

PANTHER BOOKS



3/6

JOHN SYMONDS
NO DEED WAS TOO HIDEOUS,
NO SIN TOO EVIL FOR—THE
WICKEDEST MAN IN THE WORLD

THE
**GREAT
BEAST**



THE GREAT BEAST

‘Was Crowley mad? Was he just a super-confidence trickster? Was he just a debauchee who found an easy trick for hypnotizing women? He was all these—and something more. He spent his own fortune on his weird beliefs. What makes him interesting is not that he himself was a freak; it is the influence he was able to exert on so many people of education and social standing.’

—*Reynolds News*

JOHN SYMONDS

THE GREAT
BEAST

*The Life of
Aleister Crowley*

A PANTHER BOOK

THE GREAT BEAST

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**For
GERALD YORKE
Together we tracked down The Beast**

Dilige et quod vis fac

ST. AUGUSTINE

*And he will be seen as he really was;
for I profess to write, not his panegyrick . . .
but his Life.*

JAMES BOSWELL

Mother, Father, and Son

AN undergraduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, who had a reputation for eccentricity, the outspokenness of his opinions, and the length of his purse, wrote the following preface to a philosophical poem he was preparing for the press:

'It was a windy night, that memorable seventh night of December, when this philosophy was born in me. How the grave old professor wondered at my ravings! I had called at his house, for he was a valued friend of mine, and I felt strange thoughts and emotions shake within me. Ah! how I raved! I called to him to trample me, he would not. We passed together into the stormy night. I was on horseback, how I galloped round him in my phrenzy, till he became the prey of a real physical fear! How I shrieked out I know not what strange words! And the good old man tried all he could to calm me; he thought I was mad! The fool! I was in the death struggle with self: God and Satan fought for my soul those three long hours. God conquered—now I have only one doubt left—which of the twain was God?'

A Cambridge bookseller, who admired the poet's talent, and who wished to encourage a young man who wore silk shirts and bought first editions of Shelley and Keats at £100 a time, generously sent the poem off to a printer. In due course it was issued in a white paper cover and bore upon its title page:

ACELDAMA
A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS IN
by
a gentleman of the University of Cambridge
privately printed
1898

The gentleman of the University of Cambridge was Edward Alexander Crowley, who had decided to call himself Aleister Crowley out of dissatisfaction with Edward Alexander and with his parents who had given these names to him. He had read in some book that the most propitious name for becoming famous was

one consisting of a dactyl followed by a spondee, such as Jē-rě-mŷ Taŷ-lōr. Al-eis-těr Crōw-lěy fulfilled these conditions, Aleister (more properly Alistair) being the Gaelic form of Alexander.

Acelandama, much influenced by Swinburne, was his first published work. He had been writing poetry since the age of ten. Now, at twenty-two, he felt sufficiently sure of his talent to announce it to the world in one hundred copies.

The book was read by some of the other gentlemen of the University of Cambridge without arousing much interest. The one review it gathered found it lacking in the virtues that Victorian England expected from its poets, and advised against its being shown to the young.

It is a poem of horror, expounding a philosophy of pessimism and destruction, the emotional nihilism of a young man. Here is a stanza of it:

All degradation, all sheer infamy,
Thou shalt endure. Thy head beneath the
mire
And dung of worthless women shall desire
As in some hateful dream, at last to lie;
Woman must trample thee till thou respire
That deadliest fume;
The vilest worms must crawl, the loathliest
vampires gloom.

Acelandama can be dismissed as a not very successful attempt to transplant Baudelaire's satanism to England, a task which beat Swinburne. Its short and curious preface, however, is of considerable interest, for it indicates the direction its author was to take. One night the forces of good and evil struggled fiercely within Aleister Crowley's breast. There was some doubt which side won; but Crowley rather suggests that the devil got the upper hand. He was not, of course, on a horse prancing around one of the professors of his college, babbling incoherent nonsense till the old gentleman was frightened. This is what really happened:

It was the 31st December, 1896, and Aleister was asleep in a hotel in Stockholm. Suddenly he awoke with the illumination that he possessed a magical means of satisfying a part of his nature which had hitherto lain concealed. It was an ecstatic experience, filling him at the same time with pain and terror—the sort of terror he had felt when, as a child, he came in from the garden and found the rooms on the ground floor empty and thought the Lord had collected his family and left him behind. Something terrible hidden in him had risen to the surface. When he came to think about it afterwards he could not decide whether he had been admitted to the presence of God or of Satan.

In the vacations he usually travelled abroad, wandering solitarily through Europe—to St. Petersburg with the vague intention of learning Russian as a means of entering the Diplomatic Service; to Switzerland during the summer to climb the Alps. Climbing was the only sport in which he took any interest. It satisfied his peculiar needs: it could be done alone; the conquest of a peak gave him a sense of dramatic enjoyment and of personal power. With his school cap on his head he had overcome the fells and gullies of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Wales, and the treacherous chalk cliffs of Beachy Head.

Acelandama appeared during his last term at the University. He had hardly done any work throughout his three years, but the time had not been wasted, for he had discovered what he wanted to become: an adept in the secret arts, a Magus. He had thus found, to use the phrase which throughout his life was always on his lips, his True Will. What was the good, he argued, of becoming, for example, a diplomat? He would soon be forgotten. Say he were made Ambassador to France. Who could remember the man who had filled that post a hundred years ago?

It had been his ambition to be a great poet, but poetry, too, was really no better. He picked out Aeschylus to prove his point. Even in Cambridge, cradle of poets, Aeschylus was just a name to all but a tiny fraction of the three thousand men in residence. 'I must find,' said Crowley, 'a material in which to work which is immune from the forces of change.'

It seemed to him that only magic could guarantee immortality, and by magic he meant the art which reaches the control of the secret forces of nature. His reasons for choosing magic were really rationalizations. He was drawn to this subject because it suited his introspective nature and promised unlimited power. He was also attracted to its dark side, the so-called black magic, which was conducted with the assistance of Satan.

Aleister Crowley was born in Leamington, Warwickshire, on the 12th October, 1875. In his autobiography¹ we are told that his ancestors on his father's side had been settled in England since Tudor times. He claimed the 16th-century poet and preacher, Robert Crowley, as one of them, on no greater evidence, it seems, than the sameness of the name. As he always pretended that he was sprung 'of Earth's first blood', and began his ancestry with the noble Breton family, de Querouaille, it is interesting to note that his father was no more than a brewer, and that his mother, 'of a Devon and Somerset family', was described by one who knew her as a rather common woman. Who his grandparents were he does not bother to tell us. In fact his genealogical tree begins with de

¹ *The Spirit of Solitude. An Autohagiography.* Subsequently re-Antichristened *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley.* 1929.

Querouaille and leaps straight to his father, Edward Crowley, picking up Robert Crowley the Elizabethan poet on the way.

Crowley is a common Irish name, so it is probable that his ancestors, instead of being Breton aristocrats, or belonging to the same family as Louise de Kerouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, were plain Irishmen. But the all-important fact about Crowley's youth and upbringing is that his parents, like the parents of Edmund Gosse, belonged to that sect called Plymouth Brethren. After Edward Crowley had made his fortune out of the family business, he quitted the brewery and spent his time travelling about the countryside preaching Plymouthism to anyone who would listen to him. He would also send off thousands of tracts through the post, a practice which his wife continued after his death. He insisted, like other Plymouth Brethren, upon a literal interpretation of the Bible, foresaw the end of the world, thundered against Papists and Protestants alike and was generally down on everyone who did not agree with him.

After breakfast every morning the Crowley household, including the servants, would gather in the dining-room to read out a chapter of the Bible, each person taking a verse. The little boy Edward Alexander, from the age of four, also took his part: he lisped the verses of the Bible and learnt about the end of the world, salvation through the Plymouth Brethren, the horrible nature of sin and of death, which was Edward Crowley's obsession. Long as the patriarchs had lived, his father dinned into him, they had all died in the end.

Although Aleister Crowley never thought he had much in common with his parents, his life was not unlike that of his father. Both men belonged to a small, chosen sect, tried to convert the world to their point of view, and lived amid the mysteries of religion. He began, at any rate, by identifying himself with his father. Aleister Crowley, too, was once a Plymouth Brother. Plymouthism was the only true faith; he could not, he said, even conceive the existence of people who might be so foolish or so wicked as to doubt it. In his childish ardour he thought of himself as a Christian knight doing deeds of holiness and valour. He wanted to excel himself for Christ as later he excelled himself for the Egyptian god of War, Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

As he grew older his religious ideas turned into something most unexpectedly strange—he had always preferred the sounds of the Hebrew names to the actual biblical narratives; now any description of torture or blood aroused his feelings tremendously. He liked to imagine himself in agony, and, in particular, he fancied himself degraded by, and suffering at the hands of, a woman whom he described as 'wicked, independent, courageous, ambitious, and so on'. One of his youthful heroes from contemporary history was Nana Sahib, the Indian Mutiny leader who is blamed for the

Massacre of Cawnpore. Aleister found his portrait in a book and described it as his ideal of beauty, 'proud, fierce, cruel, and sensual'. It saddened him to think that Nana Sahib had been captured and killed. He wished he had been in India with him, fighting by his side; he would take his share of torturing the prisoners 'and yet suffer at his hands'. During a game of Eastern mutiny he begged his cousin, an older boy, to be cruel to him. He never outgrew these fantasies of being hurt. They were, he explained, connected with 'the hermaphroditism in my physical structure', a delusion not uncommon among bisexual, or homosexual, men. But he had, in fact, no androgynous characteristics, and his breast, in spite of his claims to the contrary, was no larger than that of any other stout man.

The prophetic passages of the Bible, especially those in *Revelation*, fascinated him. He fell in love with the False Prophet, the Beast whose number is 666, and the Scarlet Woman. He no longer wished to be a Christian knight. The 'Elders and the harps' began to bore him, and one day he discovered that his sympathies were entirely on the side of the enemies of Heaven. What Crowley had once loved he now hated. He was unable to say why he had gone over to Satan's side; forty years or so later, when he wrote his autobiography, it still puzzled him, and he died without knowing the answer.

Crowley has left a confused picture of his childhood. He was unhappy at home and at school, but not entirely. The Crowley household wasn't exactly a gay one—Christmas, for example, was banned as a pagan festival—and Aleister was given no toys, for that was contrary to the precepts of Plymouthism; but he seems, nevertheless, to have had his fun. In fact, from his account of his childhood, his parents appear to have been not unkindly middle-class people, but with no understanding (in the modern sense) of children.

When he was eleven, his father died of cancer of the tongue. Aleister had some respect, but only little love, for his father, whose death he had foreseen in a dream. With insight he pointed out that from the moment of the funeral he entered a new phase of development, the main feature of which was rebelliousness.

The first school to which he was sent was one for the sons of Plymouth Brethren (at which the main instrument of instruction was the Bible, and the sole instrument of correction the birch), where he was accused, at the age of twelve, of attempting to corrupt another boy, and for a term and a half was ostracized by everyone, or, as the phrase has it, sent to Coventry.

Later he went to Malvern and then to Tonbridge, both of which schools he hated, and was also taught by a tutor who, between lessons, introduced him to racing, billiards, betting, cards,

and women, thereby securing a word of gratitude in Crowley's autobiography.

'They sent me to Tonbridge; my health broke down; partly, one may say, through what would have been my own fault or misfortune if I had been properly educated; but in fact it was the direct result of the vile system which, not content with torturing me itself, handed me over bound and blindfold to the outraged majesty of Nature.'

A simple note in Crowley's handwriting in the margin of his own copy of *The World's Tragedy*, where this passage occurs, removes all ambiguity: 'I caught the clap from a prostitute in Glasgow.'

He tells us a few anecdotes of his early years which are no different from those of other boys, except the one about a cat, which shows something of the vigour, and indicates a little of the future interests, of this unusual youth.

He had been told that a cat has nine lives, and deduced that it must be practically impossible to kill one.

'I caught a cat, and having administered a large dose of arsenic, I chloroformed it, hanged it above the gas jet, stabbed it, cut its throat, smashed its skull, and, when it had been pretty thoroughly burnt, drowned it and threw it out of the window that the fall might remove the ninth life. The operation was successful. I was genuinely sorry for the animal; I simply forced myself to carry out the experiment in the interests of pure science.'

Much of his early youth was spent in reverie, which is the rule and not the exception for this time of life. He was an emissary of the Devil, he was a knight on the quest of the Holy Grail. He delighted in his chastity as well as in his wickedness; he lived in the land of faery and took every line of poetry for the literal truth.

No picture of a man is complete without a sketch at least of his mother. Aleister's relationship with the plain and domineering woman who gave him birth is one which will delight psychoanalysts. She tried her best to make her only child a religious prig: in return he introduced her to the world in his autobiography as 'a brainless bigot of the most narrow, logical and inhuman type'. He treated her with open abuse and her religion with scorn. The reaction of Emily Bertha Crowley showed both the depth of her religious belief and her fear of her son: she thought he was the Beast that is described in *Revelation*. 'And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. . . . And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God' (*Revelation*, Chap. xiii, vv. 1 and 6).

His reply to this charge is stranger, perhaps, than the charge itself. He believed her: he was, indeed, this Beast, whose number is the number of a man, six hundred and sixty-and-six. Whether Mrs. Crowley intended her views on her son to be understood literally or figuratively, and whether he understood them in the one sense or in the other, makes little difference. She saw in him the living spirit of blasphemy and evil; and on that December night in Stockholm, when he was twenty years of age, he came to recognize and appreciate this spirit in himself. With a growing sense of his own urgent self he believed that he was the Evil One, the Anti-christ (predicted in modern times by Nietzsche, who died mad in 1900), come to sweep away the shambles of a false and outmoded creed, and set up in its place the true faith for mankind.

Now, no one will have the bad when the good is there for the taking, or will worship the devil in preference to God. To Crowley, Christ the Saviour was only the Pseudo-Christ. Christ's enemy was Satan; therefore the Devil is not so bad as he is painted. Indeed, he is a worthy ally; together they will make war upon Christ, and with his destruction the real lord of the Universe will arise. Like the idol Baphomet which the Templars were supposed to have worshipped, he is many-faced, and upon one of his faces is carried the mask of Aleister Crowley.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

IN the summers of 1898 and 1899 Crowley was again climbing in Switzerland. Dr. Tom Longstaff, President of the Alpine Club from 1947 to 1949, saw him there in 1899 and has given us this testimony of his abilities as a mountaineer:

‘ . . . he was a fine climber, if an unconventional one. I have seen him go up the dangerous and difficult right (true) side of the great ice fall of the Mer de Glace below the Géant alone, just for a promenade. Probably the first and perhaps the only time this mad, dangerous and difficult route has been taken.’

He had quickly followed up *Aceldama* with other works of verse: *The Tale of Archais*, *Songs of the Spirit*, *Jezebel*, *Jephthah*, and *White Stains*, the last of which he thought advisable to have printed in Amsterdam. He was the owner of £30,000, a much larger fortune in those days than to-day, and he could (as the Cambridge bookseller and publisher of *Aceldama* had shown him) bring forth his own poems at his own expense as fast as he was able to write them.

Those who have read Crowley's poetry either think highly of

his genius, cast him among the minor poets of the time, or eject him from Parnassus altogether. He was not a great poet, although he wrote a few good poems, such as *City of God* (for a fragment of which, see page 98) and the untitled poem he wrote in 1924 on the banks of the Marne (see page 210). In most of his verse there are rarely found those strains which result from a surrender to the poetic moment; instead, he mainly harnessed his talent to his occult interests and personal obsessions which are unsuitable for poetry. His stanzas awaken the strains of those poets—Shelley, Swinburne, Browning—whom he admired; and the dominating effect is one of insincerity. He tried, for example, to make his love poems more interesting by making them seem sublimely wicked, an impossible thing to do without a real consciousness of sin. Finally, he rushed everything round to the printer before he had had time to reconsider and amend it. The result is a mass of verse, always clearly expressed (he never fell into the modern elliptical manner), but on the whole rather wearisome to read.

White Stains, however, has aroused interest among certain readers who hardly know his other works of verse, because it contains some poems which are frankly pornographic. Pornography is difficult to write well. Insincerity is, perhaps, one of its essential ingredients. As far as this line of literature is concerned, one must give *White Stains* quite a high commendation. In Crowley's writings there is usually a tone of mockery, so one does not really know whether he wishes to be taken seriously or not. Some of his opinions are so preposterous (such as the one in which he identifies Madame Blavatsky with Jack the Ripper) that one is inclined to the view that he was mad.

White Stains is ascribed to George Archibald Bishop, 'A Neuro-path of the Second Empire'. (Bishop was the name of Crowley's pious uncle, of whom he said in his autobiography, 'No more cruel fanatic, no meaner villain, ever walked this earth.') It is prefaced by the statement, 'The Editor hopes that Mental Pathologists, for whose eyes alone this treatise is destined, will spare no precautions to prevent it falling into other hands.' This is, of course, an example of Crowley's humour. The work was supposed to be a rebuttal of the views of Krafft-Ebbing, author of that old handbook of sexual irregularity, *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Crowley's thesis was that sexual aberrations are not, as the German author solemnly affirmed, the result of illness or *faute de mieux*, but 'merely magical affirmations of perfectly intelligible points of view'—in other words, acts of sex-magic, a subject which will be explained when we come to the time Crowley practised them himself.

He believed that *White Stains* was proof of his essential spirituality.

'I did not agree,' he wrote of Krafft-Ebbing's opinions on

sexual pathology. 'I thought that I was able to understand the psychology involved; I said to myself that I must confute the professor. I could only do this by employing the one form at my disposal: the artistic form. I therefore invented a poet who went wrong, who began with normal and innocent enthusiasms, and gradually developed various vices. He ends by being stricken with disease and madness, culminating in murder. In his poems he describes his downfall, always explaining the psychology of each act. The conclusion of the book might therefore be approved in any Sunday School.'

Perhaps; but then one is reduced to a view which can best be exemplified in the conundrum: when is a filthy book not a filthy book? *Answer*: When it is written by Aleister Crowley.

One night in Zermatt he met an Englishman named Julian L. Baker, to whom he expounded the principles of alchemy. Mr. Baker happened to be a chemist, and during the walk back to their hotel he took the young alchemist to task. Aleister, floundering among the mysteries, was impressed. He had, earlier, sent out an appeal for a Master. Was Mr. Baker this Master? he asked himself. And he began to tell him about his search for the Secret Sanctuary of the Saints. Mr. Baker was convinced of the young man's earnestness, and confessed that, although not a Master himself, he could introduce him to one who was.

Mr. Baker kept his word. When they had both returned to London he introduced Aleister to George Cecil Jones, also a chemist, who was a member of a magical society called the Golden Dawn. And Jones introduced Crowley to this society and to its leader, Samuel Liddell Mathers, a learned occultist who had spent years in the libraries of London and Paris restoring, from the various manuscript versions, that oldest and most famous of magical works, *The Key of Solomon*, a translation of which he published in 1889.

In gratitude to Mr. Baker for providing the link, Crowley dedicated to him his *Songs of the Spirit*, then under construction.

Now, half a century later, Mr. Jones refers to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as a club like any other club, a place to pass the time in and meet one's friends. If it was a club, it was a very unusual sort of club. Although founded within living memory, its origin is more obscure than that of the ancient Sumerians. It seems to have arisen out of another club, or society, called the Hermetic Students. Now, the origin of the Hermetic Students is purely legendary. An unknown Master, a figure even more mysterious than Count Saint-Germain (who carried in his pocket the elixir of life), was said to have come to Mathers one day, and instructed him in the ancient mysteries. These instructions, together with Mathers' visions which arose out of them, formed the

spiritual and material basis of the Hermetic Students. The Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, who was a leading member of this society, tried to discover the identity of the unknown Master, but neither Mathers nor his clairvoyant artist wife knew, or if they did they would not tell.

There is another account of the origin of the Golden Dawn, which is the version most generally accepted. During the 1880s a Dr. William Woodman, a Supreme Magus of the Rosicrucian Society of England, was raking over a bookstall in that bibliophile's hunting ground, Farringdon Road, London, when he found a manuscript covered in mysterious ciphers. He promptly bought it; for how much we are not told. After brooding over it for a week with his friend, Dr. Wynn Westcott, the coroner for the London district of Hoxton, and the Secretary-General of the Rosicrucian Society of England, he admitted himself baffled. Mathers, also a member of the Rosicrucian Society of England, was then called in. It was child's play to Mr. Mathers. Here was a system of ceremonial magic with initiation rituals and some solutions of problems of the Cabbala to boot. And if more information were required, it could be had from a certain Fräulein Anna Sprengler, whose address in Nüremberg, also in mysterious cipher, was given as well.

Dr. Westcott wrote at once to Miss Sprengler, and Miss Sprengler replied. She turned out to be a Rosicrucian adept, head of the 'Licht, Lebe, Leben Temple'. An eager correspondence grew up between her and the three British magicians, resulting in her giving them a charter to establish a similar order in Britain. Thus was founded, in 1887, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with Woodman, Westcott, and Mathers as its first leaders.

Shortly afterwards Miss Sprengler died. The next letter to her was answered by her successor, who rather ungraciously said that England could expect no further help from the German lodge, and that enough knowledge had been given already to Messieurs Woodman, Westcott, and Mathers for them to establish their own magical link with the Secret Chiefs.

What does this mean? The Secret Chiefs are super-magicians watching over the affairs of men from their caves in Tibet or some other likely place; or, in so far as they are spirit, in the Empyrean. The concept of Secret Chiefs, or Mahatmas, is of ancient Indian tradition. In recent times it has been popularized under the name of Hidden Masters by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who, in 1875, the year of Crowley's birth, founded the Theosophical Society. These Hidden Masters are her central doctrine, the inspirers of her strange creed, her animus, as the analytical psychologists would say. But whoever they are, and wherever they are, they did not, as we shall see, confine their appearance to Madame Blavatsky.

The Golden Dawn now had the rituals (through the kindness of Miss Sprengler) by means of which they could get in touch with these Secret Chiefs, about whom the Theosophists were making so much ado. It was an essential first step in the working of their magic. Suddenly Dr. Woodman died and Mathers fell out with Dr. Westcott and drove him into retirement. Mathers was a capable organizer but a difficult man to get on with. He was an expert on military matters as well as on magic, and he behaved like a general. He wanted disciples, not colleagues. 'I know you mean well,' he wrote to one of the members of the Golden Dawn, 'but I utterly refuse to concede to you the right to judge my action in ruling the Order.'

Soon the Golden Dawn had about a hundred members with lodges in Edinburgh, Paris, London, Weston-super-Mare, and Bradford. But without contact with the Secret Chiefs (who were the only personalities who could advance the affairs of the Order) dissatisfaction arose. It was therefore up to Mathers and up to him alone to make the contact. And one night in the Bois de Boulogne he did so, and returned in triumph to London. He had had an interview with three of them and been confirmed in the supreme and sole authority as the Visible Head of the Order.

