also all cowards; professional soldiers who dare not fight, but play: all fools despise!

“But the keen and the proud, the royal and the lofty: ye are brothers!

“As brothers fight ye!”

“There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.”

This is plain speaking; this is “blasphemy” and “immorality” if ever such were spoken.

I quote it in preference to Nietzsche, not only because Nietzsche has penetrated from Prussia to Pimlico, and is quoted in Streatham as in Stuttgart, but also because it is simpler than Nietzsche, because there is no possibility of misinterpreting the doctrine (were I dowered with a double portion of the

Spirit of Escobar), because it is not German or Slavonic but universal, the battle-cry of what may yet become a new and terrible theocracy. Its adherents have hitherto been secret; to-day they surely lift their heads; to-morrow they may reap the reward of having thought ten years ago what England thinks this year.

It is only two months since even the saner sections of the people were disputing hotly as to whether boxing is "brutal"; and this month no man of sense but admits that little children may lawfully be pitched into blazing cottages before their mothers' eyes. And that is play to what may come. Will not human flesh be bought and sold in the markets before the war and its attendant revolutions are over? Is there any man bold enough to call such things "impossible," to invoke those fallen fishy gods "Progress" and "Civilization" and "The Higher Awakening of the Ethical Instincts of man?"

Is there any man who still shuts his eyes to the plain fact that homo sapiens is but a primate, cousin of the gorilla, with a brain over-developed to think abominations, and a larynx evolved to aid their execution, a creature whose prime pangs are hunger, lust, and hate, and his fundamental solaces rape, robbery, and murder? I laughed with open throat at the "atrocities" Press Campaigns in the Balkan War. "The half-civilized peoples of the Near East!" Is the present war any less prolific of such stories when the compatriots of Tolstoi, and Gorky, and Goethe, and Anatole France, and Shelley are at war? And are the stories true? True or false in detail, I knew them true in essence, and I knew also that the primmest old maid in Dorchester whose palsied hands dropped her knitting as she read of them was horrified because, although she did not know it, and could never be brought to know it, those atrocities were in her blood from everlasting. "There, but for the Grace of God, goes Charles Baxter" was the wisest remark that ever came from a fool's lips. And it is because we have persuaded ourselves bitterly and obstinately, against the deeper knowledge that is instinct in every organism, that these things cannot happen, that we have lost the manhood that could have prevented them. Some there are so priggishly purblind that fact itself, naked and bleeding at their thresholds, battering on the gates of their ears with the Ram of actuality, fails to force those waxed-up tympana. When the nations were already at each other's throats, when men had seen their brothers blown to atoms before their eyes, drilled through with nickel and lead, slashed and gashed with steel, ridden down beneath the hoofs of the horses,* we heard that President Wilson had offered to arbitrate! To arbitrate, when the diplomatic and economic pressure of a decade, and the consciousness of ineradi-

* Note the date of writing. The use of Poison Gas was still to come; so were the cold-blooded murders of Edith Cavell, Mata Hari, Sir Roger Casement and the Dublin Martyrs, Erskine Childers, and countless others.

cable race-hatred since time began, and clan tore clan with flint, had forced the Boar of Germany to turn at last upon the Borzoi and the Bulldog, to lash out with tush and hoof at the invisible pack of hounds that closed upon him.

And we are still babbling of the Cause of Liberty, and the Banner of the Democracies, and the Truth, and the Righteousness, and the Justice, and the Equality, and the Humanity, and the Progress, when every man that is not stultified beyond the surgery of war by his own hypocrisies, knows well that the battle is a battle of over-population, the hæmorrhage of a plethora, and that its terms are merely "My life or yours!" — "The hammer or the anvil?"

The Chinese (till Europe infected them) murdered all but a few selected female infants, and consequently lived in peace and prosperity for two thousand years. Civilization and the arts flourished: famine was rare, and floods and plague were welcomed as a purge.* Our squeamishness has forbidden us to take this elementary precaution, this restraint imposed on prosperity by wisdom; and where are our civilization, our prosperity, our liberty, our Progress? In fifty years will there remain so many monuments of what we were two months ago as Egypt has of its Pharaohs, Greece of its Republics, Rome of its Cæsars? We have used bricks and iron for stone and brass, pulp for papyrus and palm-leaf, rhetoric for fact, pharisaism for publicanism, and our era will perish ere our own bones rot!†

We have pretended‡ that there was no such thing as sex, no such thing as venereal disease, that our publicists were True Believers in Christianity, that our women were pure and our men brave; we have howled down every man who dared to hint the truth: we have sowed the wind of pious phrases, and we must reap the whirlwind of war.

