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RECENT VERSE.

Mr. Allister [*sic*] Crowley appends to his *Tannhäuser*, a Story of All Time (Kegan Paul and Co., pp. 112, 5s.) a collection of abbreviated press notices in which he is variously described as a "true poet" or as "a windbag foaming at the mouth." In his preface he speaks of this work as nearly identical in scheme with the "Pilgrim's Progress," though "literary and spiritual experts" may detect minor differences in treatment. "*Tannhäuser*" may perhaps be described, in brief, as an epitome of Mr. Crowley's own spiritual adventures, and if he may be accused of egoism it is fair to admit the plea that a man's study of typical mankind must be founded on himself. Certainly Mr. Crowley is not hampered by the prevalent indolence disguised as modesty that will not permit a man to take himself seriously. His drama is intensely serious, and is idealized out of all semblance to humanity. We read of a love that is

No petty passion like these country-folk's,
No fertile glory (as the Love of God),
But vast and barren as the winter sea,

and the whole poem seems to be another expression of the struggle between an ascetic ideal and the senses, rejecting the social compromise as unworthy of the passionate alternations. Mr. Crowley in his preface warns the judicious reviewer that, in spite of certain passages of a frenzied sensuality, he must not be ranked as a sensualist. It may be granted that this poem is essentially a product of the mind, a search for the absolute pursued by means of symbols and images when a more direct expression becomes inadequate. Such a curious conjunction of fancy and speculation requires, we think, verse of more elasticity than Mr. Crowley has at his command. He writes with considerable power and without reserves and too strenuously for beauty. Nevertheless he is at his best in grandiose or extravagant passages such as *Tannhäuser's* story of the Creation, and perhaps at his worst in the more moderate and logical dialogue

with Elizabeth, which becomes very bald and prosaic. His verse is wanting in seduction, in charm, and in commanding rhythms. Beside Mr. Swinburne's, with which it has been compared, much of it is little more than metricised prose. Mr. Crowley claims to be one who "strangely and desperately dares to force a passage into the penetadia of nature; not with the calm philosophy of the scientist, but with the burning conviction that his immortal destiny is at stake. The outcome seems to be obscure, but in these slack days the effort may be respected.