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THE SOUL OF OSIRIS.

**Aleister Crowley. (Kegan Paul, Trench,
Trubner, and Co. 3s.)**

"The Soul of Osiris" is designated a history," and we take it that Mr. Crowley's poem illustrates symbolically the progress of a soul's evolution from sin to grace. Our argument finds its support in the four sections of the poem, entitle respectively "The Court of the Profane," "The Gate of the Sanctuary," "The Holy Place," and "The Holy of Holies." In such a psychological study as this, embodying the ascent of the soul, as it were, in protest to the materialism of the descent of man, there is much to attract and not a little to repel. Mr. Crowley's poem is a very singular and striking piece of work. Without question the influence of such poets as Swinburne and Rosetti "has largely helped to shape the poetic impulses of the verse before us." The following stanza is a murmurous echo of "The Blessed Damozel":—

My prayer is mighty with my will;
My purpose as a sword
Flames through the adamant, to fill
The gardens of the Lord
With music, that the air be still,
Dumb to its mighty chord.

The prologue moreover, to Charles Baudelaire indirectly testifies to the influence of what we may term the fleshly French school. Hence in the earlier portions of the poem the vague hot breath of the "Erotic Muse"—a breath already mouthed by Swinburne and other masters of modern song—fills the page to the exclusion of all else. We have the passionate pæans of Lust in land of "immortal lips," "the torture of Desire," "intolerable flames of hair," "hungry kissings," and bodies that are either "the vehicle of grace" or "the winepress of sin." But we have had all this before, and better done, to boot. There is a monot-

ony in these ecstatic utterances of overmastering Passion and “a damnable iteration” that is ennui itself about the glorification of mere physical appetite. Indeed without genius the glamour of word painting must ever fail to cloke the nakedness of sin and the repulsive vanity of Desire. It is not, however, on this feature of the work that the critic would wish to dwell. His main attention will be riveted upon the undoubted power and originality that underlies much that is otherwise bizarre and turgid in the verse. The conception of Elijah as one of the Court of the Profane and as the secret lover of the Courtesan Mistress Jezebel is a daring, if unpleasant, piece of realism. Equally realistic and unconventional are the lines entitled Lot. Into the mysticism of the concluding stanzas of the poem we do not pretend to follow our guide. We have no acquaintance with the medley of deities that are invoked in the final Litany. Hormakhon, Horus, Ra, Themia, Hathor and the rest may be excellent company, but we cannot say that their influence throws much illuminating power into the finality of Osiris. Only, to repeat, there is a sense of music and power, a note of vigorous mastery and daring conception in much of “Osiris” that go far to atone for several glaring crudities and much banality. We are compelled to read even where the subject matter fails to attract, and we venture to think that in Aleister Crowley we have found a poet, whose genius has yet to unfold and in whose verse there lies, in the poet’s own words.

Music that sobs and soars and burns,
 And breaks the possible, to dwell
One moving monotone, nor turns,
 Making hell heaven and heaven hell.
The steady impossible song that years
 And brooks no mortal in its swell!