

M.A.P.
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Black Rites at Caxton Hall **What is the Crowley Cult?**

Flat-catching must be proving a most attractive game. The common or garden charlatan cloaks his identity under an Arabian or Persian pseudonym, and professes to treat his clients to glimpses of a world beyond, for fees ranging from half-a-crown to a guinea.

But this is only the blatant huckster, little removed from the obliging gentleman who, dressed as his Satanic Majesty, may be seen at country fairs retail to the simple country people at sixpence a bottle a pocket electric shock—in other words, a phial of pure ammonia.

Society has grown tired of all the old-fashioned hackneyed devices, and yearns for some novel sensation wherewith to pass away its idle hours, and the attendant circumstances of which can be explained in bated breath, "absolutely *entre nous*, of course, my dear."

Hence has grown up in our midst that remarkable phenomenon—the inventor of some new creed, religion, dogma—call it as you please. Necessarily such a personage must combine in his personality tact, considerable brain power, and overpowering plausibility. Gifted with these attributes, it will be an extremely odd thing if he does not amass a comfortable income without much difficulty, and become a candidate for the authorship of that book for which the world is always eagerly waiting, "How to become Rich—Quick."

The Eleusian Priest.

The latest phase of this particular craze for novelty, under patronage presumably of those suffering from the last stages of ennui, is an ingenious scheme originated apparently by a gentleman of the name of Aleister Crowley, who conducts certain ceremonials known as the "Rites of Eleusis," and whose offices are at 124 Victoria Street.

A correspondent, who out of curiosity paid a visit to this gentleman, subsequently determined to obtain quietly (through

an agency) a set of tickets for these rites, and he here describes his experiences.

The office itself gave a sufficient indication of the sort of mummerly which might be expected. On the mantelpiece stood a large crucifix cheek by jowl with a Buddha and a Vishnu. Cabalistic signs covered the walls and even the floor, and the atmosphere was redolent with the air of mystery dear to the heart of a certain section of womanhood.

The poet in charge—for he calls himself a poet—explained that his idea was to tap the Infinite by means of ecstasy, and, in order to produce that extremely disconcerting condition, he had arranged seven ceremonies names after the planets of the Zodiacal system, which were supposed to be symbolical of life.

In the course of conversation this gentleman contended that, provided they were sufficiently worked upon, the man in the street, the bank clerk, the bus conductor, or anyone else would have visions and hear voices *à la* Jeanne d' Arc.

An Elaborate Colour Scheme.

Very interesting indeed! But, still, we know of much cheaper methods. Moreover, it appears that colours play a considerable part in the rites, and for that reason a colour scheme has been arranged. Visitors to the Rite of Mercury, for example, are recommended to wear "shot silk and mixed colours," while those attending the Rite of Venus are to wear "green or sky blue." Other rites call for other colours.

Our correspondent was further informed that owing to bad taste of the public, who would probably clamour only for admission to the "Rite of Venus," the management had felt compelled to issue tickets for the seven ceremonies all together instead of singly, at the moderate price of five guineas. For the purpose of seeing exactly what went on at these ceremonies, my correspondent spent this sum on a series of tickets.

The first rite was duly celebrated at the Caxton Hall, London. My correspondent was ushered into a room the atmosphere of which was so thick with incense that it was reminiscent of a bad November "pea-souper," and was shown to a seat. The seat turned out to be a stool, standing not more than nine inches from the floor, and as my correspondent confesses to an inclination to stoutness, we have sympathy for his sufferings in the cause of duty.

What light there was came from a single electric globe, painted a deep blue, which effectually prevented too much be-

ing seen. Then the entrance door was closed, and apparently locked—what have the London County Council to say about fire?—and the ceremony began.

It consisted chiefly of recitations from Swinburne, given by someone with a strong American accent, followed by a dirge chanted by a gentleman of distinct Teutonic origin. There was an occasional accompaniment by a lady, who played the violin in a somewhat similar fashion to that which might be expected from a typist who attempted to play Tchaikovsky on her typewriter, and at intervals somebody banged a tom-tom.

What Does it All Mean?

What it all meant none of those who had paid five guineas exactly knew, and they were patiently waiting to discover when their money's worth was coming along. No doubt they remembered that the door was locked, and exit impossible, and so, like Mr. Wellman, determined to make the best of a bad job. Every now and then the light was put out, and the darkness was intensified by dead silence, at least what was meant to be dead silence, but the incense had started to get in its deadly work, and there seemed candidates for apoplexy.

Finally, there was a dance, or what was presumably meant for one, and a young lady ran round and round in a circle till she had had enough, when she threw herself down on the ground, and remained in that position till the end. This business endured for nigh on two hours, after which everyone went away, a bit bewildered.

Our correspondent, we are glad to say, is recovering slowly from the effects of his visit, but he complains that the creases in his dress trousers, produced by sitting crumpled up like a Billikin, have so far proved impervious to hot irons or anything else.

Not for Profit.

But enough of this description. The first "rite" was in the main childish, it is true: still. We make no quarrel with Mr. Crowley on those grounds. He is an excellent showman, inasmuch as he gets voluntary workers and stages his productions at a very minimum cost. There is this, however, to be said. The gentleman who was seen by our correspondent at the office in Victoria Street distinctly stated that it was not desired to make any financial profit, and when it was suggested that five

guineas was a stiff price for the series he remarked ingeniously, "Look at our expenses."

Having been invited to do so, we will, and calculate as follows: Rent of small room in Caxton Hall, at the most £10 nightly, or £70 for the seven performances; allow 30 for advertisement, and £10 for incense—the latter is an unforgettable item—making a total of £110.

One hundred entrance tickets—the maximum number permitted to be sold—at five guineas makes £525, affording a margin to the organiser of £415. Deduct expenses on the most liberal scale and there is here, apparently, not such a bad little investment for Mr. Crowley, with whom we have no quarrel any more than we have with the cheap-Jack or the purveyor of quack medicines. If he can find a gullible public, that is his affair and theirs, not ours.

But he is taking himself seriously, or pretending to, and in his "mumbo-jumbo" ceremonies there are indications that, given a little more rope, he might hang himself. Let him take well-meant advice and guard against any possibility of saying anything which might be mistaken for crude blasphemy, or equally unpleasant suggestion. In next week's article an account will be given of the rites of Jupiter and Mars, and it will be left to the discretion of our readers to say what Mr. Crowley is aiming at. Is he a lunatic, a charlatan, a humbug, or a prophet? Is he a magician, astrologer—or, indeed, what is he?