It has been the same in every drawer of our cupboard — and now the skeleton is out. Swinburne's prophecy has come true; we must amend him to read:

"They are past, and their places are taken,
The gods and the priests that are pure."

* P. S. The introduction of Idealism, which left the True Will of the Mongol out of account, has resulted in unrest and anarchy.

† Great achievements of permanent value (other than utilitarian) are evidence of a surplus of wealth & energy. The Temples and Tombs of Egypt and Hindostan; the Dagobas & Pagodas of China, Cambodia, Burma, & Ceylon; the monuments of Assyria, Greece, and Italy; the Masjid of Islam; the Cathedrals, Churches, & Chapels of Initiated Solar-Phallic Mystagogues of the Dark Ages: none such are possible since Power has passed from Prince, Prophet, & Priest to the mindless mass with neither Blood, Insight, nor Control of the Secret Energy of the Universe.

‡ If every one ceases to call a spade a spade, the term "agricultural implement" soon becomes "bad form." It has been universally agreed to avoid all reference to the phallus, and so we find sections of society to be horrified at the word "trousers." Consent to this, and the prude will soon find a new and even remoter object to stir his slime.

We have a credit system which when analysed meant that we were all pretending to be rich, a social system in which we all pretended to be esquires at the least. We had Dukes who never led, Marquesses with no marches to ward, Knights who could barely sit a donkey; we called our slattern slaveys lady helps, our prostitutes soiled doves, our grumbling mumbling fumbling politicians statesmen.

And it is gone like a ghost — and an unclean spirit sure it was that haunted us.

And if I write for England, who will read?
 As if, when moons of Ramazan recede,
 Some fatuous angel-porter should deposit
 His perfect wine within the privy closet!
 “What do they know, who only England know?”
 Only what England paints its face to show.
 Love mummied and relabelled “chaste affection,”
 And lust excused as “natural selection”.

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Caligula upbraids the cruel cabby,
 And Nero birches choir-boys in the Abbey;
 Semiramis sand-papered to a simper,
 And Clytemnæstra whittled to a whimper!
 The austerities of Loyola? to seek!
 But — let us have a “self-denial week”!
 The raptures of Teresa are hysterick;
 But — let us giggle at some fulsome cleric!
 “The age refines! You lag behind.” God knows!
 Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.

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To call forced labour slavery is rude,
 “Terminological inexactitude.”
 This from the masters of the winds and waves
 Whose cotton-mills are crammed with British slaves!
 Men pass their nights with German-Jewish whores,
 Their days in keeping “aliens” from our shores.
 They turn their eyes up at a Gautier’s tale,
 And run a maisonette in Maida Vale.

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Your titles — oh! how proud you are to wear them?
 — What about “homo quatuor literarum?”
 The puissant all their time to vice devote;
 The impotent (contented) pay to gloat.
 The strumpet’s carwheels splash the starving maiden
 In Piccadilly, deadlier than Aden.
 “England expects a man to do his duty.”
 He calls truth lies, and sneers at youth and beauty,

Pays cash for love and fancies he has won it —
Duty means church, where he thanks God he's done it!

I wish I could quote the whole poem;* but it may need another six months before prudery has a final “seizure.”†

It is this prudery which has fought Nietzsche. In its last ditch it is still pretending that Nietzsche, who hated the Germans, was a German. “The Anglo-Nietzschean War!” True it is, the Germans were the only people who had the common sense, the clear sight, the ability to face, grasp and use the facts which Nietzsche thundered to the planet. Had England done so, she would have had two million men always under arms, and Germany must have surrendered without a blow, could never have dared even this desperate dash, this madness which comes of pushing sanity to the wall, and bidding it fight for its life. Nor

could I write that the British army } has been
is being
is about to be annihilated.

Are we fighting to preserve peace, to hold the balance of power, to save civilization, to relieve the burden of armaments, to smash the tyranny of militarism, to sentinel liberty?

Then we should have had an army equal to Germany's, and our fleet should have destroyed hers while we were three to one. You must fight fire with fire. Shelley's “Laon and Cythna” and his “Masque of Anarchy,” Tolstoi and the whole school of non-resistance, where are they now? The “big blonde beast” who visits women with a whip under his arm has not been impressed with the moral superiority of the conquered. He has robbed them and enslaved them and murdered them, he has ravished their women and tossed their children on his bayonets, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Thus spake Zarathustra.

Oh rapture! Font of Medea! Baptism of Rejuvenation! The old world is bathed again in blood; its limbs glow with the crimson; it is the angry sunrise of a new æon, and Apollo shakes himself clear of the dawn-mists, Nietzsche his morning star!

The grey breaks to gold.