There are points of resemblance between Mathers and Crowley which are striking. They were both men of athletic physique, gazing intently towards the dark regions of hidden knowledge, fascinated by high-sounding titles, inventing a noble lineage for themselves when none in fact existed, and believing that there was no part of them which was not of the gods. Where others saw nothing, they beheld angels, portents, and causeless effects. Their dress, speech, and daily behaviour merged with their dreams. Years later, after Mathers had died in poverty and neglect, Crowley begrudgingly praised him amid paragraphs of abuse. But Mathers was Crowley's prototype of the Magician, and much of the latter's activities, which have the marks of originality, were plain copies of the older man's inventive talents and scholarship.

Swept up by the Celtic Movement, the head of the Golden Dawn called himself MacGregor Mathers, a scion of that noble Scottish family, just as Crowley, at a later date, dubbed himself the Laird of Boleskine and Abertarff for no greater reason than that of having a one-storeyed house of that name near Loch Ness. Later, Mathers transposed his adopted and real name and became Mathers MacGregor; then (after he had gone to live in Paris) the Chevalier MacGregor. Finally he dug up for himself the title of the Comte de Glenstrae. Nightly he changed into Highland dress and danced the sword dance with a knife (*skean-dhu*) in his stocking, a remarkable performance for a man who had never been to Scotland, and was the son of William Mathers, a merchant's clerk.

Such pretences aroused Crowley's scorn, and in the interests of

truth he stripped Mathers of his titles and put him back in his place: ' . . . a Hampshire man named Mathers who inexplicably claimed to be MacGregor of Glenstrae'.

In spite of its high-sounding title, the Golden Dawn met in uninspiring back rooms in Chelsea and the central area of London. Those who could pay their few shillings contribution for stationery, rent, and out-of-pocket expenses. Crowley described his first meeting with the members of the Order, among whom were Arthur Machen, the writer, and Florence Farr, the actress, as a bit of a shock—they were such an assemblage of nonentities. But, nevertheless, he entered into this Order on 18th November, 1898, and accepted all the vows and obligations.

* * *

He was waiting without the portal under the care of a sentinel while the Hierophant (Mathers), between the pillars and before the altar, addressed his chief officers and the assembled members. Crowley was clothed in a strange, feminine-looking robe with a hood over his head so that he couldn't see a thing, for the light of the natural world is but darkness compared with the radiance of Divine Light. And he was held by a triple cord, a token of nature's tie which bound him. A voice cried from within the Hall of Neophytes:

'Child of Earth! arise, and enter into the Path of Darkness!'

Another voice, disputing, barring his entrance: 'Child of Earth! unpurified and unconsecrated! Thou canst not enter our Sacred Hall.'

Water and fire then purified and consecrated him.

The Hierophant spoke again, as a god before the assembly of gods. 'Child of Earth! wherefore hast thou come to request admission to this Order?'

A voice answered for him. 'My soul is wandering in the Darkness seeking for the light of Occult Knowledge, and I believe that in this Order the Knowledge of that Light may be obtained.'

'Are you willing,' asked the Hierophant, 'in the presence of this assembly, to take a great and solemn obligation to keep inviolate the secrets and mysteries of our Order?'

'I am,' replied Crowley.

He was ordered to kneel and place his right hand upon a white triangle which symbolized his active aspiration towards the Higher Soul. He bowed his head and was touched once with the sceptre. Then he repeated, after the Hierophant, his obligations: to keep the Order secret; to maintain kindly and benevolent relations with its members; and to prosecute with zeal the study of the occult sciences.

The penalty for breaking these oaths was severe: a hostile current

would be set in motion against him, which would cause him to fall slain or paralysed 'as if blasted by a lightning flash! So help me the Lord of the Universe and my own High Soul.'

'Child of Darkness!' cried the Hierophant, terminating the ceremony. 'Long has thou dwelt in darkness. Quit the night and seek the day!'

The hood over Aleister Crowley's head was then removed, and he joyously arose with the light of understanding already beginning to shine in his eyes and the magical name, or motto, of 'Perdurabo', which means 'I will endure to the end'.

Thus was born, in a house in Great Queen Street, London, Brother Perdurabo, a Neophyte 1°=10□ of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The Golden Dawn, in common with other Rosicrucian and Masonic societies, had its members arranged in a hierarchy of office. As one increased in wisdom and purity, so one ascended the scale. At the top is an entity called Ipsissimus, who is perfection itself. Next in descending order, are Magus, Master of the Temple, Adeptus Exemptus (the grade held by Mathers), Adeptus Major, Adeptus Minor, Philosophus, Practicus, Theoricus and Zelator. These grades are identified with the ten branches of the tree of life, symbol of the universe, whose explanation lies in the mystical doctrine of the Holy Cabbala. The first stages are comparatively easy, to judge from the way Crowley swarmed up them; the later ones, anything after Adeptus Minor, so difficult that Dr. Israel Regardie, the foremost living authority on this subject, considers that those 'individuals who lay claim openly to such exalted grades, by that very act place a gigantic question mark against the validity of their attainment'.

In December, 1898, Crowley took the grade of Zelator, and that of Theoricus and Practicus in the two following months. The Order insisted upon a three months' breathing space for members before allowing them to leap to the next grade, so Crowley did not become a Philosophus until May. He certainly did better at the Golden Dawn than at Trinity College, where after three years' study he was given no degree at all.

Mathers, searching for a system of magic which really works, had discovered in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal in Paris a strange and unique manuscript, *The Book of Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, 'as delivered by Abraham the Jew unto his son Lamech, A.D. 1458'. It is said that that old French Magician, Eliphas Lévi, also knew of this document and drew much of his power from it.

Abraham the Jew (or his Master, Abra-Melin) seems to have been an entirely honest man. His magic does not explain one mystery by another, but is a kind of teach-yourself system in which some practical guidance is given for those who wish to impose

their will on nature. Since contemplation, prayer, and abstinence are enjoined, the magic of the Mage who called himself Abra-Melin is, in essence, the same as that Eastern magic commonly known by the name of yoga. For this reason, perhaps, it works. And Abra-Melin doesn't hold up the proceedings by asking you to hack off the hand of a man hanging from the gibbet, or acquire half a pint of bat's blood.

In magic there have always been two schools, the one invoking the forces of good, the other evoking the forces of evil, or white and black magic. Now Abra-Melin teaches that the good, or angelic, forces are superior in power to the bad, or satanic, forces; and that the latter, as a punishment, have to serve the former. All material effects, all phenomena, are the results of the actions of evil spirits working under the directions of good ones. And sometimes the other way round; for bad spirits manage, occasionally, to escape, and, revengefully, they do what harm they can. These satanic forces conclude pacts with men and hold them in their power as Mephistopheles held Dr. Faustus; for man is the middle nature between angels and demons, and has attendant upon him a Holy Guardian Angel and a Malevolent Demon. The practising magician has therefore to lead a strictly pure life. By prayer and contemplation in a suitable place (called an Oratory) he can call forth his Holy Guardian Angel, who will instruct him in the right use of the Powers of Darkness. On the other hand, if he fails to steer clear of temptation he will speedily become a prey to the Malevolent Demon and his career will be a series of misfortunes ending at his death with a rapid descent to hell.

Abra-Melin gives warning that when the aspirant starts to perform the operation of invoking his Holy Guardian Angel he will find himself strenuously opposed by his family. He must therefore shun them and go off into the wilderness. Crowley, by now almost an outcast from his mother, uncles, and aunts (all of whom were Plymouth Brethren), was only too pleased to leave home. So he took a flat in the wilderness of Chancery Lane and, by way of disguise, gave out that he was Count Vladimir Svareff. A further volume of his poetry, entitled *Jezebel*, appeared under his new name, which, he said, he adopted to increase his knowledge of mankind. He had seen how servile were Cambridge tradesmen towards members of the University; now he would know how they behaved towards a Russian aristocrat.

Instead of constructing an Oratory, he furnished two of the rooms as temples, one for the performance of white magic, the other for black magic. The former room was lined with six huge mirrors for the purpose of throwing back the force of the invocations; the latter room was empty, save for a large cupboard in which stood an altar supported by the figure of an ebony Negro standing on his hands. The only other article in this black temple was a human

skeleton, which Brother Perdurabo fed on blood, small birds, and beef tea. And both temples had their magic circle and pentagram in the centre of the floor.

During one of the ceremonies at the headquarters of the Golden Dawn Crowley became aware of a tremendous magical force. It emanated from a young man with luminous eyes and a mass of black, untidy hair. This was Brother Iehi Aour, called among men Allan Bennett. The fame of Iehi Aour, who was four years older than Crowley, was immense; he was esteemed second only to Mathers himself, and was, perhaps, even more feared.

When they were unrobing in another room, Iehi Aour suddenly came up to Perdurabo, looked penetratingly at him and said in an almost menacing manner, 'Little Brother, you have been meddling with the Goetia!'

Perdurabo, averting his gaze, denied touching the Goetia, a technical word meaning those operations of magic which deal with malignant or unenlightened forces.

'In that case,' rejoined Iehi Aour, 'the Goetia has been meddling with you.'

Crowley made no comment on this charge, but recorded it as if he were inclined to agree with it. In Crowley's face or aura Brother Iehi Aour had observed, it seems, the presence of something evil.

The next day Crowley went in search of Allan Bennett and found him sharing a tenement slum south of the Thames with another Brother of the Order. He was shocked to see the Very Honoured Iehi Aour living in such poverty and discomfort, and he immediately invited him to come and share his flat with him. On the condition that he should be Perdurabo's guru and teach him all he knew, Iehi Aour accepted this generous offer.

Crowley had come to the end of his search. He had, at last, found the Master he needed. Bennett moved into Chancery Lane, and soon these two seekers after the light were performing the magic ceremonies of their Order, evoking spirits, and consecrating talismans. The holy guru was, alas, ill from asthma, which he relieved with opium, morphine, and cocaine, switching from one to the other after periods of about a month. 'I have seen him in bed for a week, only recovering consciousness sufficient to reach for the bottle [of chloroform] and sponge,' said Crowley, who was himself to suffer as badly from this complaint. Now Brother Iehi Aour, who had been trained as a chemist, told Brother Perdurabo of an ancient tradition. 'There exists,' he said, 'a drug whose use will open the gates of the World behind the Veil of Matter.'

Crowley was determined to find this drug, and he began to experiment upon himself, and others, with opium, cocaine and hashish: he had no difficulty in getting them, for the Dangerous Drugs Act was not passed till 1920.

Was he afraid of becoming an addict? Apparently not, for he

rejected the theory of irresistible fascination: moral rectitude was his safeguard. But his moral rectitude was no safeguard against magical accidents in his apartment where the forces of good and evil congregated so closely. After returning one night from dinner with Brother Volo Noscere (Mr. G. C. Jones), he found an enormous and mysterious black cat on the stairs, his (white) temple broken into, the altar overthrown and the furniture tossed in all directions.

'And then the fun began. Round and round the big library tramped the devils all the evening, an endless procession; 316 of them we counted, described, named, and put down in a book. It was the most awesome and ghastly experience I have known.'

* * *

Crowley's sexual life at this time, and at all times until he fell into a coma and died, was, to use his own description, both 'powerful and passionate': he seems to have had a never satisfied sexual appetite.

At the age of fourteen he lost his virginity in these circumstances: finding himself one Sunday morning alone in the house with none but the poor kitchen maid (his family had gone off to the Brethren's 'morning meeting'), he possessed her upon his mother's bed. Before he was twenty he was determined to try everything in the way of sexual experience, an ambition which, as his life shows, he fulfilled. He was, in fact, a satyr, but as he made out of coitus an act of worship, or a 'magical affirmation', as he called it, his fornications are more interesting than those, for example, of Casanova. His urge for sexual relations with women while at the University was 'a blind, horrible ache for relief', and forty-eight hours never passed without this urge being satisfied and the ache alleviated.

Crowley had a low opinion of women. They should, he said, be brought round to the back door like the milk. For this reason, perhaps, he was very brief in his account of his mistress of this time, 'a seductive siren whose husband was a colonel in India'.

'Little by little I overcame my passion for her, and we parted. She wrote to me frequently and tried to shake my resolution, but I stood firm.'

He would probably never have mentioned her at all if it had not been for the following incident:

Allan Bennett wanted to go out East to study Buddhism on the spot and breathe the air of a warmer climate. Although Crowley could have paid his fare there, he declined to do so on the grounds that such an act would destroy the freedom of their relationship. Instead he conjured up to visible appearance the might spirit Buer, who healeth all distempers in man and governeth fifty Legions of Spirits, and asked him to supply Bennett's fare.

The next day Aleister received a letter from the seductive siren who was seductive no longer, begging him to call at her hotel. 'I can't remember how it came into my mind to do what I did, but I went to see her. She begged me to come back to her, and offered to do anything I wanted.'

'You are making a mess of your life by your selfishness,' Aleister said to her. 'I will give you a chance to do an absolutely unfettered act. Give me a hundred pounds, I won't tell you whom it's for, except that it's not for myself. I have private reasons for not using my own money in this matter.'

'So much for Buer,' commented Crowley after the colonel's wife had given him the money. Over twenty years later, when Crowley's name had become familiar to the world, this incident was published in the *Sunday Express*. 'He came under the notice of the police in 1900, when he stole £200 from a widow with whom he cohabited; the woman, however, refused to prosecute.'

The year, at least, is right, for it was in 1900 that Allan Bennett left for Ceylon and Crowley for Scotland, the latter taking with him the large mirrors of his white temple.

The Laird of Boleskine

IF you wish to perform the operation of conjuring up your Holy Guardian Angel, says the magician Abra-Melin, you must first of all construct an Oratory in a secluded spot. This Oratory, or temple, should have a door opening northwards on to a terrace covered with fine river sand. At the end of the terrace there should be a lodge where the evil spirits (who can be approached safely only after the Holy Guardian Angel has been invoked) may congregate; for they are prohibited in the Oratory; and this lodge should have windows on all sides so that the demons therein may more easily be seen.

Where should Crowley build his Oratory? He wandered about the Lake District and into Scotland looking for a suitable place, and finally decided upon a fairly large but single-storyed house called Boleskine. Lock Ness lay before it, and a hill behind; it was an ideal spot for the practice of Abra-Melin magic. Brother Perdurabo made his Oratory out of one of the rooms facing north, and collected sand from the lake for his terrace, as instructed. Easter was the season for commencing the Operation, so meanwhile he went salmon-fishing, love-making, and terrorizing the local inhabitants and sheep with his three companions: a Great Dane, an Alsatian (or German Sheep Dog as it was then called), and a Bulldog.

In accordance with the old Scottish practice of calling a pro-

prietor of land a Laird, he described himself as the Laird Boleskine, and sometimes as the Laird of Boleskine and Abertarff, which he thought more appropriate than Mr. Aleister Crowley for a man with a house and two acres of grounds in the wilds of Scotland. By the word 'Laird' Crowley understood not so much 'landlord' as *Lord*, which was now his title when he left his Highland home and debouched on the Sassenachs over the border. Accordingly he had a coronet embossed on his notepaper, with a gilded B for Boleskine beneath, and (on other sheets of notepaper) a choice of the best coats of arms, with an aphorism in Sanscrit thrown in.

Conjuring up Abra-Melin demons is a ticklish business. Crowley successfully raised them—"the lodge and the terrace," he wrote, "soon became peopled with shadowy shapes,"—but he was unable to control them, for Oriens, Paimon, Arifton, Amaimon and their hundred and eleven servitors escaped from the lodge, entered the house and wrought the following havoc: his coachman, hitherto a tectotaller, fell into *delirium tremens*; a clairvoyante whom he had brought from London returned there and became a prostitute; his housekeeper, 'unable to bear the eeriness of the place', vanished, and a madness settled upon one of the workmen employed on the estate and he tried to kill the noble Laird Boleskine. Even the butcher down in the village came in for his quota of bad luck through Crowley's casually jotting down on one of his bills the names of two demons, viz. Elerion and Mabakiel, which mean respectively 'laughter' and 'lamentation'. Conjointly these two words signify 'unlooked-for sorrow suddenly descending upon happiness'. In the butcher's case, alas, it was only too true, for while cutting up a joint for a customer he accidentally severed the femoral artery and promptly died.

The astral plane was a much explored territory. Crowley has left a record of some of the ascents which were performed by projecting, or imagining, his own image outwards, and then transferring his consciousness to it. The next step was to make (by an invocation of the right forces) this picture of himself rise upwards. Sometimes he used the crystal for this purpose. He said he saw Christ with the woman of Samaria, and then himself crucified on the cross. He stood within the Divine Light with a crown of twelve stars upon his head. The earth opened for him to enter into its very centre, where he climbed the peak of a high mountain. Many dragons sprang upon him as he approached the secret sanctuary, but he overcame them all with a word.

Crowley soon realized that he was born with all the talents, nay, genius, required for a great magician. It was no wonder that he had attained the grade of Philosophus and then Adeptus Minor so speedily.

* * *

In 1890, MacGregor Mathers was earning his living as the curator of the Museum of Frederick J. Horniman, M.P., at Forest Hill. In 1891, the appointment ceased; he had had a quarrel with Horniman and been dismissed. Fortunately, Horniman's daughter, who had been a fellow student at the Slade with Mathers' wife, Moina Bergson, gave him £443 a year and on this he went to live in Paris.

In his studies of Egyptian religion Mathers had discovered certain long-forgotten truths: and then, one night, the goddess Isis herself appeared to him and ordered him to proclaim her divinity.

He took a house in the fashionable quarter of Auteuil, decorated it like an ancient Egyptian temple and began to perform the appropriate rites for the entertainment and instruction of his friends. For these Egyptian Masses he appeared in a long white robe; round his waist was a metal belt engraved with the signs of the zodiac; on his wrists and ankles were sacred bracelets, and over his shoulders a leopard's skin, the spots symbolic of the stars. Moina, his wife, stood beside him, her long flowing hair expressive of the light radiating through the universe. Upon her head were a cone and a lotus flower. 'The lotus springs up,' said Mathers by way of explanation, 'from the muddy waters of the Nile. The cone is the flame of life. The whole idea of the dress of the priestess is that the life of matter is purified and ruled by the divine spirit of life from above.'

Isis-worshippers crowded out the temple in 87 rue Mozart, Encouraged, Mathers carried the proceeding over to the Bodinière Theatre, where, for a fee, the world at large could witness them. In the centre of the stage was an enormous coloured plaster figure of Isis, flanked by other Egyptian gods and goddesses. Facing these figures was an altar upon which was a Tibetan greenstone lamp burning with an eternal flame. The Hierophant Rameses (Mathers) appeared out of the shadows holding in one hand a sistrum, or rattle, with which he shattered the profound silence; in the other hand he held a spray of lotus. He approached the altar and in a powerful voice began to recite some prayers from *The Book of the Dead*.

Then appeared the High Priestess Anari (Mrs. Mathers). In passionate and penetrating tones she invoked the goddess Isis. When she had finished, a young Parisian lady danced the dance of the four elements. And so on.

The whole performance lasted about two hours, and was, to quote one critic, 'artistic in the extreme'.

* * *

From his house in rue Mozart, Deo Duce Comite Ferro ('With

God as my Leader and the Sword as my Companion'), to call Mathers by his magical name, or motto, issued his edicts and received back long arguments by the earliest post. The Brethren were growing rather tired of his arrogance, which seemed to have increased since Brother Perdurabo's frequent visits to him. On a suggestion from Yeats, who was known as *Daemon Est Deus Inversus* ('The Devil is the Reverse Side of God'), they began to regard Crowley as a kind of clinical case.

Crowley had demanded of the London lodge to be initiated into a higher grade of the Order, but this was refused; so he went to Paris, where Mathers, after getting him to swear further oaths of loyalty and obedience, initiated him instead. Crowley then returned to London and asked Yeats for the magical rituals consonant with his new grade.

'Early in 1900,' wrote Crowley, 'I applied to the Second Order in London for the documents to which my initiation in Paris entitled me. They were refused in terms which made it clear that the London body was in open revolt against the Chief, though afraid to declare its intentions.'

Crowley hurried back to Paris, and informed Mathers of what had happened. Mathers was furious. He thundered at the rebellious members of the London lodge: they must either submit to his discipline or get out. Crowley, now Mathers' 'Envoy Plenipotentiary', swept back to London and attacked on the legal front with a police-court summons for the return of temple furniture and one vault which *Deo Duce Comite Ferro* claimed as his personal property.

'I have had,' wrote Yeats to Lady Gregory, 'to take the whole responsibility for everything, and to decide on every step. Fortunately this wretched envoy [Crowley] has any number of false names and has signed the summons in one of them. He is also wanted for debt. . . . The envoy is, I believe, seeking vengeance for our refusal to initiate him. We did not admit him because we did not think that a mystical society was intended to be reformatory.'

It was this quarrel which split and finally sank the Golden Dawn. All except five of the members could not stomach the combination of Mathers and Crowley. The attempts to reorganize the movement, reflected in Yeats's anonymously issued pamphlet, *Is the Order of the R[osae] R[ubeae] et A[ureae] C[rucis] to remain a Magical Order?* were ineffectual, for magical societies are not democratic, but hierarchic, and, consequently, autocratic, for the Adept at the head insists upon obedience. Mathers was the ideal leader of the

Golden Dawn and Crowley his true heir. Yeats's gentle spirit made him recoil from the demon Crowley and thus from his own motto: *Daemon Est Deus Inversus*.

Crowley's quarrel with Yeats went back to the previous year. One night he had called on this Brother to show him his *Jephthah*, which was then in page-proofs. He expected Yeats to acclaim him as a fellow poet and a genius. Instead

'he forced himself to utter a few polite conventionalities, but I could see what the truth of the matter was. I had by this time become fairly expert in clairvoyance, clair-audience and clair-sentience. But it would have been a very dull person indeed who failed to recognize the black, bilious rage that shook him to the soul. I instance this as a proof that Yeats was a genuine poet at heart, for a mere charlatan would have known that he had no cause to fear an authentic poet. What hurt him was the knowledge of his own incomparable inferiority.'

After the Golden Dawn had banished its leader and slammed the door in the face of Perdurabo, Yeats was alarmed that these two ruthless men might make an assault on the premises of the Order and try to seize by force what they had failed to get by persuasion or by law, and for weeks he was 'worried to death' and getting only four and a quarter hours' sleep as he kept watch. There is a story which joins perfectly with these events, that the Irish poet with a big stick in his hand sat nightly on some steps in London waiting for a black brother who sought to harm him and the Order to which he belonged. And it is said that this black brother, or apostate, was Aleister Crowley.

The schism between the Paris and the London lodges rather suited Brother Perdurabo. He was now Second-in-Command under Mathers and his aggressive nature was enjoying the tension of the quarrel. However, he did not stay long to enjoy his position. He had met in Paris two of Mathers' friends who had recently returned from Mexico. From their account, Mexico seemed an interesting place, so Crowley packed up and went there to see for himself.

