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BOOKS OF THE DAY.

MAN AND THE MYSTERIES.

"Tannhäuser." A Story of All Time. By Aleister Crowley. (London: Kegan Paul. 5s.).

Mr. Crowley is moved to express himself in verse, which he handles like an artist; indeed, there are flashes of really fine poetry. Tannhäuser is not a dramatic "character"; nor is this a "play," but a "monodrama"—as the author describes it—in which Tannhäuser is a symbol of the inquiring human soul, yearning towards the Infinite, and the other people are "all little parts of Tannhäuser's own consciousness, and not real persons at all." With a conception so mystical as that of the spirit standing aloof from itself, it was necessary, doubtless, to employ mystical language. But although, as we have already said, Mr. Crowley uses words poetically with a great sense of their beauty and suggestiveness, he very frequently uses terms so obscure as to entirely baffle rather than stimulate the imagination. When Tannhäuser states that he is in search of something that transcends "all that is not and that is;" or when he refers to an "amber-scented voice of light calling my name," we respectively give up the attempt to discover what he means. Mr. Crowley, who lives in Ceylon, has apparently so steeped himself in Eastern symbolism as to prefer a symbol to a plain word when the latter would answer his purpose equally well. Still, setting this aside as a detail which does not altogether detract from the interest of the poem, there is a great depth of thought and imagination in this work. The story of Tannhäuser is, more or less, the story of all men; and though its significance is obvious enough—Venus and Elizabeth are symbols he who runs may read—Mr. Crowley brings a newer atmosphere of subtle spiritual romance into it. In the Venusburg scenes he riots in passionately sensuous thought and language—carnal, yet beautiful; a pagan beauty, which few poets have dared to attempt, and few have succeeded in as Mr. Crowley frequently succeeds. And in amorous and lyrical poetry he seems to be at his best.