Is it not written in the Seventh Incantation of the Book of LIBER VII: (that is of Lapis Lazuli) by Him that is I: —

“The forest of the spears of the Most High is called Night, and Hades, and

* “The World's Tragedy,” Preface.

† P. S. The apparent ‘Victory’ has made it possible for publicists to make a last desperate attempt to conceal the fact of the practically universal collapse of the pretense that Christianity survives — or ever existed, in any real sense, outside the stews & shambles of serfdom.

the Day of Wrath; but I am His captain, and I bear His cup.

“Fear me not with my spearmen! They shall slay the demons with their petty prongs. Ye shall be free.

“Ah, slaves! ye will not — ye know not how to will.

“Yet the music of my spears shall be a song of freedom.”

“O my God, but the love in Me bursts over the bonds of Space and Time; my love is split among them that love not love.

“My wine is poured out for them that never tasted wine.

“The fumes thereof shall intoxicate them, and the vigour of my love shall breed mighty children from their maidens.”

Is not Earth purged? Is not the Pillar established in the Void? Παμφαγε, Παγγενετωρ! Thou art arisen! Is there not an end of the anæmia of the Humanitarian, and the hysteria of the Suffragist, and the stark cunning lunacy of the Cubist-Futurist-Vorticist-Parallelipipedist-Feminist, and all the onanism of the Knut and the Flapper?

Will not man arise again, and hunt and fight and master his mate, and will not woman return to her cooking and her housewifery and the breeding of lusty children to her man? And if Nietzsche be the dawn-star, shall there be no son of man to be a Sun of men?

Had we no prophet? Had we no poet, O all ye weary criticasters of the prostitute-prude Press?

Was there not one to put into the mouth of his king-priest-magus, baffled by fate in the hour of the birth of Christianity, this prophecy of the Anti-christ* —

Listen!

“I will away

Into the mystic palaces of Pan;
Hidden from day,
Hidden from Man,
Awaiting there the coming of the Sphinx
Whose genius drinks
The poison of this pestilence, and saves
The world from all its lords and slaves.
Ho! for his chariot-wheels that whirl afar!
His hawk’s eye flashing through the silver star!
Upon the heights his standard shall he plant,
Free, equal, passionate, pagan, dominant,
Mystic, indomitable, self-controlled,
The red rose glowing on the cross of gold . . .

* “The World’s Tragedy”: concluding passage.

Yea! I will wait throughout the centuries
 Of the universal man-disease
 Until that morn of his Titanic birth . . .
 The Saviour of the Earth!"

* * * * *

It is nine years — nearly ten — since I wrote this Essay — a spasm of royal Rapture enkindled by the Spark struck from the steel of the Sword by the Flint of Fate — at the word War my Soul leapt singing unto the Sunlight. My life for England, and to win the World! So, die I did, not once but many and many a time in these strange years. No stranger years were ever written upon the scroll of Thoth! All values have changed & changed and changed again; dark and tempestuous have rolled the thunderclouds of Fact, and the Föhn of abject Fear has blown out almost every lamp of Truth, and whistles louder lies than ever was known; but the Earth rolls Sunward, Light pierces, Night is daunted, and her ministers are understood to have been shadow-phantoms imagined by Ignorance and Superstition. "Do what thou wilt!" has been proclaimed to many a million; and myself, the Prophet of that Law, made manifest to men as being indeed The Great Wild Beast. Already they have learnt to hate, fear, shun, and drive me forth: the hour is even now at hand when "the keen and the proud, the royal and the lofty" begin to accept my Law as the touchstone of Kingship, to come to me, saying: We "worship thy name, foursquare, mystic, wonderful, the number of the man" — "blessing and worship to the prophet of the lovely Star". For I am Man himself, the avatar of his Solar and Royal essence: Light, Life, Love, Liberty being the functions of my true Self, whose Word is $\Theta\epsilon\lambda\eta\mu\alpha$. For this is "The end of the hiding of Hadit", the realization in consciousness of his bornless Sovereignty, that is the opening of the Aeon of the Crowned and Conquering Child for every Man that Will; and the manifest token of his lordship is his fearless frankness in adherence to my Law, his Oath of Fealty to me as 'the priest of the princes', the Prophet in whose Word is his Energy & his Authority, The Beast of whose Solar Substance he shall build the Temple of deathless and impregnable Beauty, to the Child his God and King. For his light is in me & its red flame is as a sword in my hand to push His order: so that to me His Holy Chosen One, from whom all Lordship is derived, shouldst every Lord and King pay tribute of Truth, ranging himself beneath my Banner of Love under Will, as Warrior Lawgiver of the Hosts of Light.