

**The "Worst Man in the World"
Tells the Astounding Story of His Life**

by Aleister Crowley
Poet, Artist, Mountaineer, and Magician

*Originally published in the 18 June 1933
edition of The London Sunday Dispatch.*

If there is one subject I detest it is Aleister Crowley. On the other hand, there's no mystery about it. So, if anyone is interested, here goes!

I have been shot at with broad arrows. They have called me the "worst man in the world." They have accused me of doing everything from murdering women and throwing their bodies into the Seine to drug peddling.

Some well-known journalists have delighted in attacking me in print. James Douglas described me as "a monster of wickedness." Horatio Bottomley branded me as a "dirty degenerate" cannibal—everything he could think of.

Murdering My Secretary

Some have been more precise.

In a book I picked up recently the author told a tale of how I murdered cats with terrible ritual in Sicily.

Certain irresponsible newspapers accused me of having murdered my secretary!

The value of all this nonsense is somewhat discounted by the fact that I am back in England after wandering over most of the world, and go my way without interference.

No charge of any sort has ever been preferred against me.

Legend says that my dossier at Scotland Yard fills a whole room. There is a story that Lord Byng, when he

took over, saw a wing of the building particularly vast and quite unusually guarded.

"What's that?"

"The files about Aleister Crowley."

"Goodness gracious me!"

"Of course, we haven't got the last month's stuff in yet. A bit congested."

"Here, this has got to stop! We can't put up new buildings every few weeks. Close the record!"

Nobody stops to look at me in the street. My appearance is, I suppose, that of a simple country gentleman up in town for a weekend.

All my notoriety arises from the fact that I am a magician.

I AM THE MASTER THERION.

Practically my whole life has been spent in the study of magic.

Foolish Talk of Black Mass

Foolish people say that I am a Black Magician, that I am in the habit of celebrating the Black Mass and the Witches' Sabbath, that I eat new-born babes and explore the sky on a broomstick.

They say that Satan is my master and that I am his faithful agent.

But I am a white magician, not a black one. I belong to a secret order which has representatives all over the world; we are all working for the good of humanity, not for its downfall.

Let me say here that it is impossible for a magician to be a man of bad character. He cares nothing for conventions, but he needs the sternest virtues. His powers are limited by himself.

The man who, having practiced strange rites, becomes a drunkard or a drug-fiend, is evidently a failure as a magician. He has lost his grip.

That brings me to what is magic. The ordinary man is inclined to laugh at the word. He says that it is a phantom of the morbid and ignorant minds of the ancient and the Middle Ages.

Yet he is superstitious enough to believe in signs and omens, in astrologers and palmists, who claim to read destiny in stars and hands.

If an Englishman of a generation or two ago could have been shown a little black box and told that if he turned a knob the President of the United States would talk to him, he would have laughed at the idea.

Magic Today—Science Tomorrow

If one could have convinced him that the voice was actually that of the President that Englishman would have been forced to the conclusion that the black box was magical.

And yet we know now that the feat is quite possible, and that the box is only that kind of magic now revealed to the profane as "radio."

What is magic today is science tomorrow. The Hindus "worship idols." Yes? But what exactly do they mean by that? As I myself have observed: they get very interesting results from their "worship."

We, the enlightened West, say that their worship is ignorant superstition and the results coincidence. But are we not in the position of our mythical Englishman listening to the noise from the black box?

Swastika Over My Heart

In my textbook, *Theory and Practice of Magick* will be found the definition of the word magic, or magick, as I prefer to spell it, to distinguish the real from the fake.

It is "the science and art of causing change to occur in accordance with the will."

We magicians are men of science who, by the practice of our craft, keep just ahead of popular understanding. The result is that we are misunderstood and black-guarded all our lives.

After we are dead—sometimes centuries after—the world catches up, and discovers that we were benefactors and not villains.

I am writing these articles as an explanation of magic. Unfortunately, my name is universally identified with the subject, so I fear I must drag myself into the arena. Let me condense my personal history into a few paragraphs.

I was born in Leamington, Warwickshire, on October 12, 1875, the son of Edward Crowley, who was a colleague of John Nelson Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren.

At birth I had three of the distinguishing marks of a Buddah. I was tongue-tied, I had a characteristic membrane which necessitated an operation, and over the centre of my heart I had four hairs curling from left to right in the exact form of a Swastika.

Before Hitler was, I am.

