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DEVILISH, SEX-MAD, CORRUPT . . .



Off London's Charing Cross-road there is a bookshop of mystical and occult works. Into it came, a few years ago before the war, a bulky, middle-aged man with piercing black eyes, cruel white face and shaved head. On his small feminine hands he wore strange rings.

"Close your eyes," he said to the proprietor. He did so; when he opened them a moment later, all his books had vanished from the shelves.

The man was Aleister Crowley—mystic, black magician, drug addict, one of the most notorious men of his age, then at the height of his powers and ill fame.

Round him there hung a sweet, sickly odour which came from the sex-appeal ointment with which he smeared himself—ambergris, musk and civet. This, he claimed, made him irresistible to women and caused even horses to whinny after him in the street.

These incidents are told in the full first study of this weird figure by his literary executor, John Symonds ("The Great Beast," Rider and Co., 21s., to be published November 1).

It is the story of a man who, early in life, deliberately chose Evil.

Sex and the lust for power were the driving forces in Aleister Crowley.

And he turned to black magic, the evil art which he thought would give him power over the secret forces of nature.

To black magic he linked a sex life which makes Casanova look like a candidate for the Dunmow Flitch. It began at fourteen when he seduced a servant in his mother's bedroom. It went on unabated until he died nearly sixty years later. Any sexual act became for him a "sacred magical deed."

To the women he associated with he brought ruin. Both his wives became insane; at least five of his mistresses committed suicide.

Styling himself the Beast 666, he called his mistresses Scarlet Women, and branded them on the breast with the mark of the Beast, a cross within a circle.

His approach was brutal and direct.

Introduced in a Paris street to a woman, he raised her wrist to his mouth and bit her until the blood flowed. This he called the Serpent's kiss, and it was said that he had two teeth specially filed for this revolting practice.

In a letter to his second wife on September 20, 1930, he wrote: "You should get a divorce. I admit what some dithering nincompoops are still imbecile enough to call 'misconduct' on forty-seven occasions since August 3—the fatigues of constant travel must excuse the smallness of the figure—with Hanni F. of Berlin."

There could be no doubt about his attraction for women. At the age of sixty he was leaving the Law Courts after losing a sensational libel action during which Mr. Justice Swift described his writing as "horrible, blasphemous and abominable."

A girl of nineteen, who had heard the case, ran after him with tears in her eyes, and said: "This verdict is the wickedest thing since the Crucifixion. Is there anything I can do to help? Couldn't I be the mother of your child?" She got her wish.

It was on such gullible neurotic creatures that Crowley battered, both in his sex-life and his black magic.

Nor did he ruin only women. To his "abbey" in Sicily, where acts of sex-magic, drug-taking and animal sacrifices were part of the daily ritual, came men and women from all over the world.

Sex Pills

During his last years, a shrunken old man with a death's head skull and arms pitted with needle-marks from drugs, Crowley lived almost forgotten at Hastings, peddling sex pills.

The world was busy in a struggle with another evil man who also believed in his magical powers—Hitler.

Crowley died in 1947, and was cremated at Brighton after a strange Gnostic Requiem.

His last words were: "I am perplexed."