His first stop on the way to Mexico was New York, where he arrived at the climax of a heat wave which, he said, was killing about a hundred people a day. He was appalled at the thought that Mexico must be much hotter and almost changed his mind about going there. His three days in New York were mainly spent in crawling in and out of a bath of cold water; then he fled on the train to Mexico City.

He hired a house overlooking the Alameda, the beautiful park in the centre of Mexico City, and engaged a young Indian girl to look after him and share his bed. Then he settled down to magic,

and made his first experiments in acquiring invisibility by invoking the god of Silence, Harpocrates.

And unto ye, O forces of Akasa, do I now address my Will.
In the Great Names Exarp, Hcoma, Nanta and Bitom,
By the mysterious letters and sigils of the Great Tablet of Union.

By the mighty Name, of AHIH, AGLA, IHVH ALHIM.
By the Great God Harpocrates;

By your deep purple darkness:

By my white and brilliant light do I conjure ye;

Collect yourself together about me; clothe this astral form with a shroud of darkness.

After weeks of concentrated prayer and practice he achieved his first results; his reflection before the mirror became faint and flickering. Then he walked out into Mexico City with a gold and jewelled crown upon his head and a scarlet cloak about his shoulders without attracting the slightest attention. Doubtless the clear light of Mexico helped to penetrate what was left of his corporality.

One afternoon he picked up a woman who attracted him by 'the insatiable intensity of passion that blazed from her evil inscrutable eyes, and tortured her worn face into a whirlpool of seductive sin'. She took him with her into the slum where she lived, and there he passed a few delirious hours. Crowley records this incident in his autobiography, not as an indication of his sexual tastes, or of his love for things morbid and ugly, but merely as an introduction to the drama *Tannhäuser* which he wrote immediately afterwards. He had been left so unsatisfied by this Mexican whore that only the continuous labour of sixty-seven hours on the rhymed conversations between Venus and Tannhäuser finally appeased him. As the name indicates, the theme is Wagnerian. When he had seen the opera, the part of Venus was sung by an American prima donna whom he had met at one of Mathers' occult performances in Paris. They fell in love and became engaged, but Crowley only hints at this affair, which, anyhow, was cut short when he departed for Mexico.

Tannhäuser, A Story of All Time, in four acts and an epilogue, tells us nothing of his surfeit of lust which had reminded him of a more conventional liaison; and nothing about the mysterious American prima donna. Had he written about the one or the other, the singer or the hag in the slum, he might have made a genuine poem; instead we were fobbed off with bombastic verses around the German legend. Why he was prompted to follow this prostitute into her den, and what she meant to him as they lay in each other's arms, he does not say. He tells us only that he was fascinated by her face and left her in a fever.

In these days of public warnings of the dangers of venereal disease, one might well wonder whether Crowley had any fears of catching syphilis. He was always scornful of those who were afraid of promiscuity on this score, for the fear in him, if he had ever had that fear, had been exorcised by the reality. '*J'ai attrapé le syphilis en 1897,*' he wrote to his French doctor in the 'twenties, '*me suis soigneusement mercurialisé, n'ai jamais eu de symptômes ultra-sérieux et rien de tout depuis 1917.*' He must have had this disease in mind when his masochistic feminine soul sang:

'I am to Thee the harlot, crowned with poison and gold, my garment many-coloured, soiled with shame and smeared with blood, who for no price but of wantonness have prostituted myself to all that lusted after me, nay, who have plucked unwilling sleeves, and with seduction, bribe, and threat multiplied my stuprations. I have made my flesh rotten, my blood venomous, my nerves hell-tortured, my brain hag-ridden. I have infected the round world with corruption.'

One day his Indian girl, having learned about his interest in mountains, called him up to the roof of their house and pointed out snow-capped peaks, Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, both over 17,000 feet—that is higher than the Alps by 2000 feet, but not so difficult to climb. Crowley explained to her that he intended to climb these mountains, which, in the clear air, look as if they are standing just outside the city gates, but that he was first waiting for his friend, a mighty climber of mountains, to arrive from England.

This was Oscar Eckenstein, an English mountaineer of German-Jewish extraction whom Crowley had met at Wastdale Head in Cumberland, rendezvous of mountaineers in England. Eckenstein had been a member of the Conway expedition to the Himalayas in 1892, and was a familiar figure in the Alps.¹ He had invented a new type of crampons, or climbing irons, which enabled mountaineers to dispense with the laborious method of cutting steps in the ice. He was short and sturdy and seventeen years older than Crowley. Apparently Eckenstein liked Crowley. Crowley certainly liked Eckenstein. He and Allan Bennett were the only two people about whom he never let fall a single unfriendly or critical remark. He called Eckenstein the greatest climber of his age. He loved him as a brother and as a father-figure whom he could respect. As Bennett was his guru for magic, Eckenstein was his master in mountaineering. It is interesting to note that all three men suffered from asthma.

¹'Eckenstein,' wrote Crowley to Harry Doughty in 1924, 'provided he could get three fingers on something that could be described by a man far advanced in hashish as a ledge, would be smoking his pipe on that ledge a few seconds later, and none of us could tell how he had done it; whereas I, totally incapable of the mildest gymnastic feats, used to be able to get up all sorts of places that Eckenstein could not attempt.'

Towards the end of the year Eckenstein arrived and together they went off to Amecameca, the base of both mountains and the starting point for climbers. They began on Ixtaccihuatl, which unpronounceable word is the Aztec for 'sleeping woman'. They established a camp at 14,000 feet and remained there for three weeks, climbing this beautiful mountain on all sides and living on canned food and champagne. Crowley claimed that he and Eckenstein broke several world records.

When they had returned to Amecameca to celebrate their triumph, they were greeted by their host with a long face. He told them the sad news: Queen Victoria was dead. To his amazement, he saw Crowley fling his hat into the air and dance for joy. To Crowley and, he believed, to many others—certainly to all artists and thinkers—Queen Victoria was sheer suffocation, a huge and heavy fog. 'We could not see, we could not breathe,' he said, and although he admitted that under her England had advanced to prosperity, 'yet, somehow or other, the spirit of her age had killed everything we cared for. Smug, sleek, superficial, servile, snobbish, sentimental shopkeeping had spread everywhere.' Victoria, doubtless, reminded him of another female autocrat: his mother.

Their next expedition was to Colima, over 500 miles west of Mexico City. Near this town is an active volcano, Mount Colima. The two wanderers emerged from the forest and watched the volcano erupting. They were twelve miles away but the wind was towards them. Soon the falling ashes were burning tiny holes in their clothes. They advanced, climbed a neighbouring peak, and then began the ascent of Mount Colima itself. They never got far; their feet started to burn through their boots and they turned back.

They climbed Popocatepetl under unusual circumstances. A Mexican newspaper, *The Herald*, had got wind of the activities of these two Englishmen, and cast some doubts on their climbing accomplishments. 'We had published nothing, made no claims,' rebutted Crowley. Eckenstein was indignant. He went to the bar frequented by *The Herald's* reporters, made the acquaintance of the writer of the article and invited him to join an expedition to Popocatepetl, the 'smoking mountain', and thus acquire a first-hand knowledge of mountains and of men who climb them. The reporter accepted. The rest of the story can best be told by Crowley himself.

'One of the world's records which we had left in tatters was that for pace uphill at great heights. Long before we got to the lowest point of the rim of the crater our sceptical friend found that he couldn't go another yard—he had to turn back. We assured him that the case was common, but could easily be met by the use of the rope. So we tied him securely to the middle; Eckenstein set a fierce pace uphill, while I assisted his tugging by prodding the recalcitrant reporter with my axe. He exhausted

the gamut of supplications. We replied only by cheerful and encouraging exhortations, and by increased efforts. We never checked on our rush till we stood on the summit. It was probably the first time that it had ever been climbed in an unbroken sprint. Our victim was by this time convinced we could climb mountains. And he was certainly the sorriest sight!

Orizaba, or Citlaltepetl, 'mountain of the star', the highest peak in Mexico, they did not try: for a while they were tired of climbing mountains. But they agreed that, as soon as possible, they would organize an expedition to the Himalayas and attempt K2, the second highest mountain in the world.

Eckenstein packed up and went home, and Crowley, who had spent nine and a half months in Mexico, set out for San Francisco.

'I strolled across to Juarez to kiss My Girl good-bye. O Mexico, my heart still throbs and burns whenever memory brings you to my mind! For many other countries I have more admiration and respect, but none of them rivals your fascination. Your climate, your customs, your people, your strange landscapes of dreamlike enchantment rekindle my boyhood.'

He would look up Allan Bennett in Ceylon—for he wanted to ask him a question about Mathers—and go home when he had climbed K2. Unlike Eckenstein, he had never been out East: this was going to be his Grand Tour.

He broke the journey at El Paso, the border town between Texas and Mexico, and saw three peons playing cards among a crowd in a labour camp. (The life of Aleister Crowley is a series of ecstasies, abominations, and bizarreries. The incidents he witnessed as he roamed about the world take on the same dark hue. We see and remember the things that touch our imagination and ignore or forget the rest.) Suddenly one of the players flung himself across his poncho on to the man opposite, twisted his fingers into his long hair, and thrust his thumbs into the corners of his eyes.

It was over in a moment: the man's eyes were torn from their sockets and his assailant, disengaging himself by a violent jerk, was off like a streak. 'The shrieks of the mutilated man were answered by universal uproar. Some followed on foot, others ran to their bronchos, but the great majority maintained an attitude of philosophical indifference. It was no business of theirs, except as far as it might remind them to visit the barber.'

He stayed a week in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, and left on a Japanese boat for Hawaii. On Waikiki Beach he met an American woman of Scottish origin, ten years older than himself, married to a lawyer in the States, and mother of a teen-age boy. She had, Crowley said, come to Hawaii to escape hay fever. He

fell in love with her, wrote a long poem, *Alice: An Adultery*, under her inspiration, took her with him to Japan, and there left her. He was very pleased with *Alice*, which contains fifty poems, one for each day of his passion.

At noon she sailed for home, a weeping bride
Widowed before the honeymoon was done.
We sobbed, and stretched our arms out, and
despaired,
And—parted. Out the brute-side of truth
flared:
‘Thank God I’ve finished with that
foolishness!’

Crowley did not say what caused the break-up of their love, but whatever it was, it left him conscious of the sadness of life and of the mysterious demon who drove him darkly onwards. Alice was the first of a long line of women who taught him that he was not made for love.

He went on to Ceylon and found Allan Bennett, who was staying with a holy yogi¹ in the Cinnamon Gardens, Colombo. The question which had been bothering Crowley since he had left England, and for an answer to which he had travelled three-quarters round the globe, was then put; but put in such a way that one doesn’t know what, exactly, was being asked. When Crowley dictated his account of this incident he was hazy with drug poisoning. Besides, it was twenty years later and in another country. However, the story runs thus:

One day Brother Iehi Aour (Allan Bennett) and Brother Deo Duce Comite Ferro (MacGregor Mathers) fell into an argument about the god Shiva, the Destroyer, whom Iehi Aour worshipped. Said I.A., ‘If one repeats His name often enough, He will open His eye and destroy the Universe.’

Brother D.D.C.F. disagreed. The thought that his life should depend upon Shiva keeping his eye shut was too much for him. Finally I.A. sought to end the argument, which had worked Mathers up into a rage, by assuming a yoga posture and repeating *ad nauseum* the mantra, ‘Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva . . .’

D.D.C.F. left the room. When he came back half an hour later Brother I.A. was still in the Padmasana position and muttering, ‘Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva . . .’

‘Will you stop blaspheming?’ roared Mathers.

But the holy man only continued with his ‘Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva, Shiva . . .’

¹ The late Sri Paránanda, Solicitor-General of Ceylon.

'If you don't stop I'll shoot you!' And Mathers drew out a revolver.

But I.A., being concentrated, took no notice, and continued to repeat Shiva's name.

Before D.D.C.F. could pull the trigger Sister V.N.R.¹ (Mrs. Mathers) entered the room and saved the life of Brother I.A.

That is the story, but what is true and what is false about it, and what Crowley wanted to ask Bennett about, he does not say.

The two seekers after truth went off together to Kandy, and hired a furnished bungalow on the hills overlooking the lake. Iehi Aour continued his yoga meditation and Perdurabo his poetry. But soon Crowley grew interested in yoga too and under Bennett's instruction began his first serious study of the subject. This was a Magical Retirement and Crowley was in the hands of his Holy Guru.

He progressed so rapidly that within a few months he reached the state of Dhyana, which he described as a tremendous spiritual experience . . . the subject and object of meditation uniting with excessive violence amid blinding brilliance and unearthly music. He made, in particular, one important discovery which was to come in useful later on. Combining certain ideas from Western magic with Eastern yoga, he developed a technique whereby he could make even the dullest person into a genius. When Crowley became a Master himself, this was one of his abilities which attracted the backward, but ambitious pupil.

While Crowley went big-game hunting—he shot a buffalo with a Mauser .303,—grew a beard, and lusted after the joys of the flesh, Allan Bennett tore away the last ties that held him to the world, and stretched out his hand for the Yellow Robe; that is, he became a Buddhist monk. The two brethren of the Golden Dawn who had shared a flat together in Chancery Lane bid each other good-bye; the one went off to the mainland of India in search of new adventures, and the other to a monastery in Burma.

Crowley's wanderings about India during 1901-2 produced at least one unusual experience. He wanted to visit what he called 'the most interesting part' of the big temple at Madura, which was, and maybe still is, prohibited to Europeans. Like his hero, Sir Richard Francis Burton, the explorer and orientalist, who, disguised as an Arab, entered the forbidden city of Mecca, he dressed himself in a loincloth and, in a nearby village, held out a begging bowl. The story sounds a little unlikely, but there was no limit to Crowley's antics. No one was deceived by this performance, of course, but Crowley gained the sympathy of the natives, who, persuaded of his sincerity and impressed by his yoga accomplishments, finally allowed him to enter some of the secret shrines, in one of which he sacrificed a goat to Bhavani.

¹*Vestigia Nulla Retrorsum*, I never retrace my steps.

After exploring the north of India for a few months, he thought he would like to see how Brother Iehi Aour was getting on in Akyab, so he sailed for Rangoon, and from there proceeded up the River Irrawaddy. He decided to cut across country from Midon, but before the wild Arakan hills his coolies refused to go on, so Crowley and his companion (a man called Edward Thornton whom he had met in Calcutta) decided to turn back. They hired a thirty-five-foot-long, dug-out type of boat with an awning in the middle, just broad enough for two men to pass, and started downstream. Although ill with malaria, Perdurabo sat at the stern with a rifle across his knees, potting at every animal that came in sight.

Forty-five years later, when Crowley had become mere skin and bones and staring eyes, this return journey to Rangoon hadn't deserted his memory. And one rainy afternoon during 1947, when I was with him in his little boarding-house room in Hastings, surrounded by his books and paintings (one was of that sinister-looking lover of his, Camille), he cast away gloom with a strange tale of a trip in a canoe down the Irrawaddy, with a rifle across his knees.

He arrived in Akyab on the 13th February, 1902, and rushed ashore to meet Allan Bennett. He found him in the monastery of Lamma Sayadaw Kyoung, standing like a giant in his yellow robe beside his diminutive Burmese brethren. Brother Iehi Aour had dropped the child's play of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn for the real life of the spirit. The Buddhist Sangha had claimed him. He was now the *Bhikkhu* Ananda Metteya, and many did him reverence.

During Crowley's short stay at the monastery he worked hard on a new poem (which later appeared under the title of *Ahab*), and at Hindustani, for he was to be the interpreter on the projected expedition with Eckenstein to the Himalayas. And Bennett was in a little hut half a mile away meditating quietly.

If Perdurabo had achieved proficiency in yoga, Ananda Metteya had literally surpassed himself in this art. Food and water were quietly placed on the window ledge for the European *Bhikkhu*. One day one of the Brethren came to Crowley and said that for three days the food hadn't been taken in from the window ledge and there was no reply to his knocking. Crowley hurried to investigate.

He opened the door of the bungalow and to his amazement and horror saw Ananda Metteya hovering in the air at eye level. He no longer had any weight and in the draught from the open door he was being blown about like a dry leaf. . . .

Against Chogo Ri

CROWLEY and Eckenstein had been quite serious about going to the Himalayas and climbing K2, that mighty mountain which is the culminating point of the Karakoram. In 1892 Eckenstein had almost caught a glimpse of K2, which is the name given to Chogo Ri, or Mount Godwin-Austin, on the Indian survey map; for he was a member of Sir William Martin Conway's famous expedition. Eckenstein does not mention Conway in his account of his travels in this part of the world, *The Karakoram and Kashmir, An Account of a Journey*; nor does Conway mention Eckenstein in his, for these two men discovered, when they were on the verge of civilization, that they did not like each other, and Eckenstein left the party and wandered home alone.

Upon his return to London from Mexico, Eckenstein began organizing the expedition, keeping Crowley informed by letter. An agreement was drawn up between them, which Crowley prints in full in his autobiography but which boils down to these simple conditions: Eckenstein, to whom it was left to find some more climbers who could pay their way and make themselves otherwise useful, was to be the leader. Obedience to him must be unquestioned, but if a climber thought that in carrying out his orders he might lose his life, he had the right to refuse. Disputes were to be decided by majority vote. No one was to purchase any articles without Eckenstein's knowledge and consent. Any interference with the natives' prejudices and beliefs was forbidden; and women were to be left strictly alone.

This agreement was only part of the eager correspondence between two men contemplating an assault on a mighty, unscaled and hitherto unattempted mountain in a distant country. K2 was then the highest mountain in the world accessible to Europeans, for Mount Everest lies on the border between Tibet and Nepal, two states rigidly closed to Europeans. It was not until 1921 that the first climbing party obtained permission to approach Everest.

In March, 1902, Crowley met the team at Delhi. Apart from himself and Oscar Eckenstein, it consisted of a 22-year-old Cambridge man, Guy Knowles, a 33-year-old Swiss doctor and mountaineer, J. Jacot Guillarmod, and two experienced Austrian climbers, H. Pfannl and V. Wesseley, both 31 years of age.

Crowley was the second in command. He had paid £1,000 towards the expenses—or so he says in his autobiography. Mr. Knowles, however, told me that Crowley never put down a penny and that most of the cost of the expedition was borne by him.

In Crowley's account of the expedition, written eighteen years later, he summed up his climbing companions in the following

manner. Towards Eckenstein he kept his usual affection: he was the noblest man Crowley had ever known, even on a mountain. Guy Knowles is rather damned by faint praise. Pfannl and Wesseley are abused for having no climbing experience apart from the Alps and for behaving as if they were still in the Tyrol. Wesseley is called a pig because he made Crowley feel sick by the way he ate on the glacier and because he had not sufficient imagination to fall ill—as everybody else had done—and both Austrians are dismissed as 'undesirable aliens'. As for Jacot Guillarmod, who had been a doctor in the Swiss Army, 'he knew as little of mountains as he did of medicine'.

Look at the map of Asia. Across the north of India lies a range of mountains whose peaks are higher than anything in Europe, Africa, or the Americas. They begin where the Alps leave off, for they are on a plateau of 12,000 to 18,000 feet. In spite of many heroic attempts, their highest peaks are unclimbed to this day,¹ the wilderness of snow and ice in which they lie is still largely unexplored, and their numerous mountains unnamed.

It was into this part of the world that the Eckenstein-Crowley expedition made its way. They were not the first white men to go there. Sir William Martin (afterwards Lord) Conway had preceded them, and five years before him Sir Francis Younghusband, who in 1904 settled a dispute between the British Government and the Tibetans with the help of an escort of 2,500 men, had seen K2 at close range.

Chogo Ri is concealed by satellite mountains. As Colonel Younghusband rounded the end of a spur and beheld for the first time its towering ice walls, he gasped with amazement. It rises over 12,000 feet from the high tableland that supports it, to a total height of 28,250 feet. It was higher than anything that he had ever imagined. He thought it an absurd notion that anyone should attempt to climb it.

Two courageous, middle-aged Americans, Dr. William Workman and his wife Fanny, had also been wandering about and climbing in this part of the Himalayas before Eckenstein, Crowley, Knowles, Guillarmod, Pfannl and Wesseley appeared. And since the 'nineties of the last century other parts of the Himalayas had been approached by mountaineers. But Eckenstein's party was the first to attempt an actual assault on K2.

The train took them to Rawalpindi in the Punjab, where they descended with their three tons of baggage. The rest of the journey was on foot, by pony, and by a two-wheeled pony-drawn cart called an ekka, which Crowley described as a contraption which suggests a hansom cab with the back knocked out and the driver

¹ This was written in 1951; since then, the three largest peaks in the Himalayas, Everest, Chogo Ri (K2), and Kangchenjunga, have been climbed.

on the floor, 'as might have been conceived by the man who invented the coracle'. Fifteen ekkas were engaged, and off they went. At the village of Tret they were mysteriously interrupted by a police inspector who arrived post-haste in a two-horse rattle-trap with instructions to detain Eckenstein. The following day the Deputy Commissioner of Rawalpindi descended with an order from no less a person than the Viceroy himself forbidding Eckenstein to go on.

Eckenstein returned to Rawalpindi, and the expedition, under the command of Crowley, pushed on to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. They were all bewildered and rather depressed. No one knew why Eckenstein had been arrested, for no explanation had been offered. Three weeks later their leader rejoined them, after having 'cornered' Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, and asked him what he had against him. Lord Curzon, apparently, never told him, for Eckenstein professed complete ignorance of the whole business and was unable to enlighten his crew: there were, of course, rumours of his being a 'spy', a Prussian one, on account of his German name.

On the 28th April they left Srinagar with 170 native porters and Conway's map, which Crowley found difficult to read or, as he ironically put it, to reconcile with nature. The ekkas were exchanged for kiltas, vase-like baskets which the coolies carried on their backs. And the ponies were returned to their owners. The terrain now before them was one of steep mountain passes and primitive rope bridges slung above ravines and rivers of mud. Through every village they passed a temporary clinic was established. A doctor was a rare bird in these parts. Dr. Jacot Guillarmod's meticulous and rather dry story of the expedition, *Six Mois dans l'Himalaya*, is interspersed with accounts of rough and ready operations performed upon the natives.

The scenery began to lose its vegetation; the marches grew more arduous. In spite of a biting wind, the glare of the sun was very distressing. On one side they were frozen, on the other roasted. At Skardo they ran into a sandstorm, which rose from the bed of the Indus and blotted out the view of the mountains.

The last link with civilization—such as it was—was the village of Askoley, where Eckenstein, ten years previously, had left Sir W. N. Conway. Here a dispute broke out between Eckenstein and Crowley over the latter's books. It had been decided that, on these last stages of the journey, they shouldn't carry more than forty pounds on their backs. Crowley was weighed down with poetry.