At school I had passions for poetry and chemistry. I had an instinct for chess; experience rapidly proved my ability. I never lost to anyone until—at Cambridge—I met H. E. Atkins, seven years running amateur champion of Britain.

It was at Cambridge that I perceived the futility of worldly ambitions. I had wanted to be a poet and to attain to the greatest success in the Diplomatic Service, for which the late Lord Salisbury had intended me.

Secret Community of Saints

Suddenly all the ordinary ambitions of life seemed empty and worthless. Time crumbles all; I must find durable material for building. I sought desperately for

help, for light. I raided every library and bookshop in the University.

One book told me of a secret community of saints in possession of every spiritual grace, of the keys of the treasure of Nature. The members of this church lived their secret life of sanctuary in the world, radiating light and love on all those that came within their scope.

The sublimity of the idea enthralled me; it satisfied my craving for romance and poetry. I determined with my whole heart to make myself worthy to attract the notice of this mysterious brotherhood.

Then one of the first principles of magic was revealed to me.

It is sufficient to will with all one's might that which one wills. You who read this—whatever you will you can do. It is only a question of commanding the means.

The first proof that I had of this miracle-working capacity which is latent in every man was this: even before I had issued the call for guidance there was a man at my side to answer it.

But the first call: 1896. In a Bierhalle under the shadow of the Matterhorn I met an alchemist.

He is one of the best-known technical chemists in London. One of his scientific feats was the "fixing" of mercury (i.e. the making of it solid at ordinary temperatures) and he had done this by the despised alchemical processes of the Middle Ages.

£100,000 For My One-Way Ticket

He was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, fraudulent imitations of which have created so much scandal in later years.

Through his good offices I was initiated into the Order in November 1898.

I realized that I had found the key to illimitable knowledge and power, that I had started the path which

enabled a man to transcend all the inflictions and disappointments of life.

The Path! I did not guess that it would lead me through all the most obscure and dangerous lands upon this planet, and cost me £100,000 for a one-way ticket.

The Path! One of the final secrets—listen!—is this: not even the inexpressible glory and rapture of the goal, but the Path itself, with all its dangers, hardships, and distress, is the reward worth while.

The initiation ceremony was impressive. I was handed over by my sponsors at the door of a secret temple (even today I must not reveal its whereabouts) by the Kerux or Herald; a man in a golden robe with a drawn sword.

He conducted me through the first of the Great Py-lons. After being blindfolded and bound, purified by being sprinkled with water and consecrated by fire, I was led into semi-darkness thick with the fumes of incense.

I was made to kneel before an altar and repeat a formidable oath of fidelity, of secrecy, and of abstinence from any kind of conduct which might impair my power of self-control.

The hoodwink was removed from my eyes at a throne set up in darkness in the west. Here I was confronted by a black-hooded officer representative of the god Horus.

He gave me my first injunction: "Fear is failure and the forerunner of failure. Be thou therefore without fear, for in the heart of the coward virtue abideth not. Thou hast known me. Pass thou on."

The hoodwink was removed also when I arrived at the throne in the east, where the officer representing the god Osiris gave me another injunction—that the path of attainment lies through the knowledge and use of perfect balance, justice, righteousness, and truth.

Finally I was unbound and bidden to take my place in the north, the place of greatest darkness, to show

that I had taken only the first step in a long and difficult road.

Travelling In the Astral Plane

All this ritual may strike the reader as being unnecessary. But its purpose is to stamp the injunctions indelibly on the memory, more upon deeper parts of the spiritual being of man than the superficial strata of the conscious mind.

I am forbidden to mention the names of those who initiated me, but among them were some of the most distinguished men and women in the Empire in literature, art, politics, the theater, diplomacy, and the army.

I was then a neophyte—a new being born into a new world. I have never gone back to the old world of the gross deceptions and illusions of matter as the senses describe it.

Those who become magicians can travel in the astral plane, visiting distant places while the body still stays at home. They have prepared and proved an elixir of life; they are often seen surrounded with an aura of light.

I have myself tested all these claims and found them true. There is no limit to the possibilities of an attainment.

But these are only superficial things. Magic transcends space and time. All things are possible to an adept, but the virtue of his knowledge and power would desert if he used them for selfish ends or personal gain.

In fact, these words "selfish" and "personal" cease to mean anything to the initiate. He develops himself, and finds himself by losing his old limited self in all that is: for "everything that lives is holy."

Next week I shall describe my world pilgrimage in search of magical attainment.