

THE ACADEMY AND LITERATURE

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Other New Books.

Tannhäuser: a Story of All Time. By Aleister Crowley.
(Kegan Paul.)

This is really a tremendous poem. Not only is it printed upon paper twice the size of that which meaner poets use, but also its scheme, which embraces the pursuit of man, in the person of Tannhäuser, after Supreme Knowledge, appears to be commensurate with the whole. Mr. Crowley, as he is good enough to inform us, speaks "both in Hebrew and Egypto-Christian Symbology" and his work is less a drama than a monodrama, and "really a series of introspective studies; not necessarily a series in time, but in psychology, and that rather the morbid psychology of the Adept than the gross mentality of the ordinary man." Not being experts in the psychology of the Adept, we must content ourself with saying that to our gross mentality the adventures of Tannhäuser with the true and the false Aphrodite-Hathoor are exceedingly tedious, and that Mr. Crowley's chief poetic merit appears to be a certain facility in reproducing the emptier melodies of Mr. Swinburne. A short example will perhaps suffice;—

Come, love, thy bosom to my heart recalls
Strange festivals and subtle funerals.
Soft passion rises in the amber walls,
And falls!
None but the dead can breathe the life of love!

Come, love, thy lips, curved hollow as the moon's!
Bring me thy kisses, for the seawind tunes
The song that soars and reads the starry runes,
And swoons!
None but the dead can tune the lyre of love!

Come, love! My body in thy passion weeps
Tears keen as dewfall's, saltier than the deep's.
My bosom! How its fortress wakes, and leaps,
And sleeps!
None but the dead can sleep the sleep of love!

Come, love, caress me with endearing eyes!
Light the long rapture that nor fades nor flies!
Love laughs and lingers, frenzies, stabs, and sighs!
And dies!
None but the dead can know the worth of love!

It is fair to add that, although "Tannhäuser" is not wholly free from morbidity, it does not reach the extreme of unpleasantness to be found in some of Mr. Crowley's earlier works.