'Eckenstein wanted me to leave behind my library. His theory of travelling in wild countries was that one should temporarily become an absolute savage; but my experience had already shown me that man shall not live by bread alone. I attributed the

almost universal mental and moral instability of Europeans engaged in exploring to their lack of proper intellectual relaxation far more than to any irritations and hardships inseparable from physical conditions. Perfectly good friends become ready to kill each other over a lump of sugar. I won't say that I couldn't have stood the Baltoro Glacier in the absence of Milton and the rest, but it is at least the case that Pfannl went actually mad, and Wesseley brooded on food to the point of stealing it.'

Like Baudelaire, Crowley could go three days without bread, but not one day without poetry. He stood firm. He told his leader that either he took his books with him or he left the expedition. Eckenstein gave way, of course.

A caravan of 230 men, 18 sheep, 15 goats, and more than 20 chickens made its way into the wilderness, climbing steadily higher. The coolies came to Crowley, he said, and told him that they knew they would never return, but this they did not mind: it was Kismet.

The Baltoro Glacier is about thirty miles long and two miles wide, a rising field of debris and ice brought down from the mountains on either side of it. About twenty tributary glaciers feed the Baltoro. A muddy torrent, the Bralduh, rushes out from its snout and down the Biaho Valley to become one of the sources of the Indus.

On the 8th June Crowley, with a large topaz ring on his finger, and 20 coolies, stood before this formidable moraine. They were at 11,580 feet: the ascent of K2 had begun. Pfannl and Wesseley with 80 men followed a day's march behind; and the rest of the party behind them.

Near the end of the Baltoro, at 15,500 feet, commences a tributary glacier which leads straight up to the mountain. Conway, who had stood at the foot of this glacier, called it Godwin-Austin, after the man who first surveyed the region. They were now entirely on the ice, and where no white man had ever trodden before.

On the 16th June K2 rose up magnificent before Crowley's advance party.

The poet of the expedition stared at it with only a practical eye, watching it through the drifting clouds with his binoculars, sketch-book in hand to draw the best line of approach. The matter-of-fact Dr. Guillardod, who sighted it two days later, was spellbound.

'At first the fascination that it exercised on our minds was so great that, in spite of being accustomed to appreciate peaks at a glance, we were overwhelmed and paralysed. We stared at it dumbly, not being able to find a word to express the impression it made on us.'

Along the Baltoro they had been making their camps and moving their stores. Crowley was now at Camp VIII, halfway up Glacier Godwin-Austin and only five miles from the formidable peak of K2 itself. He spent the whole day examining the King of the Karakorams through his glasses. The best approach to the summit, he concluded, was along the south-east ridge. Although he had not made a circuit of the mountain and seen what the ridges were like on the other sides, he had, nevertheless, fallen upon the best, if not the only possible, way up, as the American expeditions of 1938 and 1939 were to prove. The next day he trudged on for three and a half hours, searching for a suitable spot for a main, or base, camp for the actual assault, until he was stopped by overhanging ice walls of incredible height. Here, at 17,332 feet, directly under the south face of the mountain, he set up Camp IX.

The following morning Frater Perdurabo climbed in a north-easterly direction, away from those unassailable ice walls. He covered a distance of about two miles, and ascended to 18,733 feet. The way to the summit seemed clear from where he was now, so on this spot he pitched Camp X. Eckenstein afterwards criticized him for selecting this exposed site to pitch a tent, to which Crowley sarcastically replied that he hadn't 'the slightest ground for supposing that they were likely to meet any conditions which would make Camp X other than a desirable residence for a gentleman in failing health'.

The rest of the party began slowly to arrive at Camp X. They had now come to the heart of the business. There was the mountain asking to be climbed and reaching out towards them with avalanches of snow, ice, and rock which, with each fall, blotted out the landscape in fog and snow.

In the Himalayas the blizzard-bearing winds from the high plains of Central Asia meet the monsoons from the Indian Ocean, turning the snow and ice into death traps for climbers. The aim therefore of mountaineering parties in the Himalayas is to rush to the summit in the short period of the spring before the treacherous monsoons begin; or in the few weeks of the autumn before the whole of this part of the world is locked in ice.

Crowley, Pfannl, and Guillaumod, one of each of the three nationalities represented on the expedition, were to go first. While they were preparing for the ascent, the weather broke, and Eckenstein and Knowles fell ill with influenza. Two days later the wind dropped, but it was still snowing. Then there was one fine day, followed immediately by a blizzard which tore up the end of Crowley's tent although it had a hundred-pound weight on it.

On the 28th June the weather cleared. Everything was made ready for Crowley, Pfannl, and Guillaumod to set off, but they

awoke the next morning in a high wind which made climbing impossible and froze their fingers as they drank their coffee.

A day later Crowley was down with snow-blindness. His eyes felt as if they had red-hot sand at the back of them. On the 1st July Pfannl and Wesseley went off reconnoitring and came back to report that the north-east ridge was definitely climbable. Against Crowley's advice, the main camp was moved round the mountain and up to 20,000 feet.

On the 10th July, when a day of fine weather turned up again, Wesseley and Guillardmod set off and reached a height of 22,000 feet, which is 200 feet higher than the highest point reached seven years later by the Duke of Abruzzi, whose expedition to K2 is considered, erroneously, to be the first attempt ever made on this mountain.

This was the highest point reached. Upon their return to Camp XI, they found Crowley ill with malaria. His temperature was 103 degrees and he saw butterflies in the frozen air. He also saw Knowles in an unfavourable light and grabbed his Colt revolver. Now, Knowles didn't like Crowley, and when he saw him pointing his gun at him he jumped. And Crowley fell over from a short blow to the stomach and his gun, like the butterflies, flew away.

The continual bad weather was robbing them of their chance of climbing to the summit, or at least of getting any higher. The July days were running out. Living at such a height is, in itself, difficult, for the atmospheric pressure is much lower. Two hours were spent making a pot of lukewarm tea, and the whole day in boiling some mutton.

The two Austrians went further northwards and established Camp XII at 21,000 feet. A few days later a coolie brought down a note saying that Pfannl was ill. He was spitting blood. Crowley said that Pfannl went insane and saw himself as three persons, one of whom was a mountain with a dagger threatening to stab him. Dr. Guillardmod injected the unfortunate Austrian with morphine.

The weather showed no signs of clearing. Reluctantly they decided to abandon the expedition. They had not succeeded in doing what they had set out to do, but they had achieved something. They were the first to attempt K2 and they had lived for longer than had ever been lived before at the remarkable height of 20,000 feet.

At the beginning of August they retraced their steps down the glacier.

Prince and Princess Chioa Khan

IN October, 1902, Crowley embarked at Bombay for France, stopping en route at Cairo. He didn't go and see the Pyramids, but wallowed in the fleshpots of Shepherd's Hotel instead. He wasn't, he said, going to have forty centuries look down upon *him*.

Since leaving England he had been corresponding with a young painter, Gerald Kelly—now Sir Gerald Kelly, President of the Royal Academy. They had met in the following way during Crowley's last term at Trinity: a Cambridge bookseller, whom Crowley called 'the most nauseating hypocritical specimen of the pushing tradesman that I ever set eyes on' (was this abuse due to his having published *Acelandama?*), showed Kelly a copy of Crowley's first book. The concealment of the author's identity with a phrase which awakened memories of Shelley,¹ and the quotation from Swinburne, aroused Kelly's curiosity. Here is Crowley's choice from Swinburne:

I contemplate myself in that dim sphere
Whose hollow centre I am standing at
With burning eyes intent to penetrate
The black circumference, and find out God.

Kelly enquired after this mysterious 'gentleman of the University of Cambridge', and a meeting was arranged at the latter's apartment at 37 Trinity Street, for he did not have rooms in the college.

The poet was good-looking, wore a great floppy bow tie round his neck, and rings of semi-precious stones on his fingers, rings as strange and as remote as their owner's gaze. His shirts were of pure silk, a little dirty, perhaps, at the cuffs and collar, but that only went with his manly air. He was a master of that esoteric game called chess (and who can ever get to the bottom of chess?), had played in two matches against Oxford and won his chess half-Blue. (Leaded Staunton chessmen were in their mahogany box upon a folding card-table which stood open, scattered with poker chips). He was also a master of language, riposting with words of dry humour, and with scholarly ease capping one quotation with another.

An atmosphere of luxury, studiousness and harsh effort pervaded this apartment. Books covered the walls to the ceiling and filled four revolving walnut bookcases which stood on the floor. They were largely on science and philosophy, with a moderate collection of Greek and Latin classics, and a sprinkling of French and Russian novels. On one shelf shone the black and gold of *The Arabian*

¹ *The Necessity of Atheism*, by a gentleman of the University of Oxford.

Nights of Burton; below was the flat canvas and square label of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Valuable first editions of the British poets stood beside extravagantly bound volumes issued by Isidor Liseux. An early Rabelais in dull crimson morocco stamped with the arms of a Cardinal was next to John Payne's *Villon* in virginal white. Hard by stood the *Kabbalah Denudata* of Knorr von Rosenroth, its vellum rusty orange with age; it was, so to speak, the advance guard of an army of weird old books on alchemy and kindred subjects, such as the forged *Grimoire* of Pope Honorius, the *Enchiridion* of Leo the Third, the *Nuctemeron* of Apollonius.

Over the door hung an ice-axe with worn-down spike and ragged shaft, and in the corner was a canvas bag containing a salmon-rod.

The painter quickly grew to like the poet immensely; the poet was soon kindled by the appreciation of the painter. They became warm friends and when term was over met in London where Kelly's father was the vicar of Camberwell.

While Crowley had been in the Himalayas, Kelly had been serving his apprenticeship in Paris. Having business with Mathers in Paris, Crowley wrote to Kelly from Cairo and invited himself to stay with him.

* * *

Brother Perdurabo, laden with wisdom from the East, shook with excitement at the thought of his arrival at Mathers' door. Suddenly, in all his glory, he would appear. In a letter to Kelly he wrote of his impending descent upon rue Mozart as his Hour of Triumph. When in the winter of 1899-1900 he had supported Mathers against the London lodge, he had been content to hold up Deo Duce Comite Ferro as a hero and submit to his will. Now he thought he could get Mathers to submit to his: it would have been easier for Crowley to have walked up calmly to the top of Chogo Ri.

The Hour of Triumph was celebrated only by Crowley himself, and not even by him to any great degree. Mathers greeted him in silence, quite unimpressed by the Himalayas, yoga (a subject he was never interested in), or the obtruding genius of the young man before him. What these two Brethren of the Golden Dawn said to each other, one can only try to guess. Crowley, who wrote in detail about most things, passes over this matter as if it were too embarrassing to record.

Of course the trouble with Mathers was that he was a Black Magician. Instead of conjuring up his Holy Guardian Angel he'd only brought forth a Malignant Demon. Thus argued Crowley. And Mathers had stolen some of his things. Before going off to Mexico Crowley had left at rue Mozart a dressing-case (worth fifty guineas), and when he asked for it back Mathers only shook his head and denied ever having seen it.

The break between the two magicians was inevitable. Mathers wanted only subordinates, and Crowley couldn't sit for long at the feet of any Master. Besides, he had made up his mind that he, and he alone, should be the head of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

His friend Kelly introduced him to a little circle of artists who met in a restaurant called *Le Chat Blanc* in rue d'Odessa. From this cénacle he sauntered out and met Auguste Rodin and Marcel Schwob. Schwob introduced him to Arnold Bennett and William Ernest Henley. Crowley also made the acquaintance of Eugène Carrière and a young doctor, who wished to make a career for himself as a writer, called William Somerset Maugham.

For his autobiography Crowley recalled these personalities and events with characteristic exaggeration, as if it were the crowning glory of Rodin's life to meet the brilliant young English poet and magician, Aleister Crowley. He explained, with subtle penetration, the cause of Schwob's mental and physical agony (Schwob died two years later): it was due to that complaint which Beecham's pills so immediately remedies.

His enthusiasm for Rodin was immense. To complete the identification of himself with the great French sculptor, he composed a series of short poems, entitled *Rodin in Rhyme*, which Schwob obligingly translated into French.

Le Chat Blanc, and those who frequented it, were part of the raw impressions for the introduction to a little erotic book, *Snowdrops from a Curate's Garden*, which Crowley wrote two years later. But it was left to Maugham to draw a skilful picture of this club and of Crowley, whom he made the central figure in his novel *The Magician*. Crowley was, of course, the lion of *Le Chat Blanc*: those who hadn't the courage to face lions, fled.

* * *

In July, 1903, Crowley went to Edinburgh to look for a mistress-housekeeper and to meet Kelly, who was coming to stay with him. He made a date with the former, a lady known as 'Red-headed Arabella', and took the latter with him to Boleskine, where a certain L. C. R. Duncombe-Jewel, who had disgraced himself among the Plymouth Brethren by turning Roman Catholic, was staying as a kind of bailiff. (This gentleman wore a kilt, called himself Ludovic Cameron, and advised everyone to talk Gaelic although he couldn't do so himself.)

In later years Crowley liked to make a list of his accomplishments: poet, chess-master, mountaineer, magus, etc. He might have added leg-puller, for in that art he certainly excelled. It was this feature which attracted his friends most. The anecdotes about him, humorous and sinister, began to accumulate. Crowley himself

cherished the humorous ones on scraps of paper, a record of his witty youth; they support the theory that laughter is produced by witnessing the embarrassment of others. Here is one which fits into the narrative at this point.

During the summer he had been whiling away the time with some woman whom he had picked up in London. One day, bored, he sat down in his library in Boleskine and wrote the following letter to the secretary of the Vigilance Society, a kind of organization for the suppression of vice.

'Sir,

'I am sorry to say that the prostitution in this neighbourhood is *most unpleasantly* conspicuous.

'Perhaps you would inform me what steps (if any) I can take to abate this nuisance, which every day seems to me to grow more intolerable.

'I would willingly spend a considerable amount.

'I am, sir,

'Yours very truly,

'Aleister MacGregor.'

By return post the secretary of the Society replied to the effect that they would send an observer up immediately. After a further exchange of letters and the passage of about a week came the disappointing report that their observer had not found prostitution to be especially conspicuous in the little town of Foyers. To which Aleister MacGregor, the Laird of Boleskine Manor, feeling that he had been shocked long enough over this matter, replied on a post-card with this one sentence: 'Conspicuous by its absence, you fools!'

Kelly had not been long at Boleskine when he received a letter from his mother, who had gone to Strathpeffer (twenty miles or so north of Foyers) for a cure. Could he come over? There was something important she wanted to discuss with him. Enclosed with her letter was a note from his sister, Rose, saying that she was in a jam, and he must help her. That same day Kelly and Crowley left for Strathpeffer.

When Rose caught sight of her brother in the company of a magnificent creature in full Highland kit of the colourful MacGregor tartan, she knew he had brought with him the celebrated poet, explorer and mountaineer, Aleister Crowley. She went out to meet them.

After introducing his friend, Gerald disappeared with his mother to learn what the trouble was about. It was all on account of Rose's stupid flirting. She had married a man much older than herself. Now she was a widow, and, to her chagrin, living again with her parents. It had been a disappointing marriage in every respect; she was now making up for it by flirting with all the men she met. When

they fell in love with her and proposed, she hadn't the heart, or the purposefulness, to refuse. What did she want? Love, passion, understanding? She didn't really know. The previous year she had become engaged to a South African. He had gone home to earn the customary fortune. Meanwhile she had become involved with an American, a Cambridge friend of her brother, and had promised to marry him too—he had only to get his father to agree to the marriage. Unfortunately both men had succeeded and simultaneously sent cables to say they were returning to claim her. What on earth should she do? She loved neither of them.

Rose told Aleister about her plight as they strolled together over the golf links. And Brother Perdurabo, whose 'Shelleyan indignation' had been awakened by her story, propounded a solution.

'Marry me,' he said.

He proceeded to tell her about his spiritual states and future plans, returning to her trouble half-way through a discourse upon magic. 'Don't upset yourself about such a trifle. All you have to do is to marry me. I will go back to Boleskine, and you need never hear of me again.'

I think Crowley was sincere in this ill-considered offer. To sleep with every woman, but not with his wife, appealed to the logic of his emotions. He was now twenty-eight years of age, and marriage was a card he had not yet played. He would throw it away.

'By marrying me,' he explained 'you will be free—free from your two fiancés, and free from me; for I will leave you to do what you like.

And Rose agreed.

They felt the need to act quickly. That afternoon Crowley called at the local church, but the only available authority was the grave-digger, who informed him that they would have to have the bans published and wait three weeks.

'Come, come,' said Crowley, 'there must be a simpler and quicker way of getting married than that.'

The sexton shook his head sorrowfully, a motion that Crowley checked by slipping a half-crown into his hand. The man then admitted that, according to the law of Scotland, it was only necessary to go to the Sheriff of the county and declare the intention of getting married and the marriage could take place there and then.

'There and then?' echoed Crowley in a hollow voice.

The next morning, before the rest of the party were awake, Rose and Aleister stole away in the dim grey of morning and caught the first train to Dingwall. They sat opposite each other in the carriage, silent and apprehensive.

At Dingwall, with the aid of a sleepy policeman, they found the house they were looking for. But the maid who answered the door told them that the Sheriff was still asleep. They explained the

reason for their call, to which she replied that for that purpose any lawyer would do. So they roused a lawyer in the town, and at eight o'clock in the morning they were made man and wife, the ceremony concluding with Crowley drawing his dagger from his stocking and solemnly kissing it.

At that moment Gerald Kelly—who had had no difficulty in tracing the gaudily accoutred Laird of Boleskine—burst into the room, pale with anger. Upon learning that he had arrived too late, he swore violently and aimed a blow at Brother Perdurabo's head.

They parted on the pavement outside the lawyer's door. Crowley, according to his arrangement with Rose, went back to Boleskine, and Rose and Gerald returned to Strathpeffer.

Crowley's account of his quixotic marriage, like his writing in general, is marred by his inflated view of the situation. He felt he had made a stir in the little towns of Strathpeffer and Dingwall, and he was filled with excitement. What, he asked himself, was to happen now? For Rose, he knew, wasn't going to be scared out of her marriage either by her brother, or mother, or by Mr. Hill, an elderly solicitor who had accompanied Mrs. Kelly to Scotland. Arriving home, he dispatched Ludovic Cameron to Strathpeffer to tell the Kellys that he was, in fact, legally married to Rose, and there was nothing they could do about it. 'It was,' said Crowley of his bailiff, 'the supreme moment in his life!'

The upshot of it was that Rose and Aleister had to go to Dingwall again and register their marriage with the Sheriff, according to the letter of the law. This was done amid excitement which, according to Crowley's unrestrained imagination, eclipsed that aroused over the Relief of Mafeking. Mr. and Mrs. Aleister Crowley then went on the train to the end of the local line and found themselves staying at a hotel on the west coast of Scotland. And after a dinner during which much champagne was drunk, Rose retired to the bedroom while her spouse, bursting into poetry, covered the menu with a rondel of spontaneous verse.

He then followed Rose upstairs. The suspicion was beginning to rise in his breast that he was in love with her and that his indifference had only been a subtle device to keep his mind on the Great Work.

They reached Boleskine—the Laird had brought home his bride—and learned that Red-headed Arabella was due to arrive the next day. In his excitement Crowley had completely forgotten about her.

'I blush to say,' wrote Crowley, 'that I didn't know quite what to do about it, and confided in Duncombe-Jewell. He rose to the occasion, and went on to Inverness to head her off. It may seem incredible; but my reaction was one of sheer annoy-

ance. I had no feeling for Red-headed Arabella; in point of fact, I had picked her for that very reason.'

Crowley always did everything to excess. He married to help a poor girl out of a jam; within twenty-four hours he felt himself slipping into love with her. A few days later he was being consumed by wild passion. During the three weeks that followed their runaway wedding he was in an ecstasy of love and only once turned Rose up and walloped her. He explained that her love for him—she apparently started all this love business—began to evoke his love for her; and that, to begin with at least, he was carried away on the wings of her rapture. As he was a man whom only the best could satisfy, he soon discovered that he was married to 'one of the most beautiful and fascinating women in the world'. Towards the end of the summer he carried her off to Paris, the first stage of a honeymoon that they had planned for themselves in the East.

As he walked over the Pont Alexandre III with Rose on his arm he met Mrs. Mathers. In spite of the break between them, they stopped for a moment to talk to each other. But Moina, the beautiful sister of the philosopher Henri Bergson (Madame Maud Gonne MacBride, also a member of the Golden Dawn, told me that she was a lovely creature) was now only a tart in his eyes and he published, a year after her death, the following story about her:

'I learnt that Mathers, falling upon evil times, had forced his wife to pose naked in one of the Montmartre shows which are put on for the benefit of ignorant and prurient people, especially provincials and English, and that even that was not the worst of it.'

That was no apparent reason for degrading Mrs. Mathers in this way; unless, perhaps, Crowley, having been once in love with her, but now deflecting these emotions upon Rose, wished to throw her to the mob. He invented spiteful and morbid stories about everyone, of course, with the two notable exceptions of Allan Bennett and Oscar Eckenstein.

He had made up his quarrel with Gerald Kelly.

'Thanks for your amusing note and enclosure,' he wrote. 'I felt at the time you were only bitter because you felt yourself wrong. . . . Letters intended for me find me more easily if addressed

Lord Boleskine

without further circumlocution or ambiguity. I am entitled to this address and I intend to assert it. "Aleister Crowley" is of course a *nom de plume* now, and a name for literary use only.'

They went on to Marseilles and took the boat to Cairo.

He persuaded her to spend a night with him in the King's Chamber of the Great Pyramid and help him invoke the ibis-headed god of Wisdom, Thoth.

'We reached the King's Chamber after dismissing the servants at the foot of the Grand Gallery. By the light of a single candle placed on the edge of the coffer I began to read the invocation. But as I went on I noticed that I was no longer stooping to hold the page near the light. I was standing erect. Yet the manuscript was not less but more legible. Looking about me, I saw that the King's Chamber was glowing with a soft light which I immediately recognised as the astral light. . . . The King's Chamber was aglow as if with the brightest tropical moonlight. The pitiful dirty yellow flame of the candle was like a blasphemy, and I put it out. The astral light remained during the whole of the invocation and for some time afterwards, though it lessened in intensity as we composed ourselves to sleep.'

From Cairo they went to Ceylon. Crowley wished ultimately to take Rose to China. In Ceylon he spent the day hunting. When he laid down his rifle he took up his pen and composed poetry. It was while he was in Ceylon with Rose that, modelling himself on Shelley this time, he wrote *Rosa Mundi*, the poem which has so fascinated some of his critics.

On one expedition through the wilds of Ceylon they pitched camp near a lake. In the shallow waters at the edge were large trees whose branches were festooned with flying foxes, species of large bat whose breast is furred with red and white. Crowley decided to kill a few of these animals and make of their skins a toque for Rose and a waistcoat for himself. They went out in a punt to catch them asleep. The flying foxes kept no guard; but at the sound of the first shot they all awoke and the sky became dark with them. Crowley kept firing away until one of the bats fell wounded right on to Rose, its claws catching in her hair.

This adventure, or mishap, had a sequel of a hysterical or occult nature. In the middle of the night Crowley was awakened by a horrible squeal like that of a dying bat—they had retired to a kind of bungalow provided for wanderers in this part of the world, and thrown themselves into beds surrounded by a stout framework for mosquito nets. He called to Rose; as she didn't reply, but the squealing continued, he leapt out of bed and lit the candle.

What he saw must have disturbed him, although he did not say so when he came to describe it. Perhaps his sense of sorrow for others had dried up, or he had begun to grow tired of his wife, or perhaps (one must not rule out this possibility with a man so

fanciful as the hero of this work) the whole story is a discharge of Crowley's imagination.

There was Rose, stark naked, hanging to the frame by her arms and legs, insanely yawling. It was quite a job to pull her down. She clung on desperately, squealing all the time. When, at last, her husband managed to detach her, she scratched and bit and spat . . . exactly as the dying bat had done to her. Crowley, with the clinical thoroughness that was to characterize his dealings with women, described her condition as 'the finest case of obsession that I had ever had the good fortune to observe. Of course it is easy to explain that in her hypersensitive condition the incident of the day had reproduced itself in a dream. She had identified herself with her assailant, and mimicked his behaviour.'

During January, 1904, they decided to go back to Europe. Rose was pregnant, but this was not the reason which made them turn their faces westwards. They had planned to call on Allan Bennett at Rangoon, but the gods had decided differently. They could have no more got to Rangoon than to the moon, said Crowley; for the event which he called the greatest in his whole life, his sole reason for having been born, was about to unfold.

At the time Crowley had no foreknowledge of it, only a vague sense of destiny which was turning him round and sending him back to Egypt.

* * *

In Cairo, Count Svareff, or Aleister MacGregor as he sometimes called himself, was subtly metamorphosed into Prince Chioa Khan: he wore a turban with a diamond aigrette, a robe of silk, and a coat of cloth of gold. With Princess Chioa Khan, formerly Mrs. Rose Crowley, he was driven about the streets, 'a jewelled talwar by my side, and two gorgeous runners to clear the way for my carriage'. In case anyone should doubt him, Crowley had a notice printed to the effect that some Eastern Potentate had raised him to this rank. He sent a copy of this notice to Rose's parents with a letter pointing out that Prince Chioa Khan would not allow any communication to reach his wife that was improperly addressed. Rose's father, the vicar of Camberwell, a typical Victorian figure, shrugged his shoulders at this latest piece of vulgarity from his son-in-law. Briefly, he thought Crowley a cad and his poetry 'windy stuff'. But his wife obediently addressed a letter to her daughter as instructed. On one occasion she added an exclamation mark; and for this piece of impertinence her letter was returned to her, in a registered envelope, unopened.

Aiwass, the Holy Guardian Angel

ALTHOUGH Mathers, according to his foe Crowley, had succumbed to the malevolent demons evoked by the Operation of Abramelin, and therefore, presumably, lost his contact with the Secret Chiefs, Brother Perdurabo had made no such contact with these Secret Chiefs, or with any other Secret Chiefs. He had no magical current to sustain him, and without that he could set up no Order of any consequence: on the magical plane his life was meaningless. Since breaking with the head of the Golden Dawn he had been living the life of a poet, traveller, big-game hunter, husband, poker-player and English gentleman, roles which were far from satisfying his demoniac genius. He must, sooner or later, go on to establish his own link with the gods or abandon all pretension to magic.

On the 14th March, Prince and Princess Chioa Khan moved into a flat in a corner house near the Cairo Museum. Crowley turned the room facing north into a temple and recommenced his magical ceremonies, invoking Thoth, IAO.

Rose was in a strange state of mind, like someone dazed. She was, said Crowley, possibly drunk, or hysterical from pregnancy. She kept repeating dreamily, 'They are waiting for you.' On the 18th March she came out with the astounding statement that 'He who was waiting was Horus,' and that Aleister had offended Him, and ought to invoke Him, and beg His pardon.

'Who is Horus?' asked Crowley. Rose knew nothing of Egyptology. On her lips the name of Horus was most perplexing. For an answer she took him to the Cairo Museum, which they had not previously visited. They passed by several images of Horus, and went upstairs. In the distance was a glass case, too far off for its contents to be recognized.

'There,' cried Rose, 'there He is!'

Brother Perdurabo advanced to the case. There was the image of Horus in the form of Ra-Hoor-Khuit painted upon a wooden stele of the 26th dynasty.

Suddenly Crowley fell back in amazement: *the exhibit bore the number 666!* His number, the number of The Beast!

The temple in the flat of Prince Chioa Khan reverberated with the sound of prayer, as a white-robed, bare-footed, bejewelled figure loudly invoked the Egyptian god Horus, according to the instructions of Ouarda the Seer, as Crowley now called his wife—Ouarda being the Arabic for Rose. A bowl of bull's blood and a sword lay on the altar before the supplicant.

'How shall I humble myself enough before Thee? Thou art the mighty and unconquered Lord of the Universe; I am a spark of Thine unutterable Radiance.'

'How should I approach Thee? but Thou are Everywhere.

'But Thou hast graciously deigned to call me unto Thee, to this Exorcism of Art, that I may be Thy servant, Thine Adept, O Bright One, O Sun of Glory! Thou hast called me—should I not then hasten to Thy Presence?

'With unwashed hands therefore I come unto Thee, and I lament my wandering from Thee—but Thou knowest!

'Yea, I have done evil!

'I bow my neck before Thee; and as once Thy sword was upon it so am I in Thy hands. Strike if thou wilt: spare if Thou wilt: but accept me as I am.'

The voice of the adept, Brother Perdurabo, who had wandered solitarily over the world, seeking for a sign and a word, rose to a shout:

'Strike, strike the master chord!

'Draw, draw the Flaming Sword!

'Crowned Child and Conquering Lord,

'Horus, avenge!'

In this City of the Pyramids, the ancient home of magic, a solitary voice in a strange, un-Egyptian tongue prayed again after thousands of years to the falcon-headed god Horus.

'Therefore I say unto thee: Come Thou forth and dwell in me; so that every Spirit, whether of the Firmament, or of the Ether, or of the Earth or under the Earth; on dry land or in the Water, or Whirling Air or of Rushing Fire; and every spell and scourge of God the Vast One may be THOU. Abrahadabra!'

This invocation was an undoubted success, for Brother Perdurabo received the message (by what means I do not know, unless it was again through Ouarda the Seer) that 'the Equinox of the Gods had come'. In plainer language, that New Epoch had begun for mankind and that Aleister Crowley had been chosen to initiate it.

It is now necessary to introduce a new and very important character, if one may call him so. He is the spirit named Aiwass, Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel, whose knowledge and conversation he had been seeking since his first experiments with Abramelin magic in his Oratory at Boleskine. Now, at last, he had appeared, firstly as a voice of Ouarda the Seer, instructing her to tell her husband to invoke Horus. Then, with equal solemnity, he commanded her to tell Perdurabo to go into the temple and write down what he should hear.

Crowley, by now rather impressed with Rose, did as she bid. On the 8th April, 1904, at exactly twelve noon, he entered the temple, his Swan fountain pen in his hand. He sat down at his

desk with sheets of paper before him and waited for something to happen.

Suddenly a voice began to speak over his left shoulder, from the furthest corner of the room.

'Had! The manifestation of Nuit.

'The unveiling of the company of heaven.'

Perdurabo began writing as this voice, 'deep timbre, musical and expressive, its tones solemn, voluptuous, tender, fierce or aught else as suited the mood' intoned its message.

'Help me, O warrior lord of Thebes, in my unveiling before the Children of men!'

Crowley wrote on steadily for an hour. Then at 1 p.m., after the 66th verse:

'To me! To me!

'The Manifestation of Nuit is at an end.' Aiwass vanished and laid down his pen.

The following day again, at exactly twelve o'clock, Perdurabo entered the temple. With similar European punctuality, Aiwass appeared and began dictating Chapter Two.

'We have nothing with the outcast and the unfit: let them die in their misery. For they feel not. Compassion is the vice of kings: stamp down the wretched and the weak: this is the law of the strong: this is our law and the joy of the world. Think not, O king, upon that lie: That Thou must Die; verily thou shalt not die, but live. Now let it be understood: if the body of the King dissolve, he shall remain in pure ecstasy for ever. Nuit! Hadit! Ra-Hoor-Khuit! The Sun, Strength and Sight. Light; these are for the servants of the Star and the Snake.'

The same procedure happened on the third day, when Aiwass's message from the Secret Chiefs was completed.

No doubt Crowley must have been tempted to look over his shoulder and have a glimpse at His Holy Guardian Angel. Apparently he did so, for he said that Aiwass was suspended in a kind of cloud, and

'seemed to be a tall dark man in his thirties, well knit, active and strong, with the face of a savage king, and eyes veiled lest their gaze should destroy what they saw. The dress was not Arab; it suggested Assyria or Persia, but very vaguely. I took little note of it, for to me at that time Aiwass was an "angel" such as I had often seen in visions, a being purely astral'

Liber Legis, or *The Book of the Law*, as Aiwass's dictation is called, is a series of dithyrambic verses, with more exclamation

marks than any other work of similar length. Like all prophetic writings, its symbols have to be deciphered before it can be understood. Some of its balder statements seem to me to be indecent; but it is only fair to say that Crowley himself found certain verses shocking and a whole section incomprehensible. During the many hours that I have studied this extraordinary document I have often thought that it is written in Crowley's distinctive style and to indicate more the content of his mind than that of either Aiwass or the Secret Chiefs, but with both of these views Crowley passionately disagreed. He swore that while whole and in his right mind, he heard the voice of a 'preter-human intelligence'. If Eliphas Lévi, that wily old French magus (whom, incidentally, Crowley claimed as the vessel of his previous incarnation), could summon up the divine Apollonius of Tyana in London during the summer of 1854 I see no reason why Crowley should not call forth Aiwass in Cairo in 1904.

Crowley spent many years writing two Commentaries on *The Book of the Law* which are much longer than *The Book of the Law* itself. Any exegesis of *Liber Legis*, or critique of the Commentaries, is outside the scope of this biography, but briefly the exoteric teachings of *The Book of the Law* can be boiled down to three fundamental principles. One, that there is no law beyond *Do What Thou Wilt*. Two, that 'every man and woman is a star', or, as we already know it, everyone has an immortal soul. Three, that the only sin is restriction', which could be interpreted as the essence of nihilism.

Let us take the first, and chief, principle, *There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt*, or, as it has been otherwise expressed, *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law*. Everything of course hangs upon the meaning of the word 'wilt'. Crowley repeatedly pointed out that the word 'liketh' must not be substituted for 'wilt', for one must do only one's true will. And this seems to me to be quite an admirable injunction, the only difficulty being that of distinguishing between one's true and false wills. Later, when Crowley had pondered on this matter, he decided that it wasn't good enough to implore men to follow their true wills and just leave it at that: he must devise a technique whereby they will be able to discover and express their true wills. And in that technique, which is one of sex-magic, lies his great contribution to *goety*.

In the statement, *Every man and every woman is a star*, the choice of the word 'star' is a felicitous one, because human beings seem as closely huddled as stars in the Milky Way, but they are all, in spite of appearances, well separated and defined and brightly shining.

The meaning of the startling dictum *The only sin is restriction* is that everything which inhibits one's true will is bad.

There are many apparent contradictions in *The Book of the Law*. The phrase, for example, that 'the slaves shall serve', seems to me

to fly into the face of the business about every man and woman being a star.¹ To enter, however, into the theological side of Crowleyanity is beyond the scope of this biography.

Liber Legis expresses a philosophy of pleasure. Its frenzied outbursts represent that aspect of life which Nietzsche called Dionysian, but there is no Apollonian aspect to balance it.

'Be strong, O man! lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this.' (*Liber Legis*, Ch. ii, v. 22).

One cannot think of the phrase *Do What Thou Wilt* without being reminded of Rabelais's memorable *Fay ce que voudras*, but whereas the merry doctor's *Do What Thou Wilt* was an anti-clerical gibe and a free-flung jest to cabined mankind, Aiwass's exhortation was pronounced with all solemnity. One must do what one wills, not so much for the fun of it but in order to bring oneself into line with the immanent meaning of life. But is there any reason to believe that Aiwass had ever read Rabelais? Or was this phrase from his dictation, and the rest of it only the stirrings of Crowley's unconscious, and conscious, mind? This view seems to be supported by the verse, 'The word of the Law is θέλημα,' which Aiwass also spake, for is not θέλημα, thelema (the Greek for 'will'), the name of François Rabelais's wondrous, fantastic abbey built by the river Loire?

There is a lot of foreboding prophecy in *Liber Legis*: 'Another prophet shall arise, and bring fresh fever from the skies: another woman shall awake the lust and worship of the Snake: another soul of God and beast shall mingle in the globed priest; another sacrifice shall stain the tomb . . .' (Ch. iii, v. 34).

A new aeon had begun, and all beginnings of new aeons, or epochs, are invariably stained in blood. The World War was, of course, prophesied.

'A first important result of the new revelation was the information from the Secret Chiefs that the New Aeon implied the breaking up of the civilization existing at the time. The nature of Horus being "Force and Fire", his Aeon should be marked by the collapse of humanitarianism. The first act of His reign would naturally be to plunge the world into the catastrophe of a huge and ruthless war.'

After the assistant curator of the Cairo Museum had translated the writing on the stele of the Priest Ankh-f-n-khonsu (exhibit 666), and a local painter had made a fascimile of it, Prince and Princess Chioa Khan departed for Europe.

¹ A distinguished exegetist of Crowleyanity, Mr. Kenneth Grant, has pointed out to me that 'the slaves' in this context are those who have failed to discover their true wills and thus to become 'kingly men'.

The immediate upshot of this encounter with Aiwass, which afterwards came to be known as the Great Revelation in Cairo, was that Crowley sat down and wrote a formal letter to Mathers, informing him that the Secret Chiefs had appointed him visible head of the Order, and declared a new Magical Formula—*thelema*. 'I did not expect or receive an answer,' said Crowley. 'And I declared war on Mathers accordingly.'

Kangchenjunga, the Five Sacred Peaks

CROWLEY did not at once realize the significance of *The Book of the Law*. In fact, for some years to come, he ignored it, fought against it, even mislaid the precious manuscript, until, irresistibly, its tremendous meaning forced itself upon him. Before he left Cairo he threw it into a case, with his copy of the stele of Ankh-f-n-khonsu and the rest of his literary possessions, and returned to Europe wearing a heavily jewelled red waistcoat and the largest ring that Arnold Bennett had ever seen on any hand. We know about this splendid waistcoat and this outsize ring because Bennett conveniently recorded them for us in his *Journal* on the 22nd April, 1904, and also made use of them and their owner for one of his characters in *Paris Nights*.

Upon arriving in Paris, he sent Bennett a telegram asking him to lunch at Paillard's. There was no mention of *Liber Legis*; instead he talked to Bennett about his elevation to the Persian nobility.

With steady persistence he had continued producing volumes of poetry. He had tried as publishers Kegan Paul, and Watts; and the Chiswick Press and other printers had been commissioned to make some of his private editions. Most of Crowley's books were privately produced. He chose the type face, the paper, and the binding (the most expensive, of course); then he, or one of his pupils, footed the bill. Years later most of the volumes were still on his hands, for they were too expensive for the public to buy, and poetry, even Aleister Crowley's, is notoriously difficult to sell.

After *The God-Eater*, a tragedy in rhymed and unrhymed verse, and *The Star and the Garter*, a long love poem, there streamed from his industrious pen *The Argonauts*; *The Sword of Song*; *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King* (a work on the magic arts), and other books all of which Crowley had decided to bring out under his own imprint and from his own doorstep: thus, upon his return to Scotland, the Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, as he called his publishing house, was born, with headquarters at Boleskine, Foyers, Inverness.

He had such a large body of verse in manuscript and print that

he conceived the idea, after Max Beerbohm, of publishing his 'Collected Works'. But, unlike Beerbohm, who had published in one volume his 'Works' at the age of twenty-four, Crowley, by the time he was thirty, could only just squeeze his prolific works into three volumes.

He described his life with Rose, from their marriage until the appearance of Aiwass, as 'an uninterrupted sexual debauch'. Now they found other things to do. In the third chapter of *The Book of the Law* certain specific instructions are given for the worship of the Crowned and Conquering Child of Horus: the making of the Cakes of Light 'to breed lust and the power of lust at the eating thereof', which seem to me to be a Crowleyan parody of the Eucharist wafer.

'The other images group around me to support me: let all be worshipped, for they shall cluster to exalt me. . . . For perfume mix meal and honey and thick leavings of red wine: then oil of Abra-Melin and olive oil, and afterwards soften and smooth down with rich fresh blood. The best blood is of the moon, monthly; then the fresh blood of a child, or dropping from the host of heaven; then of enemies; then of the priest or of the worshippers; last of some beast, no matter what. This burn: of this make cakes and eat unto me. This hath also another use; let it be laid before me, and kept thick with perfumes of your orison.'

The making of these Cakes of Light was, apparently, a success; for one day soon afterwards, when Crowley went into the bath room, he found a beetle on the floor. It measured about one and a half inches in length, and had only 'a solitary horn which ended in its eyeball'. For the two following weeks the whole house and garden were plagued with these insects. He tells us that he sent one of them to the Natural History Museum in London for identification, but it was politely returned with a note to the effect that the species was unknown. This was indeed a tangible piece of magic, vindicating *The Book of the Law*, for wherein it is written: 'it [the Cakes] shall become full of beetles as it were and creeping things sacred unto me'. But Crowley was not to realize the full implication of all this until much later. *Liber Legis* was still an enigma to him.

Meanwhile, MacGregor Mathers had been quietly stirring up a current of evil against Brother Perdurabo, who had seized the leadership of the Golden Dawn—not as far as the members of the Order were concerned, but spiritually. It was a very effectual current of evil, for, firstly, Crowley's pack of bloodhounds fell dead in their tracks; then Lord Boleskine's servant went mad and tried to kill Rose. Aleister overpowered him with a salmon gaff

and threw him into the cellar; he was led away by the police and never heard of again.

Desperately Perdurabo began to evoke Beelzebub and his forty-nine servitors. They rallied to his call, and before they set off too blast MacGregor Mathers in his Auteuil abode, Rose (whose clairvoyant gift enabled her to see them) described them all. Crowley published a brief catalogue of them in one of his rarer books called *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz*, otherwise known by its Persian title of *Bagh-I-Muattar*.

'NIMORUP: A stunted dwarf with large head and ears. His lips are greeny-bronze and slobbery.

'NOMINON: A large red spongy jellyfish with one greenish luminous spot, like a nasty mess.'

To imagine the whole list of Beelzebub's forty-nine servitors together in one room is too horrible; they are enough to frighten anyone, even a magician of the rank of Deo Duce Comite Ferro. What happened to him after they were directed to Paris, where, presumably, they fell on him with fury, we are not told. We only know that in the end Crowley killed Mathers, but this did not happen till 1918, for that was the year he died.

Crowley had invited a physician called Percival Bott to come and stay with him and hold himself ready for Rose's confinement; also Gerald Kelly, and their mutual friend of their Cambridge days, Ivor Back, now a surgeon at St. George's Hospital in London—Back was one of the youthful company of *Le Chat Blanc*.

They were three good friends, Crowley, Kelly, and Back. Crowley, being the oldest and the boldest and chucking his weight about the most, was naturally the leader. With his abundance of wit, audacity, and fun-making, he raised the greatest laugh. He taught Bott and Back how to climb, leading them upon the cliffs around Boleskine. To Back, the young doctor, he gave spontaneous examples of the kind of medical book that would make medicine less dull. It should be in verse, thus:

General paralysis
Of the insane
Baffles analysis:
Treatment is vain.
Never more rallies his
System or brain.

While Bott delivered Rose of a daughter, Back, by his erudite editing and footnoting of his friend's writings, was safely bringing to birth the first volume of *The Collected Works of Aleister Crowley*.

There is a story about Crowley at this time which adds colour

to the Beelzebub evocation. It is, simply, that while Rose was in labour, he was in the next room consecrating (or shall we say desecrating?) a talisman for the purpose of making his wife bring forth a monster. If the story is true it may not be more than an expression of Crowley's cynical sense of humour, but whether true or merely fantasy projected from the hostile minds of his enemies, it is, at least, the sort of thing which was being said about him, and which helped to build up the Crowley legend. Here, however, his magic didn't work, for the child was perfectly healthy and normal, and within a few days Crowley, like any other father, was delighted, and carefully thought out the following names for her: Nuit Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith.

He gave the following reasons for the choice of these names. Nuit was chosen 'in honour of Our Mistress of the Stars';¹ that is to say, the Egyptian goddess with wings outspread, or with elongated body encircling the sky; Ma, or Maat, the Egyptian goddess of Truth and Justice, because according to the child's horoscope Libra, the balance, was in ascendancy; Ahathoor, the goddess of Love and Beauty, because Venus governs the sign Libra. He couldn't remember the reason for choosing Hecate, but suggested that it may have been an expression of politeness towards the gods of hell. And he could hardly help doing honour to the only woman poet, Sappho. Jezebel was still his favourite character from the Bible, and Lilith retained his affection in the realm of demons.

They made a jolly party in the Highlands. Crowley's aunt, Annie, the only female member of his family whom he could tolerate, was running the house. They went fishing, shooting, and climbing, and at night played billiards and emptied the Laird's wine cellar.

There was only one problem; that of keeping Rose amused during her convalescence. She could not play even the simplest game of cards and there were only half a dozen books that she cared to read among the 3,000 volumes in her husband's library. Aleister therefore decided that it was up to him to write a book for her which she would not only understand, but enjoy. For a reason best known to him, he decided that the most suitable book he could write for Rose was a pornographic one. Out of these circumstances was created *Snowdrops from a Curate's Garden*, a 20,000-word fantasy centring round an Archbishop.

It is so violently sadistic and obscene that if it didn't contain a strong element of humour one might well believe a madman had written it. Its savageness has something in common with *Les Chants de Maldoror*, a wild work written by a Frenchman of genius, the source book of surrealist literature. Printed with *Snowdrops* are some indecent limericks, poems, and songs, and some parodies

¹ In the new religion of Crowleyanity Nuit takes the place of the Holy Virgin.

such as 'To Pe Or Not To Pe' and 'All The World's A Brothel', all of which were written at an earlier date, the fruits of his Cambridge studies.

Crowley's own opinion on *Snowdrops from a Curate's Garden* was contained in a letter which he wrote twenty years later to one of his followers, Norman Mudd. Mudd had tried to bring into England from Sicily some boxes of Crowley's manuscripts and paintings, and an album of certain photographs, but had failed to get them through the Dover Customs authorities, who destroyed them as indecent. 'It is imperative to take the view that these things, whatever they are, are simply the appurtenances of a surgical operation,' instructed Crowley in a vain endeavour to save his property. 'My whole plan is to clean all germs out of the sexual wound. To some extent I developed this thesis in my account of *Snowdrops* in the Hag.¹ My object is not merely to disgust but to root out ruthlessly the sense of sin.'

He spent the winter with Rose in St. Moritz, skating and skiing, and returned to England when the thaw set in, laden with more poetic compositions, *Rosa Inferni*; *Orpheus*; *Gargoyles*, all of which, in due course, were printed. He was feeling unusually elated. Not since the Great Gate of Trinity had admitted him ten years before had he felt so carefree and happy. He was a recognized poet (G. K. Chesterton had described him in a review as 'a good poet') and a magician; he was growing in stature; there was no limit to his ambition and his expectations.

Clifford Bax, who later was also inspired by the Buddhist monk Allan Bennett, has left us a picture of Crowley at this time, for they were staying at the same hotel in St. Moritz.

'A powerful man, with black magnetic eyes, walked up to me. He wore a velvet coat with ermine lapels, a coloured waistcoat, silk knee-breeches, and black silk stockings. He smoked a colossal meerschaum. . . . Every evening we played chess together and to play chess with a man is to realize the voltage of his intellect. A strong and imaginative mind directed the pieces that opposed me. Moreover, he was an expert skater, an expert mountaineer; and in conversation he exhibited a wide knowledge of literature, of occultism, and of Oriental peoples. I am certain, too, that with a part of his personality he did believe in his Messianic mission. On the eve of my return to England, after we had played the last of our chess-games, he exhorted me to devote myself to the study and practice of magic. I understood that he would instruct me. "Most good of you," I stammered, "but really, you know—perhaps I am not quite ready. I must read a little more first." "Reading," he answered, "is for infants. Men must experiment. Seize what the gods have offered. Reject

¹ i.e. Crowley's *Autobiography* or *autobiography*.

me, and you will become indistinguishable from all these idiots around us." He paused, and then asked abruptly, "What is the date?" "January 23rd," I answered. "What is the year—according to the Christian calendar?" "Nineteen hundred and five." "Exactly," said Crowley, "and in a thousand years from this moment, the world will be sitting in the sunset of Crowleyanity."

Surely Crowley said, or meant, 'sunshine' and not 'sunset'? For he expected his new Order to last at least two thousand years, the span so far of Christianity. The exegetist of Crowleyanity will need to know how it was possible for Crowley, at a time when he had not yet realized the significance of *The Book of Law*, to make this claim. He couldn't have had *Liber Legis* in mind when he hurled his remarkable boast at Mr. Bax's head. If Mr. Bax had replied to Crowley with that word of five letters which is often spoken but rarely found in print, what would Brother Perdurabo have said?

Crowley had not yet integrated his system (*The Book of the Law* only ties up the ends and gives the Idea its scriptural form), but he could already see that spirit and nature must be brought together again, after having been divorced by Christianity for so long. For, from out of the depths of Crowley's mind had come a very strange idea, one so old that men had forgotten about it. It told of the worship of the sun and of man's organ of creation, and of sexual union as the highest form of religious consecration.

The knowledge of these things filled Crowley with deep satisfaction. It compensated him for the agony of his childhood; freed his mind from a sense of guilt—for in these (sexual) acts was he not performing a scared rite?—and opened the way for a great assault on that which he hated most—Christianity.

A few years later the word for this old-new religion thundered forth, conscious and whole, *thelema*, the Greek for 'will', in the phrase which is at one and the same time a summary of Crowley's philosophy (his *logos* of the new aeon), and an injunction for the whole of repressed (i.e. Christianized) humanity: **DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW!**

Upon his return from St. Moritz, Crowley resumed the life of the Scottish nobleman. Gerald Kelly, Mrs. Kelly (Crowley's mother-in-law), Ivor Back, and Eckenstein came and stayed at Boleskine; and a certain Indian Army doctor, Lieutenant Gormley.

On the 27th April Dr. Jacot Guillarmod arrived with a copy of a book he had published in Switzerland on the expedition to K2, *Six Mois dans l'Himalaya*. He wanted to climb again in the Himalayas. He suggested Kangchenjunga, a giant like K2, upon whose slopes no one had yet dared set foot. Crowley, of course, was enthusiastic; he wished to climb higher than any man had

ever climbed before. Kangchenjunga would give him his chance: he would lead the party to the summit.

His insistence upon being the leader of the expedition made Oscar Eckenstein decline to join it; with Perdurabo in command, the risk, he confessed to Kelly, was too great. Knowles, who was also asked to come along, flatly rejected another climb with a man who had threatened to shoot him at 20,000 feet.

Crowley's doubts about Guillardmod's abilities as a mountaineer, carefully recorded in *The Confessions*, were conceived after the climb had taken place. Before setting off for India he only feared that he himself might fall, and made the following will:

In case of my death, George Cecil Jones will carry out these instructions:

'Embalm the body.

'Dress it in white Tau robe with Abra-Melin red and gold tunic and girdle, and the Crown and Wand. Also the big red sword.

'Bury all magical jewels with me.

'A pastos and vault to be prepared for coffin and tomb; in shape as taught, but without any figuring. Use white stone.

'On the pastos write only *Perdurabo*.

'Let the vault be bricked up and concealed utterly from human sight nor let any memorial of its place be kept. In the vault place vellum editions of all my works, hermetically sealed up.

'The place shall be chosen by and known to George Cecil Jones alone. It shall be in ground consecrated by him.

'Aleister Crowley.'

It was decided that Guillardmod should find at least two other mountaineers who could pay their share of the expenses of the expedition; and he went off with his haggis to Switzerland to look for them.

On the 6th May Crowley left Boleskine. After spending a week in Cairo lingering before the stele of Revealing (exhibit number 666 in the Cairo Museum) he took the boat to Bombay, where he arrived on the 9th June. In Calcutta he called on Edward Thornton, who had accompanied him into the interior of Burma four years previously; then he went north to Darjeeling and saw, forty miles ahead, the mountain he'd decided to pit himself against. Kangchenjunga has been called the showpiece of the Himalayas, for it is not hidden, like Everest and K2, by satellite peaks, but can be seen by anyone on a clear day from the hill town of Darjeeling. It lies on the border between Sikkim and Nepal, fourteen miles from Tibet.

Guillardmod wired to say that he was bringing along Alexis

Pache and Charles Reymond, both active officers of the Swiss Army and experienced Alpine climbers. And on the 31st July the three Swiss mountaineers arrived in Darjeeling, and shook hands with their leader.

A fifth man, who had never before put his foot on a mountain, had offered his services to Crowley and been accepted. This was Alcesti C. Rigo de Righi, the young Italian manager of the Drum Druid Hotel, where Crowley was staying. He could act as interpreter as he knew both Hindustani and Tibetan, and direct the provisioning of the expedition.

A contract was drawn up and signed by all five men. It contained the same sort of clauses as the contract used for the expedition to K2; but this time it was agreed that 'Aleister Crowley shall be sole and supreme judge of all matters respecting mountain craft, and the others will obey his instructions'.

Crowley was in a hurry to get started, but they had to wait until permission to enter Nepal was granted. So meanwhile he added finishing touches to his preparations and wrote two articles for the Allahabad *Pioneer Mail* on the expedition to K2—to be followed with an account of the Kangchenjunga climb as soon as it began. The first article contained a quite unnecessary and unjustified abuse of Alpine guides: 'I may observe that only the most expert men on the easiest mountains should deliberately handicap themselves by taking "guides", those always incompetent and too often cowardly and drunken peasants whom, if they have learnt by rule of thumb the way up a few easy Swiss peaks, our Alpine quacks love to extol as the highest type of men.'

On the 8th August they set off in the pouring rain with seven tons of food and luggage, 230 porters and three personal servants whom they had brought from Kashmir—the three Kashmiris who had accompanied the expedition to K2—chief among whom was Salama, bearded, turbaned and, judging from his photograph, bow-legged.

Mount Everest has been calculated to be 29,002 feet high; K2 28,250 feet, and Kangchenjunga 28,150 feet, but there is still some argument about the exact height of these three giants of the Himalayas, the three highest mountains in the world. Colonel Sidney Burrard, who was Superintendent of the Trigonometrical Survey of India when Crowley was in Darjeeling, put Everest first, Kangchenjunga next with a height of 28,225 feet, and K2 14 feet lower. Everyone has agreed, though, that all three mountains are very high, and no one has yet climbed to the top of any of them.

In 1899 Douglas Freshfield had explored Kangchenjunga and his companion, Vittoria Sella, had photographed it. And before them W. W. Graham had scrambled about in this part of the

world and climbed Jubonu, 19,350 feet, a peak of the neighbouring Kabru range.

Kangchenjunga is a particularly dangerous mountain to climb. Owing to its relatively isolated position, it collects and hurls down to the glaciers below huge avalanches of snow and ice, the latter sometimes hundreds of feet thick. In the opinion of that distinguished English mountaineer the late Frank Smythe, there is probably no mountain in the world which exposes the climber to greater danger.

Crowley led his men through leech-infested, rhododendron-covered valleys. He had been negotiating for months for permission to enter the state of Nepal. Fortunately word came that they would be allowed to proceed as they approached the border village of Kang La.

After a march lasting a fortnight they found themselves, on the 22nd August, beside the south-west face of the mountain, the ascent of which proceeds along the Yalung Glacier. The assault on Kangchenjunga had begun. Crowley was perfectly happy with this route as soon as he set eyes on it. 'I went up the glacier for reconnaissance,' he said. 'I wanted to establish the main camp as high up as possible.' He did suspect, though, that the glacier's stream might turn out to be unscalable. But all his doubts vanished as he climbed higher.

'Already at a height of fourteen or fifteen thousand feet, less than fourteen days' march in the valley, I was in excellent physical condition. Not an ounce of my reserves of strength had been used up. A completely clear path led to the summit in front of me. The mountain was hardly five miles away, the weather was always improving, and of the extreme temperatures, which had been so terrible on Chogo Ri, there was no trace. In short there was not a single dark speck on the horizon.'

And later:

'The summit of Kangchenjunga was only two miles away, and I could see almost the whole of that questionable area which had been hidden from me during my reconnaissance [through a telescope] at Darjeeling. I climbed up a bit higher and the last doubt vanished.'

In the light of the opinions of later climbers, who saw more of this mountain than did Crowley and his party, this view is absurdly optimistic.

Crowley forged ahead, leaving Guillardmod and Reymond to look after the greater part of the coolies, and Pache and de Righi in the rear.

'I had told them,' he observed, 'the best way across the glacier. Compared with Piccadilly it was a more or less complicated and difficult walk but surely less difficult than an average march on the Baltoro Glacier. The purpose of my going ahead was to make sure that Camp III should be as favourably situated as it looked at a distance. It was so.'

One hundred and thirty of the coolies had been supplied by the Sikkim government. They had carried their loads to a height exceeding that of Mont Blanc when they absolutely refused to climb any further: they feared the demon of the Five Great Peaks, which is the literal meaning of the words Kang Chen Junga, and left en masse. Guillardmod was grateful that they had come so far, and consoled himself with the thought that their departure meant a great saving of their provisions.

Dr. Guillardmod, the second-in-command, was as pessimistic as Crowley was optimistic.

'Never before had we found a glacier so tangled,' he said in his account of the climb.¹ 'The moraines mixed themselves up with the crevasses in a diabolical maze and one could no longer count the halts and the countermarches which were often useless.'

As the doctor climbed higher and saw, through the gaps in the fog and clouds, the obstacles ahead, he lost hope completely of ever reaching the summit by this route.

'The western ridge of Kangchenjunga,' he wrote, 'stood out against a cloudless sky of intense blue. Precipices, swept incessantly by avalanches, left us no hope of the possibility of direct access by this ridge, which did not appear as disconcerting as the approaches to it. Not the least snowfield was approximately horizontal; there was no place, not even a square yard, to pitch the smallest of our tents. The rocks themselves, supposing that human forces still permitted us to perform acrobatic feats at such a height, nowhere offered any point of attack at all tempting.'²

They had been only three days on the lower slopes of the mountain when confusion and hostility broke out among them, or, rather, between Crowley and Guillardmod. In studying the different versions of the expedition, one must either believe that Crowley, whatever his abilities as a climber, was quite impossible as a leader, or that Guillardmod was out of his mind. The Swiss doctor began

¹ AU KANGCHINJUNGA. *Voyage et explorations dans l'Himalaya du Sikkim et du Népal. Echo des Alpes*, Nos. 8 et 9. 1914.

² *Ibid.*

by criticizing Crowley for failing to mark his passage with little 'stone men', so that he had to assume the leadership of his own party—he did not know either where Crowley was or what he was doing. Then he was shocked at the brutal way in which Crowley treated the porters, with results which were speedily forthcoming. This was, in fact, the main cause of the breakdown of the climb. Crowley, for his part, was furious with the doctor for making his own camps, instead of finding and settling down in the ones he had established. Like the builders of the Tower of Babel, they did not speak the same language.

On the 25th August, after Crowley had pointed out to the doctor and Reymond the route to be followed and then gone on to find a suitable spot for their next camp, Guillaumod discovered to his 'stupefaction', that the coolies were without suitable shoes, and that most of them were still barefooted. 'Crowley,' he wrote, 'had always assured me that they were all furnished with shoes in good condition hidden in their baggage.'¹

Although the climb had only just begun, Guillaumod saw plainly the uselessness of all their efforts and expense, and the failure of the expedition. He cursed Lord Boleskine, on whose pleasant estate he had shot the rare haggis, and pronounced him a careless and unscrupulous individual—*un individu négligent et sans conscience*.

Reymond went off to search for another route for the coolies, one which would avoid, if possible, the ice, but he soon returned saying that the glacier was their only way. He began to cut steps for the shoeless porters. Suddenly Crowley reappeared and lent a hand by hacking out half a dozen steps, but so badly that the doctor shivered as he put his weight on them.

They would try to get as high as they could before the final impasse.

In continuous danger of being overwhelmed and crushed by avalanches—one writer has said that Kangchenjunga can brush off men as men brush off flies,—they reached a little rocky ridge set at a very sharp angle, where they pitched camp for the night.

'In the most uncomfortable site, but also the most grandiose which it is possible to imagine (astride a thin ridge of snow which had to be cut away in order to pitch the tents and which might have slipped, with equal and terrible ease, either down one side or the other), we remained for two days, as much to rest ourselves as to wait for the convoy of provisions.'²

On the 27th August Crowley was awake at 3 a.m., 'and by stupendous efforts got off the men by 6 a.m.,' he wrote. 'The doctor

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

strongly opposed me, urging that the men should be allowed to warm themselves thoroughly before starting.'

The next morning several porters deserted, and one of them 'lost his footing precisely at the spot where Crowley had cut the only steps in the whole ascent'.¹ He was thrown into the abyss.

On the 29th Guillardmod, who had spent the previous day ill in bed, went down the mountain with a party to search for the body. They found it mutilated on a rocky spur 1500 feet below. To the coolies the death of their comrade was not surprising. The god of Kangchenjunga demanded sacrifices from those who dared approach the Five Sacred Peaks. They buried him according to the rites of their religion.

Guillardmod continued to climb down the mountain until, two hours later, he fell into Camp II, where he found several coolies suffering from mountain sickness and snow blindness. That afternoon de Righi came up from Camp II with more than fifty men.

Meanwhile Pache had joined Crowley as Camp V. But the coolie who had been carrying his bed, demoralized by the death of the lost man and the thought of joining the Burra Sahib, the Big Lord, as Crowley was called, failed to arrive. He had dropped behind, deposited his load on the snow and fled.

By now Crowley was in a bitter mood. He had fallen out with everyone. He couldn't understand what was wrong with Guillardmod, and de Righi was 'simply off his head'. He described the doctor's reactions to the loss of the coolie thus:

'Next morning Guillardmod was well enough to curse. I couldn't imagine what it was that was torturing him and I can't imagine even now.² The kindest explanation I can give for his conduct is that he was mentally unbalanced.'

Finally, the coolies were demoralized 'by the excited, shrieking Reymond'. In order to revive their courage Crowley said he performed a little feat which he described in his novel *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, written seventeen years later.

'But the best of it was this: I was in command of a Himalayan expedition some years ago; and the coolies were afraid to traverse a snow slope which overhung a terrific cliff. I called on them to watch me, flung myself on the snow head first, swept down like a sack of oats, and sprang to my feet on the very edge of the precipice. There was a great gasp of awed amazement while I walked up to the men. They followed me across the *mawvais pas* without a moment's hesitation. The probably thought it was magic or something. No matter what. But at least they felt sure

¹ *Ibid.*

² i.e. about 18 years later when Crowley wrote his account of the climb.

that they could come to no harm by following a man so obviously under the protection of the mountain gods.'

In the evening of the 31st August a number of coolies tumbled into Camp IV and complained to Guillardmod that Crowley had been beating them. They had had enough, and were on their way home. They continued down to Camp III, where de Righi, who knew their language fluently, persuaded them not to abandon the expedition. He gave his word that he would not allow the Burra Sahib to beat them any more and that they were not obliged to spend a night in the same camp with him. Reluctantly they took up their loads again.

Crowley admitted beating a coolie, but only for his own good, and for the sake of the other coolies. His party, which contained Pache and Reymond, had attained a height of 21,000 feet. Suddenly the men were startled by a small avalanche falling in their direction. One of the coolies

'completely lost his head and with the instinct that makes a drowning man lift his hand into the air, he began to do the one thing that might have killed him: he began to undo the rope. I ordered him to stop but he was completely hysterical, breaking into senseless screams. There was only one means of saving him from his suicidal act. I took aim and gave him one with the axe. That pulled him together immediately and prevented his panic being transferred to the other men. Some of the slopes were really very bad. Deep snow on ice.'

They started back to Camp V,

'but the morale of the men had been undermined by the incident of the little avalanche. They began to talk nonsense of the demon of Kangchenjunga and the tiny avalanche grew to the most fantastic dimensions. In the night a few crept away.'

The following morning de Righi joined Guillardmod at Camp IV; they soon ran into the rest of the coolies who had slipped away in the morning from the Great Lord who beat them.

At 10 a.m. Guillardmod and de Righi set off for Camp V, determined to hold a durbar and depose Crowley from the leadership of the expedition. The camp was deserted when they arrived four hours later, but they could see Crowley in the distance.

Here is Crowley's description of the arrival of Guillardmod and de Righi.

'Meanwhile I saw to my surprise that a large crowd of men had arrived at Camp V. When I came down I found that

Guillarmod's hysteria and de Righi's stupidity had caused a fine mess again. They had arrived in the camp with seventeen or twenty coolies, but without bringing any of the things we needed so much. Their conduct was quite inexplicable. The doctor appeared not to know what he was saying. His remarks spoke only of a confused irritation. He seemed incapable of answering any of my questions, or of explaining what had happened. His only idea was to hold a conference, and to have himself elected leader in my place. Such folly had not been thought of in our contract which, he seemed to think, was nothing more than a scrap of paper. When the others came an excited argument began. No one suggested I had behaved unfairly in any way. From the beginning to the end it was nothing more than the resentment of a foreigner at being led by an Englishman . . . I did my best to discuss the matter with them and to calm them like naughty children which they were. Reymond had no complaint to make and did not take part in the discussion. Pache could see where it was leading and was quite friendly. I had certainly greater worries that Guillarmod's and de Righi's nonsense. They had brought up all these men without providing for food and shelter and it was late in the day. The snow was in an unusually unsafe condition and though I had chosen our way in such a manner that the danger was lessened, it was not less than criminal to send the men down. But the mutineers were quite unreceptive to the voice of reason.'

There was no arguing with Crowley and no shouting him down. There were now two leaders of the expedition: Crowley leading himself and Guillarmod the rest. Although the doctor had little hope of climbing much higher, he did not at this point say that he decided to abandon the expedition. The immediate problem was what they should do for that night, for there was no room for all of them at Camp V. So at five o'clock in the evening of the 1st September, Guillarmod and de Righi decided to return to Camp III, their main base. Pache also wanted to come down with them, because for the previous three nights he had been sleeping uncomfortably on the floor of the tent through the loss of his bed.

'We took him then on our rope and also his servants, leaving Crowley at Camp V with Reymond,' said the doctor. 'We were six on the rope, three Europeans with boots furnished with crampons, and three natives, of whom two were ill shod and whom we took on the rope out of pity.'

'Fortunately for the coolies,' replied Crowley to his statement, when he read it some years later, 'he did not extend this humane action to the seventeen I had sent to bivouac at the

camp on the ridge, otherwise he might have put everybody on the rope and killed the lot.'

'The first steps went well enough,' continued Guillardmod. 'The coolies in the middle slipped sometimes, but the rope being always well stretched, one readily held them. A little later the track, which descended vertically, turned at a right angle and became horizontal. De Righi and I passed easily, but the coolie who followed slipped and dragged the fourth man with him. Pache had not the strength to hold these two men on a slope so steep and he, in turn, lost his footing, as did also the sixth man.'

'De Righi and I, firmly planted, thought we could hold these four men, the speed of whose fall rapidly increased. Immediately the cord became stretched, the snow slipped away quickly from under our feet, thus causing an avalanche which soon took on enormous proportions. The whole slope of the mountain was soon swept clear, over more than fifty yards wide. Without support for my feet, despite my crampons, and suspended by my hands to my well-fixed ice-axe, I was just about to hold on to de Righi as he was carried away by the avalanche, but when the whirlwind of our comrades passed, rolling over one another, there were no possible means of resisting a similar shock. I was violently separated from my ice-axe, and dragged away in my turn.'

Guillardmod tried in vain to catch another ice-axe as he saw his comrades disappear into the vortex of the avalanche. He struggled to keep himself above the snow, swimming for all he was worth. But it was all over in five seconds. He was thrown into a crevasse, falling upon his kidneys. He was almost suffocated, but the movement had stopped. For a while he lay prostrate; then, when he had regained sufficient breath, he struggled up, gasping. With the aid of the rope which was immediately attached to de Righi, who was stretched out on his back on a higher ledge of the crevasse, he managed to pull himself out.

The Italian had been knocked senseless. He was entangled in the rope and half buried under the snow. The doctor succeeded in reviving and freeing him—but where were the others? They pulled the rope in vain. It descended vertically into the crevasse to a depth of which they were ignorant. They began to dig, but there was nothing to be found but the snow and rope extending deeper still.

They shouted for help, their voices in the rarefied air carrying far. Raymond promptly appeared. With their ice-axes all three dug furiously for an hour, but there was no coming to the end of the rope with the missing men attached to it.

'I had two toes frozen,' wrote Guillardmod, 'and my hands were without feeling. Our comrades were dead long since. All our efforts were useless. Nothing remained for us, but the sad duty of going to look for their bodies with other implements than our ice-axes.'

Let us return to Crowley, who, although not present at the accident, had a lot to say about it.

'I warned the rebels that they would certainly meet their death if they tried to go down that night. It might be more or less suitable for coolies, but for *them*: I knew only too well how great was Guillardmod's skill in producing accidents out of the most unsuitable material.

'They became all the more furious. By rights I should have broken the doctor's legs with my axe. To my horror I saw that Pache wanted to go down with them. The rascal had not even had the decency to bring a sleeping bag with him. I implored him to wait until the morning. I told him that he could have all my sleeping gear, but nothing could prevail upon him. I described the position to him, but he could not believe that I was speaking the literal truth when I said that Guillardmod at his best period was a dangerous fool on mountains and had now developed into a dangerous madman.

'My heart broke when I said good-bye to him, for I had taken a great liking to the man and my last words were: "Don't go. I shall never see you again. In ten minutes you'll be dead."

'I'd made another mistake. He was still alive a quarter of an hour later.

'Less than an hour later Reymond and I heard wild screams. No words could be distinguished but the voices were those of Guillardmod and de Righi. Reymond suggested going to their help at once, but it was now nearly dark and we had no one to send because de Righi had taken the men with him and there was no indication as to why they were screaming. They had screamed the whole day long. Reymond hadn't yet taken off his boots, and said he would go and see what was wrong and would call me if any help was needed. He went and neither returned nor called me. I went to sleep and rose next morning at dawn and went down to see.'

And what did Crowley see? Not much, according to Guillardmod, for, wrote the Swiss doctor,

'the following day one saw Crowley coming down from the upper camp without even knowing if our comrades would be found. He deserted the expedition in a cowardly manner and

we heard no more of him until we arrived back at Darjeeling.'

They saw Crowley, but he did not see them. When, on the morning of the 2nd September, Crowley descended the deserted slopes of the great mountain, he suddenly heard noises. He approached Camp IV and called aloud, 'Who is there?'

There was no reply. The noises died away. But soon they began again. 'I could have sworn I heard voices,' said Crowley. 'Again I called, and again dead silence fell. Almost I began to think myself the prey of an hallucination.'

Thus ended the first attempt to climb Kangchenjunga. The accident which killed Alexis Pache, 31-year-old lieutenant in the Swiss Cavalry, and three nameless coolies, was not Crowley's fault. He only reacted to it in a manner which greatly increased his reputation of being different from other men. On his arrival in Darjeeling he cabled a brief, and inaccurate, account of the expedition, and the accident which terminated it, to the London *Daily Mail*, expressing his disgust of his crew, and his hope of 'success another year with a properly equipped and disciplined expedition.'

The only question that remains to be answered is, why did Crowley, the leader of the expedition, not go to the assistance of his comrades? He didn't go to their aid because he hated them, and had already cut himself off from them; if they were in trouble, it was none of his business. Besides, they were dead or dying: it was too late.

When he was five years old he was taken by his parents to see the dead body of his sister, Grace Mary Elizabeth, who had lived for five hours. He couldn't see, he said, why he had been disturbed so uselessly. There was nothing he could do about it; Grace Mary Elizabeth was dead.

Death is irreparable, it should be forgotten as soon as possible: that was his attitude and his explanation why he 'would not even join the search party after the Kangchenjunga accident. What object was there in digging frozen corpses from under an avalanche?'

But Crowley was also afraid, afraid of death and of the demon of Kangchenjunga, who had shown his face.

Forty years after this tragic event, when Crowley was recording, in a shaky hand, on little rectangular pieces of paper, the number of grains of heroin he was taking each day, he used this phrase to describe his despair: *Kangchenjunga phobia*. Only the great fear of the demon mountain could express the physical pain and mental agony of his last years.

Kangchenjunga phobia; fear of Kangchenjunga. He had heard voices when alone in those awful, barren wastes, the voices of the dead. A deep dread rose up that day in Aleister Crowley, and in anguish he fled.

The Walk Across China

ON the 6th September Guillardmod, Reymond, and de Righi saluted their fallen friend and shed a tear before his tomb of boulders, surmounted by a rough-hewn cross. As they leisurely returned to civilization they visited Tibetan temples and gathered plants, beetles, and stones to take back with them to Switzerland for scientific study. And on their arrival at Darjeeling they discovered, to their rage, that Crowley had published his version of the expedition in the Indian papers. Apparently the doctor had imagined that Crowley would wish to say as little as possible about the fate of the expedition. Instead, to his amazement he found himself arraigned in print for taking the five men on the rope, for cutting the rope to free himself, and for other infamies. And Crowley's comment on Pache's and the coolies' deaths left him flabbergasted:

'As it was, I could do nothing more than send out Reymond on the forlorn hope. Not that I was over anxious in the circumstances to render help. A mountain "accident" of the sort is one of the things for which I have no sympathy whatever.'

Crowley's fifth, and final, article in the *Pioneer* was in defence of himself.

'But just a word of explanation by way of parenthesis as to why I did not go down at the time of the accident. I was in bed at the time of the first shout, making tea, after twelve hours without food in the snow; and it would have taken me ten minutes to dress. Reymond had his boots and patawe on, ready to start; I told him to call me if, when he found what was wrong, he needed any assistance. He did not call me. . . . Nobody who was not there can judge of the circumstances; and I was the only person who was there who knew one end of a mountain from the other. . . . The doctor is old enough to rescue himself and nobody would want to rescue Righi. . . .'

The rest of this article was devoted to abuse of the service at de Righi's Drum Druid Hotel, where Crowley had returned and made himself comfortable.

From Crowley's account of this sordid tail-end of a mountain-eering adventure, or Crowley's last villainy as Guillardmod called it, we learn that the doctor threatened to bring a charge of fraud against him, 'with a copy of *Snowdrops* which I shall deposit in a place where you would rather not see it, you scoundrel. . . . Your explanations stumble over four dead men.'

The next issue of *Pioneer* contained a long letter from de Righi, rebutting all Crowley's accusations and putting forward other views about the expedition which patiently attempted to prove that Crowley was a cad, a bully, and a liar.

Guillarmod decided that it would be too expensive and quite futile to prosecute Crowley for embezzling part of the funds of the expedition—most of the money had been supplied by the doctor—so Crowley continued to enjoy in peace the favours of a Nepalese girl who inspired him to write some more poetry.

Soon he wandered off alone to Calcutta, where he accepted the invitation of the Maharajah of Moharbhaj to a big-game hunt in Orissa.

Crowley had now reached his thirtieth birthday. The elation which he had felt earlier in the year had gone; he prophesied that he would never experience it again. The future stretched out before him, uncertain and foreboding. Magic and poetry had taken him away from the run of ordinary men. A letter he wrote to Gerald Kelly reflects the turmoil of his mind:

'After five years of folly and weakness, miscalled politeness, tact, discretion, care for the feeling of others, I am weary of it. I say today: to hell with Christianity, Rationalism, Buddhism, all the lumber of the centuries. I bring you a positive and primaevial fact, Magic by name; and with this I will build a new Heaven and a new Earth. I want none of your faint approval or faint dispraise; I want blasphemy, murder, rape, revolution, anything, bad or good, but strong.'

In another mood he explained that he wanted to achieve that detachment from the world and that exaltation of spirit known to mystics and to the holy men of the East.

But in the meantime his capital, left him by his father, like Balzac's *peau de chagrin*, the magic shagreen skin, shrank alarmingly with the fulfilment of every wish. Nothing stopped his prodigious output of poetry, but he derived only little satisfaction from it—it did not touch him in the depths.

Whither and wherefore? He did not know; he was not, anyhow, the kind of man who cared. He was being drive on by his Holy Guardian Angel, whom he later identified with the demon Aiwass. Any doubt he may have had was cast out by this reassuring voice.

He returned to the study and practice of magic, following the Golden Dawn, which used the Enochian system devised by those two Elizabethan magi, Dr. John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly. He turned his gaze inwards, ascended to the astral plane and communed with a certain lady and former inamorata, Sister Fidelis,

whom he had met at the Golden Dawn, Sister F. discussed the Great Work with him—it was nothing less than the creation of a new universe. A golden falcon was perched upon her shoulder, in whose features Crowley, with a start, recognized one of the Secret Chiefs.

Strangely, except for those who are familiar with paradox, he began to express this pure and mystical feeling by writing another obscene book—or so it would be judged by the authorities of the British Museum, if someone kindly gave a copy of it to that great library. He was explicit about the seemingly contradictory nature of his vision. Although of the highest and most ennobling kind, 'I felt a compulsion to express myself in a satirical (and as some might think) obscene form. . . .'

The inspiration again came from Sir Richard Burton, to whose memory at a later date he dedicated the second volume of his autobiography. After translating *The Arabian Nights*, Burton turned into English a 15th-century work known to scholars and collectors of literary curiosa as *The Perfumed Garden* or *The Scented Garden for the Soul's Recreation*, by Nafzâwi. Burton died before his translation, with its many learned notes, had been handed to his publisher, and the manuscript fell into the hands of his wife, who lacked his openness of mind. She was horrified as she read this quaint work. Suddenly—her story runs thus—her dead husband appeared to her in a vision, and in anguish begged her to destroy the manuscript completely.

Like Burton, Crowley had picked up a great deal of information relating to Eastern sexual practices, and under the watchful eye of his munshi, who was teaching him Persian, he began to compose ghazals, a form of Persian verse, purporting to be translations from that language—with Persian words and phrases spangling the text to make the forgery more convincing. He planted his imaginary poet, Abdullah al Haji, into the 17th century and gave him the same place of origin as that of the celebrated Hafiz. The collection of forty-two poems was entitled *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist, of Shiraz* ('translated from a rare Indian MS. by the late Major Luty and Another'). Major Luty was an imaginary Anglo-Indian who had found, translated, and annotated the manuscript. As that gallant soldier was killed in the South African war before he had finished the job, and unnamed editor completed it with the help of 'a Christian clergyman who discusses the matter of the poem from the peculiar point of view of high Anglicanism'. This is, of course, only another example of Crowley's bitter irony and humour, for the poems themselves, the introduction and the many footnotes, are lewd, learned, and (for those who find pornography no bar to humour) rather witty.

Crowley, in his characteristically schizophrenic way, took

a pious view of this pornographic *tour de force* when he came to discuss it in the third (unpublished) volume of his *Auto-hagiography*.

'The book itself is a complete treatise on Mysticism, expressed in the symbolism prescribed by Persian piety. It describes the relations of God and man, explains how the latter falls from his essential innocence by allowing himself to be deceived by the illusions of matter. His religion ceases to be real and becomes formal; he falls into sin and suffers the penalty thereof. God prepares the pathway of regeneration and brings him through shame and sorrow to repentance, thus preparing the mystical union which restores man to his original privileges, free will, immortality, the perception of truth, and so on.'

Although homosexual themes are not incompatible with Persian mysticism (the poetry of the famous Hafiz is not free from these sentiments), and they are, in fact, part of the convention of Persian mystical verse, Crowley's treatment of the subject falls into obscenity.¹

One night Crowley left his hotel and went out in the streets of Calcutta seeking adventure. He made for a spot called Culinga Bazaar, which he described as a street of infamy.

It was a feast night, the Durga Puja of the Bengali, and countless thousands of Hindus and Moslems of every caste and sect darted by, a bewildering series of flashes, red, blue, white and brown. Leaving a minor main street with its torment of damned souls (thus, in a poetic mood, he imagined the Indian crowd), he found himself in a thronged way that seemed to lead in the direction he wanted to go.

He was now in a labyrinth of tiny streets, arched, curved, tunnelled, and exceedingly narrow, so that he felt—the simile is his—like an inhabitant of flat-land lost on the thumbprint of a murderer.

Suddenly he had the eerie, disturbing feeling that he was being followed. Passing through an archway he came in pitch darkness into the narrowest possible passage: there was just room for two men to walk abreast.

Glancing back, he saw six faint, white flashes, the robes of men marching in Indian file. He was wearing a dark suit and pressed himself against the wall, hoping that he would be passed unnoticed.

As the third man went by the file swiftly bent in two. In an instant he was seized and his arms pinned to his sides. Rough hands began to search his pockets.

¹ One must distinguish between the genuine homosexual mysticism (parented) and the pseudo mysticism of homosexuality—a counterfeit brand.

He saw the pallid gleam of a knife, a cry rose in his throat and his fingers contacted upon the trigger of a .38 Webley which he was holding in his pocket.

There was a click, the hammer had fallen . . . but only upon an empty chamber. While still able to move his right forefinger, he tried again.

There was a terrific report and the white blouses fell away from him like a screen toppling over. Soon the street began to surge with people hunting 'with cries of hatred' for the gunman.

Escape seemed cut off; there was nothing for Crowley to do but to make himself invisible. Accordingly, with a silent prayer to the great god Harpocrates, Perdurabo the Adept mysteriously vanished.

Is the story true, or had Crowley only imagined it? Well, *some-one* shot two Indians that night in the streets of Calcutta.

The *Calcutta Standard* carried half a column about it in the middle of its front page.

Crowley drove immediately to see his friend Thornton, who told him to go to bed and in the morning see a solicitor. He did so and was advised to read *Uncle Remus*, and to study especially the character of Brer Rabbit who 'lay low and sed nuffin'.

That afternoon Rose and the child arrived at Calcutta from England. Perdurabo greeted her on the quayside with 'Welcome, beloved, to India's sunny shores. You are just in time to see me hanged.'

The next day the papers bore an announcement from the Commissioner of Police offering 100 rupees reward for information leading to the finding of the European.

Crowley decided to clear out. He asked Rose where she would prefer to go: Persia or China. All Persia meant to her was carpets and Omar Khayyám; all she knew about China was opium-smoking, porcelain, and tea. But she thought she would like China better, so they packed up and went there with a nurse for the child and the faithful Salama, the Kashmiri who had accompanied Perdurabo to K2 and Kangchenjunga, as Crowley's personal servant.

* * *

In an out-of-the-way corner of the earth, amid a landscape bizarre and wild that evoked his deepest longing, wandered Brother Perdurabo. He was somewhere between Teng-Yueh and Ta-lifu, in the province of Yunnan. He had entered China from Burma, after going by steamer up the Irrawaddy to Bhamo. With him were his wife and child (borne along in a chair by coolies), Salama, and the Indian nurse—who, at some stage of the journey, gave up in despair and got back home as best she could. They camped in the open and leisurely but steadily made for Ta-lifu.

'I found myself in the middle of China¹ with a wife and child,' Crowley wrote. 'I was no longer influenced by love for them, no longer interested in protecting them as I had been.' He was lost amid his conversations with the mighty men of antiquity, guardians of the esoteric tradition. One by one they passed before his impassioned gaze: Pythagoras, Plotinus of the school of Alexandria, the initiate of the Mysteries; Avicenna, Paracelsus, Fludd, William Blake. . . . He heard them all; every event in his life had been pre-arranged by them to help him accomplish the Great Work.

From these trances he always sank back to earth in a cradle of flame.

Part of Crowley's 'Walk Across China' was undertaken on the back of a Burmese pony. He admitted, and in print, that for a time he was not in his right mind. Whether this was due to the practice of a form of magical invocation which he called *Augoeides*²—shouted out amid the deserts and hills of this part of Western China—or to a fall of forty feet over a cliff (when his pony backed and threw him), is not clear.

He was tormented with doubt about the meaning of his existence—doubt which he would in the end dispel with the thought of his Holy Guardian Angel.

'I am indeed sent to do something. For whom? For the Universe? . . . What shall I teach men? And like lightning from heaven fell upon me these words: "The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel."'

Elsewhere he expressed the same thoughts in other words; he was so far away from himself that Aleister Crowley became some other, and strange, figure to whom he referred in the third person. 'He had come to the point of conquering his mind [consciousness?]. That mind had broken up³ . . . passing from this, he became as a little child, and on reaching the Unity behind the mind, found the purpose of his life formulated in these words, *The Obtaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel.*'

Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel, or Aiwass, was the only thing that mattered. He must leave everything and everyone and follow his demon.

He shaved his head to save brushing his hair and purchased an opium pipe. In five hours he smoked twenty-five pipes, but with no result whatsoever; then he discovered that this was because he hadn't been inhaling.

In Kandy with Allan Bennett he had tried laudanum and when

¹ In the middle of somewhere, but not China, for Yunnan is on the periphery of that vast country.

² αὐγοειδής, from αὐγος = the morning light, the dawn. Crowley borrowed this word from Περὶ Μυστηρίων, *De Mysteriis*, of Iamblichus, who was the greatest of the anti-Christian philosophers.

³ The stage of (temporary) insanity.

on his first visit to Burma he had eaten powdered opium. Now for the first time he discovered the pleasures of smoking opium.

While in the town of Yunnan, he changed his mind about sailing down the Yang-tze, the great river that flows across the centre of China. He wanted to go back to Europe and raise another expedition to Kangchenjunga. 'I had,' he said, 'the mountain, so to speak, in my pocket. A party of average strength could make as certain of strolling to the top as if it were the Strand.' So he sailed instead down the Red River to Tong-king, in French Indo-China, experiencing en route what he called 'an unpleasant incident'.

He had fallen out with the coolies who had carried him and Rose about the valleys and hills of Yunnan. He did not say why, but in the light of his treatment of the coolies of Kangchenjunga, we can guess the reason.

'It was not until we had left Manhao that I saw my chance of getting even with the coolies. I had hired a dugout to take us down the rapids of Ho-K'ou, and having got everything on board, I proceeded to pay the head man the exact sum due to him—less certain fines. Then the band played. They started to threaten the crew, and prevented them from throwing off the ropes. They incited the bystanders to take their part; and presently we had thirty or forty yelling maniacs preparing to stone us. I got out my .400 Cordite Express and told Salama to wade ashore and untie the ropes. But like all Kashmiris, thoughtlessly brave in the face of elemental dangers, he was an absolute coward when opposed to men.

'I told him that unless he obeyed at once I would begin by shooting him. He saw that I meant it, and did his duty; while I covered the crowd with my rifle. Not a stone was thrown; three minutes later the fierce current had swept us away from the rioters.'

On the 22nd March, 1906, they arrived at the sea-port of Hai Phong. Crowley decided to go and see Sister Fidelis, who was living in Shanghai. As he left for Hong Kong, the first stage of the journey, he told Rose to go back to England. The 'Walk Across China', which had taken four months, was over.

Eaters of Scorpions

CROWLEY spent twelve days in Shanghai with Sister Fidelis, and then set off across the Pacific in the *Empress of India*. From Vancouver he took the train to New York, where he was photo-

graphed with a half-serious, half-nonchalant face, an eye-glass dangling outside his jacket, a yellow bow-tie and his hair beginning to recede from his forehead.

His attitude towards Rose was, at best, ambivalent, alternating between love and hate. He'd left her in Tong-king and raced after his demon, but somewhere between China and New York a longing for her arose, and he wrote *Rosa Coeli*, Rose of Heaven.

When he arrived at Liverpool on the 2nd June, 1906, he was sent reeling at the news that his little girl had died in Rangoon. He blamed Rose: 'She had neglected to cleanse the nipple of the feeding bottle, and thereby exposed the child to the germs of typhoid.' He experienced no remorse at having left her and Rose in Tong-king. Duncombe-Jewell, Crowley's former factotum, was not surprised when he heard about it. He took a poor view of Crowley as a father. To this unknown man of humble circumstances is attributed the remark which outlives sorrow, that Nuit Ma Athahoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith had died of Acute Nomenclature.

In order to stimulate the sale of his *Collected Works* (the third volume of which was not published until 1907) Crowley had offered, at the time the first volume was due to appear, a prize of £100 for the best critical essay upon his writings, and announced the competition with the school-boyish shriek of

The Chance of the Year!
The Chance of the Century!!
The Chance of the Geologic Period!!!

'This method of propagating minor poetry,' commented the *Manchester Courier*, 'is not more remarkable than the publication of such poetry by the Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth.'

For two years no one had seized this chance of the geologic period, but after Crowley's return from China a young Regular Army officer of the First Oxfordshire Light Infantry, home on leave from India, informed him that he was competing for the prize.

It seemed to this young officer that the mantle of the great English Victorian poets had fallen squarely upon Aleister Crowley's shoulders. It also seemed to him that Crowley's creed, which he called Crowleyanity, was the true millenium. With such enthusiasm he became the first Crowleyan and wrote a long, turgid account of Crowley's genius—the fourth edition has 327 printed pages—entitled *The Star in the West*:

'Crowley is more than a new-born Dionysius, he is more than a Blake, a Rabelais or a Heine; for he stands before us as some

priest of Apollo, hovering 'twixt the misty blue of the heavens, and the more certain purple of the vast waters of the deep.

'It has taken 100,000,000 years to produce Aleister Crowley. The world has indeed laboured, and has at last brought forth a man. Bacon blames the ancient and scholastic philosophers for spinning webs, like spiders out of their own entrails; the reproach is perhaps unjust, but out of the web of these spiders, Crowley has himself twisted a subtle cord, on which he has suspended the universe, and swinging it round has sent the whole fickle world conception of these excogitating spiders into those realms which lie behind Time and beyond Space.'

The Star in the West (Crowley was this star) won the prize, it was published as a book, and the author held out his hand for the £100. But when, in 1904, Crowley had announced this competition, he had had more money to spend (and had been more reckless in spending it) than in 1907 after another trip round the world. Now the greater part of his fortune had drained away, and he was anxious to retain the few thousand pounds that still remained.

The cheque for £100 was not, therefore, written out until the author of these hymns of praise grew suspicious and then alarmed: some say that he never got paid at all.

The Star in the West is fairly well known among occultists and those interested in the by-paths of literature. Its author, John Frederick Charles Fuller, later wrote better books on military matters, and achieved the rank of Major-General. He was one of two Englishmen whom Hitler invited to his fiftieth birthday celebrations.

There is no mention of *Liber Legis* in *The Star in the West*. How, then, one might ask, was it possible for its author to proclaim Crowleyanity? Probably Crowley's physical pretence and personality, and his unrestrained verses, so overwhelmed the young Captain Fuller that he didn't have to wait for the creed, the manuscript of which was mislaid, and its significance at this time unappreciated even by Crowley himself. According to Fuller, Dante and Kant were small beer compared with the genius of his demoniac friend. 'Crowleyanity has led us through more marvels than Dante ever bore witness to. . . .' 'Thus has the great lion of Crowleyanity set the little crab of Königsberg and his lunar hut in their appointed niche in the great solar mansion of eternity.'

That part of Crowley's mind which was moulded by his parents and upbringing, the apocalyptic part, believed in the divine origin and literal meaning of *The Book of the Law*; and that part of his mind which he termed 'scientific' was too coldly sceptical to believe in anything at all. He never resolved the conflict. But to be able to see oneself 'scientifically' is useful even for the purpose of turning against one's friends. Thus, when he had fallen out with Captain

Fuller, he attacked him in *The Winged Beetle* with a lampoon which enabled him to say the last word on their friendship, but which delivered to Crowleyanity its death blow.

* * *

In the 1920s, during days of depression and anxiety about the future, Crowley looked back over the years for the time when, as he said, 'he went wrong', and put his finger on the year 1907. During 1907, however, he seemed to be in no particular doubt about himself or his future. He had been ill, but continued, nevertheless, to perform his daily work of magic. About this time he achieved his ambition of completing the Operation of Abra-Melin, i.e. the bringing forth of his Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwass. *The Magical Record*, or diary, however, contains but scant reference to this great event. Instead we have:

'Fratr Perdurabo was crucified by Frater D.D.S., and on that cross made to repeat this oath: "I, Perdurabo, a member of the Body of Christ, do hereby solemnly obligate myself to lead a pure and unselfish life, and will entirely devote myself so to raise myself to the Knowledge of my higher and Divine Genius that I shall be He. In witness of which I invoke the Great Angel Hua to give me a proof of his existence. . . ."
'Cut cross on breast and circle on head.'

There was more than one Crowley, for in him existed a number of different and conflicting personalities. There was Crowley the god, and Crowley the clown, and Crowley the English gentleman of Trinity College, Cambridge, whose occupations, so far, had been that of mountaineering, exploring, and poetizing. The role of Crowley the English gentleman was in opposition to Crowley in either of the other two roles: there is nothing gentlemanly about a demoniac genius. In 1907 there was still time for him turn to back. Rose had given birth to another child, Lola Zaza, and all human and reasonable things were calling him. He was thirty-two years of age. His boisterous roving past could be set aside as the *Sturm und Drang* period of his life. He had still a chance of settling down and getting on with the business of ordinary living. But he kicked his mother-in-law downstairs instead—she had come to visit Rose and the three-weeks-old Lola Zaza, who was ill with bronchitis—and strode on glorifying the immortal gods.

One day when Crowley was stumbling about in the loft of his London house, looking for a pair of skis, lo and behold his eyes fell upon a flat brown paper parcel, the missing manuscript of *The Book of the Law*.

* * *

Crowley's favourite rendezvous was a little chemist's shop in Stafford Street, managed by a man called E. P. Whineray. Crowley had a very high opinion of Whineray. 'He supplied me with ingredients for some of my magical preparations, such as kyfi, the mysterious incense of the ancient Egyptians; the perfume and oil of Abra-Melin, the unguentum Sabbati, and the like. In particular, he was at one time able to supply onycha.'

One evening Whineray told him that a certain English lord who he knew wished to meet him. This was George Montagu, the seventh Earl of Tankerville.

'At that moment the man himself walked in. He took me round to his rooms; and, to my stupefaction, blurted out the most extraordinary story. I could hardly believe my ears. He told me his inmost family secrets, and those of the most atrocious kind, as if I had known him twenty years. He said that he was bewitched by his mother and a woman friend. On the surface these people were pious Evangelicals. The idea that they were trying to murder him by witchcraft was a little startling, no less so the alleged motive. Lord Tankerville had been the second son. He claimed that his elder brother had really been the son of some baronet or other; that his mother hated her husband, and had become desperate when the heir-apparent had been killed in battle. His mother had determined to kill her remaining son.

'He saw witchcraft in every trifle. When the Countess happened to sneeze he would deduce that his mother was on the job. He had told his troubles to many people, and trusted them at first quite blindly, and then without a word of warning would conclude from some harmless word or act that they had joined the conspiracy against him.

'Of course, it was a perfectly plain case of persecution mania, accentuated by his old habit of brandy tipping and his newly acquired one of sniffing a solution of cocaine. Apart from his obsession there was nothing wrong with the man. He enjoyed magnificent health; he was one of the best preserved men of fifty to fifty-five that I have ever seen. He was deeply religious, with more than a touch of mysticism and a really deep insight into the Cabbala, which he understood although he knew little or nothing about it. I thought I could cure him, and undertook the task.

'My plan in such cases is not to undeceive the patient. I proposed to treat his story as literally true in every way, to fight fire with fire. I said to him: "What you must do is to develop your own magical powers so as to beat your mother at her own game."

'He had considerable capacity for magick, and understood the

object of the measures which I proposed. We began by chartering a yacht. . . .’

It was while he was ridding the Earl of Tankerville of his obsessions in Morocco that Crowley, out on one of his lonely adventure walks, ran into the Sidi Aissawa—eaters of scorpions—who were performing their secret, sacred dances.

‘I came upon a crowd of about two hundred people in a secluded spot. They were protected from intrusion by unofficial sentinels, strolling (apparently without aim) among the trees in a circle of a couple of hundred yards in diameter. I knew more or less what to expect, and before being observed, looked myself over to see that every article of my costume was correct. I then began to recite what I had learnt from my Sheikh in Egypt—“the Great Word to become mad and go about naked”.

“*Subhana Allahu Walhamdu lilahi walailaha illa allahu . . .*”

‘I passed the sentinels and mingled with the crowd. The women were present, though they took no active part, and merely helped to keep the ring. The circle was some thirty feet across. Squatting on its edge were the usual musicians, playing for dear life, while a number of men, armed with very small light axes of peculiar workmanship, were dancing and yelling. These axes were evidently not the ordinary tools used in daily life, but manufactured for the purpose of the ceremony. With these weapons the men cut themselves on the head (very rarely elsewhere) until the blood was streaming from their scalps on every side. They were, of course, quite unconscious of any pain, and those of them who were actually blinded by the blood were yet able to see.

‘The excitement of the crowd was as great as that of the celebrants themselves, but it was rigorously suppressed. I cannot say that the ring kept absolute silence; I doubt whether I was sufficiently cool to make any reliable observations, and I certainly was beyond the stage of intellectual curiosity. But the impression was that the onlookers were deliberately abstaining from either speech or gesture. I governed myself accordingly. But it was hard for me to refrain from dashing down my turban, leaping into the ring with a howl of “*Allahu akbar!*”, getting hold of an axe, and joining in the general festivity.

‘It literally took away one’s breath. It seemed that I was breathing with my heart instead of with my lungs. I felt myself vibrating with the energy of the universe. It was as if I had become conscious of atomic energy or of the force of gravitation. I do not know how long I stood there holding myself in, but it must have been over an hour. Suddenly I became aware of a terrific reaction; I felt that I had missed my chance by not letting

myself go, and perhaps be killed for my pains. At the same time I was seized with a sudden sense of alarm. I felt myself to be outside the spiritual circle. I was sure that someone would discover me, and a swift shudder passed through me as I apprehended my danger. Fortunately, I had sufficient presence of mind to resume my mantra, and melt away from the multitude as silently as I had descended upon it.¹

To let himself go, to hurl himself over the brink of consciousness, was an urge by which Crowley was constantly possessed. It arose out of a state of tension which he normally relieved by sexual intercourse. It is the key to his personality and his philosophy.

Crowley and Tankerville returned to England through Spain, saw a number of wonders on the way, and parted the worst of enemies. The latter was, it seems, uncured. 'He classed me as having joined the conspiracy against him of black magicians.' In this matter it is only Crowley's voice that can be heard, but from one utterance of Tankerville's recorded in *The World's Tragedy*, written in 1908, it seems that the noble lord could, when the occasion demanded it, speak his mind.

'... as Lord Tankerville said to me at eleven a.m. on the 7th of July, 1907, "I'm sick of your teaching—teaching—teaching—as if you were God Almighty and I were a poor bloody shit in the street."'

The Brothers and Sisters of the A . . . A . . .

It was Victor B. Neuberg, the little eccentric poet, who, out of his need for submission, facilitated Crowley's development; he also replenished Crowley's empty coffers. 'I cannot say what he looked like,' wrote Crowley in his autobiography about Neuberg, 'because when God made him He broke the mould'.

The roles of the two men were complementary; the fascinating and the fascinated. The one was looking for pupils; the other was seeking a Master.

A number of expensively printed and bound books of verse now began to appear: *Knox Om Pax*;¹ *Amphora*; *The World's Tragedy*, and other works. Crowley described 1908 as his *annus mirabilis* in poetry. He also published under a pseudonym his salacious poems *Clouds Without Water* (by the Rev. C. Verey. 'Privately printed for circulation among ministers of religion'). The preface to the collection, *Ambergris*, told of his disappointment and growing bitterness about the public's indifference to his poetic genius.

¹ Not *Knox on Pax*, as one bookseller's catalogue had it.

'In response to a widely-spread lack of interest in my writings, I have consented to publish a small and unrepresentative selection from the same. With characteristic cunning I have not included any poems published later than the Third Volume of my *Collected Works*. The selection has been made by a committee of seven competent persons, sitting separately. Only those poems have been included which obtained a majority vote. This volume, thus almost ostentatiously democratic, is therefore now submitted to the British Public with the fullest confidence that it will be received with exactly the same amount of acclamation as that to which I have become accustomed.'

But his main publishing enterprise at this time was *The Equinox*, subtitled *The Review of Scientific Illuminism*. These bulky volumes appeared twice a year, at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. They were not a review of illuminism, scientific or otherwise, but a kind of Crowley scrapbook and exposition of Crowleyanity.

Crowley himself naturally took a high view of his magazine:

'*The Equinox*,' he said, 'was the first serious attempt to put before the public the facts of Occult Science, so-called, since Blavatsky's unscholarly hotch-potch of facts and fable, *Isis Unveiled*. It was the first attempt in history to treat the subject with scholarship and from the standpoint of Science. No previous book of its kind can compare with it for the perfection of its style, and the rigidity of its rule never to make any statement which could not be proved as precisely as the mathematician exacts. . . . It did not command a large public but its influence was enormous.'

Ever since Crowley had broken with Mathers he had had the ambition to possess an Order of his own. A magician needs an Order as a politician needs a Party. He acquired one in the following manner: Mathers' Golden Dawn was an occult brotherhood divided into three parts, only the first, or Outer Order, of which carried the title of the Golden Dawn. When members reached the 5°=6□ grade, they passed into the Order of the Rosy Cross. (Mathers, with his 7°=4□ grade, was of this Order.) The three remaining grades of the whole hierarchy, *Magister Templi* (Master of the Temple) 8°=3□, *Magnus* 9°=2□, and *Ipsissimus* 10°=1□, came within the Order of the Silver Star, *Argentinum Astrum*; but these last three grades were of such an exalted nature that only the Secret Chiefs themselves had attained to them. Now, after Crowley had performed in China that ceremony which he called *Augoeides* (see page 77), the gods had beckoned him to ascend to the grade of Master of the Temple, although he did not formally accept the position till 1909. In fact, he was, from 1906 onwards, one of these

Secret Chiefs. Therefore his Order was that of the Silver Star, or the A. : A. : as it was called, and he announced it to the world in the pages of *The Equinox*. Crowley had, with the publication of his occult journal, swallowed MacGregor Mathers whole.

In each of the ten volumes of *The Equinox* runs an instalment, in high-flown, symbolic language, of Crowley's magical biography: *The Temple of Solomon the King*. The author (according to Crowley) was Fuller, but Crowley undoubtedly assisted in the composition as well as supplying the information.

The Equinox was mainly filled up with the writings from Crowley's unquenchable pen. Fuller, Neuberg, Ethel Archer (who, in 1933, wrote a novel about Crowley and Neuberg called *The Hieroglyph*), George Raffalovitch and Meredith Starr (like Neuberg a minor poet) were some of the other contributors. By 1914 the list of members of the A. : A. : adds up to the surprising number of thirty-eight, most of whom hadn't paid their subscriptions. Included are the names of Miss Nina Hamnett, the artist; Miss Gwendoline Otter ('expelled'); Count Louis Hamon, better known as Cheiro, the society palmist ('owes us £4 4 0'); V. B. Neuberg, 'An imbecile with no moral feeling', and a certain Miss Florence B—— ('Must marry or go mad').

The Silver Star had much in common with the Golden Dawn, for the simple reason that Crowley used, without acknowledgment, the latter's rituals and teachings. His magical weapons—sword, wand, cup, bell, and burin—were consecrated in the goetic tradition of the G. : D. : , and he used their pentagram ritual for banishing evil spirits. The differences of the two Orders rose out of the fact that Crowley preferred sex to ceremony.

His headquarters were now at 124 Victoria Street, London. From this address *The Equinox* was published. Here the Brothers and Sisters of the A. : A. : gathered and were put through their magical paces. There is no account of their activities, except the following—from an unpublished volume of *The Confessions*—which gives us a glimpse of the workings of this mystic body.

'On one occasion the God came to us in human form (we were working in a locked temple) and remained with us, perfectly perceptible to all our senses, for the best part of an hour, only vanishing when we were physically exhausted by the ecstasy of intimate contact with His divine person. We sank into a sort of sublime stupor; when we came to ourselves, He was gone.

'Again, at Victoria Street, a number of us were dancing round the altar with linked hands and faces turned outwards. The temple was dimly lighted and thick with incense. Somehow the circle was broken, and we kept on dancing, each for himself. Then we became aware of the presence of a stranger. Some of

us counted the men present, and found there was one too many. One of the weaker brethren got scared, or one of the stronger brethren remembered his duty to science—I don't know which—and switched on the light. No stranger was to be seen. We asked Brother Lucifer—as I may call him!—why he had broken the spell, and each of us independently confirmed his story. We all agreed about the appearance of the visitor. We had all been impressed with the same feeling, that he did not belong to the human species.'

The mysterious leader of the A.: A.:, Brother V.V.V.V.V. (the initials of his motto for his grade of Master of the Temple), otherwise known as Sir Aleister Crowley (he was knighted, he said, for his efforts on behalf of the Carlist cause),¹ could easily be recognized by a single lock of hair on the forehead of his otherwise shaved head, the symbol of the Sun's viceregent: in other words, the Phallus. Apart from this eccentric coiffure, Crowley's handsome face had glided away into flabbiness, and his athletic frame had adorned itself with a paunch.

Oliver Haddo, the hero of Somerset Maugham's novel *The Magician*, who was drawn from Aleister Crowley, is described as a big stout fellow with a taste for wild-looking clothes. This novel gave Crowley considerable gratification.

'Late in 1908 I picked up a book. The title attracted me strongly, *The Magician*. The author, bless my soul! No other than my old and valued friend, William Somerset Maugham, my nice young doctor whom I remembered so well from the dear old days of the *Chat Blanc*. So he had really written a book—who would have believed it! . . . the Magician, Oliver Haddo, was Aleister Crowley; his house "Skene" was Boleskine. The hero's witty remarks were, many of them, my own. . . . But I had jumped too hastily to conclusions when I said "Maugham has written a book".

'I found phrase after phrase, paragraph after paragraph, page after page, bewilderingly familiar; and then I remembered that in my early days of the Golden Dawn I had introduced Gerald Kelly to the Order, and recommended him a selection of books on Magick. I reflected that Maugham had become a great friend of Kelly, and stayed with him at Camberwell vicarage. Maugham had taken some of the most private and personal incidents of

¹ The question of Crowley's knighthood is an obscure one. 'I obtained the honour of Knighthood from one of Don Carlos's lieutenants.' How a lieutenant of that unhappy and unsuccessful pretender could confer a knighthood, I do not know. However, Crowley won the honour in this way: 'I actually joined a conspiracy on behalf of Don Carlos, obtained a commission to work a machine gun, took pains to make myself a first-class rifle shot and studied drill, tactics, and strategy.' The last Carlist uprising was in August, 1875, two months before Crowley was born; so his prowess exceeds Gargantua's, unless he had in mind a later and insignificant skirmish that the history books have passed over.

my life, my marriage, my explorations, my adventures with big game, my magical opinions, ambitions and exploits and so on. He had added a number of the many absurd legends of which I was the central figure. He had patched all these together by innumerable strips of paper clipped from the books which I had told Gerald to buy. . . .¹

The first indication of the break-up of Crowley's marriage was that Rose began to drink heavily. Their marriage had not, of course, been a success: no marriage with Aleister Crowley, who styled himself the Wanderer of the Waste, could be anything but a disaster. Upon returning from Tangier in 1907 he found that Rose had run up in five months a bill for 150 bottles of whisky with one grocer alone.

His account of his domestic tragedy, as he called it, makes sickening reading. The number of whisky bottles was probably an exaggeration; and the reason which he adduced for Rose's dipsomania was intended as an insult to her parents. In 1909 they were divorced, after Rose had persuaded Aleister to make a small financial settlement upon their daughter, Lola.¹

Crowley's attitude towards his wife is partly reflected in the fourth, and final, poem which was inspired by her, *Rosa Decidua*, A Fallen Rose:

Rose of the World!
If so, then what a world!
What worm at its red heart lay curled
From the beginning? Plucked and torn and trampled
And utterly corrupt is she . . .

The poem was printed and bound with a photograph of the author and family and a copy was sent to the judge, Lord Salvesen, who had granted the *decree nisi* on evidence manufactured by Crowley.

In the autumn of 1911 Rose entered an asylum suffering from alcoholic dementia. Her last years with Aleister had not been happy. It is said that he entertained his mistresses at home and, on occasions, hung his wife up by her heels in the wardrobe.

During the spring of 1910 Crowley and his mistress, Edith Y——, a young Australian violinist, were staying in Dorset. One day they performed a ritual for the purpose of evoking Bartzabel, the spirit of Mars. Their host, who witnessed it, was impressed, and he suggested to Crowley that he should make a public spectacle of such rituals.

¹ In 1909 Crowley had no money to give away, but he was due to inherit £4,000 on the death of his mother. He therefore created a discretionary trust fund, the income of which, when available, was to be divided between his daughter and himself at the discretion of the trustees—George Cecil Jones and Oscar Eckenstein.

This idea was further advanced when Crowley and Edith were performing another ritual while under the influence of the drug anhalonium. Crowley was reciting poetry, Edith was playing the violin 'against each other, before the Lord'.

Anhalonium, or *anhalonium lewini*, was first analysed and identified by the German chemist Louis Lewin. It comes from the plant peyotl, the wonderful properties of which were known to the old Indians of Central America, who worshipped it as a god.

'No other plant,' says Lewin, 'brings about such marvellous functional modifications of the brain. Whereas the poppy gradually detaches the soul and the body with it from all terrestrial sensations and is capable of leading them gently to the threshold of death and setting them free, a consolation and a blessing for all those who are wearied and tormented by life, anhalonium procures for those who make use of it, by its peculiar excitation, pleasures of a special kind. Even if these sensations merely take the form of sensorial phantasms, or of an extreme concentration of the inner life, they are of such a special nature and so superior to reality, so unimaginable, that the victim believes himself transported to a new world of sensibility and intelligence.'

Crowley wrote seven rites, one for each of the planets, called them the Rites of Eleusis, and, in the Autumn of 1910, they were performed at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on seven consecutive Wednesdays at 9 p.m. The advertised aim of the rites was to induce a state of religious ecstasy in the audience, for a fee (for the course) of £5 5s.

The Eleusinian Mysteries, performed yearly at Eleusis, were the most celebrated of all the religious ceremonies of ancient Greece. The legend which formed their basis is the well-known one of the abduction of Persephone, daughter of Demeter, by Pluto. There is no connection between Crowley's Rites of Eleusis and the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries. His rites have more in common with the mediaeval morality plays, except that they are more like immorality plays, for Pan, the antichrist, is exalted.

'After depositing our hat and coat with an attendant we were conducted by our guide to a door, at which stood a rather dirty-looking person attired in a sort of imitation Eastern robe, with a drawn sword in his hand, who, after inspecting our cards, admitted us to a dimly lighted room heavy with incense. Across this room low stools were placed in rows, and when we arrived a good many of these were already occupied by various men and women, for the most part in evening dress. At the extreme end of the room was a heavy curtain, and in front of this sat a

huddled-up figure in draperies, beating a kind of monotonous tom-tom.

‘When all had been admitted the doors were shut, and the light, which had always been exceedingly dim, was completely extinguished except for a slight flicker on the “altar”. Then after a while more ghostly figures appeared on the stage, and a person in a red hood, supported on each side by a blue-chinned gentleman in a sort of Turkish bath costume, commenced to read some gibberish, to which the attendants made response at intervals.’

It was only gibberish to the reporter of *The Looking Glass* because he couldn’t understand it.

I lift the mask of matter;
I open the heart of man;
For I am of force to shatter
The cast that hideth—Pan!

I bring ye laughter and tears,
The kisses that foam and bleed,
The joys of a million years,
The flowers that bear no seed.

I lift my wand and wave you
Through hill to hill of delight;
My rosy rivers lave you
In innermost lustral light.

Another hostile report of the Rites appeared in *John Bull*, then quite a different journal from the present publication. In view of the harshness of *John Bull’s* later attacks on Crowley, it is interesting to note that they began with the highest appreciation of Crowley as a poet.

The proprietor of *The Looking Glass*, a certain de Wend Fenton (who in 1913 was fined £10 for sending indecent articles through the post), saw good copy in Aleister Crowley. Further issues of his paper attacked Crowley’s treatment of his wife, told the story of his liaison with a milliner who worked in Burlington Arcade (she had had, of course, an illegitimate baby by Perdurabo), and dragged some of his friends in the mud for good measure.

Fuller urged Crowley to sue de Wend Fenton for libel, but Crowley refused. ‘Resist not evil,’ he replied, quoting the scriptures. Ten years later, and for the rest of his life, Crowley was obsessed with suing publishers and persons for libelling him; but then the bitterness had overflowed into his soul and the balance of his mind had been destroyed by a drug more powerful than anhalonium—heroin.

Just before the third number of *The Equinox* was due to appear,

MacGregor Mathers served Crowley with an injunction restraining publication. The secrets of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (which Perdurabo, at his initiation, had solemnly sworn to preserve) were being given out to the world in the pages of this journal. The sections called *The Temple of Solomon the King* were, more or less, literal transcriptions of the secret rites.

The case came before the late Mr. Justice Bucknill, who, to Mathers' great joy, and Crowley's great surprise, confirmed the injunction. Perdurabo promptly gave notice of appeal, and before the case came to the Appeal Court for reconsideration made sure of victory by consecrating an Abra-Melin talisman 'to acquire the affection of a judge'. Needless to say he won his appeal, and the previous decision was reversed.

This was Crowley's last skirmish with Mathers. In the next few years, with the publication of further numbers of *The Equinox*, most of the remaining rituals of the G. . . D. . . were divulged. The head of the G. . . D. . . was now a broken man. The secrets of his Order were available for all to profane. Eight years later Mathers died. It is said, with more truth than is apparent, that Crowley killed him.

On the 27th September, 1911, Rose Kelly was certified insane.¹ Crowley heard about it some time during the following month and juggled with the dates in order to establish that the occasion had some magical (numerological) bearing upon his meeting Mary d'Este Sturges, the companion of Isadora Duncan.

'Late in the evening of the 11th October, within a few minutes of midnight, he [Brother Perdurabo] was taken by the well-known raconteur Mr. Hener Skene, to the Savoy Hotel in London, and there introduced to a Mrs. Mary d'Este Sturges.

'An astrological figure for this hour is subjoined.

[This chart is missing from *The Magical Record*.]

'This astounding figure is unintelligible without a reference to certain previous figures. At Fra. P.'s birth, Luna, Caput, and Neptune were culminating. Saturn in the 8th house; the only figure above the horizon [and so on].

'Of this heavenly disposition Fra. P. was of course ignorant at the time; but he was in no wise ignorant of the profound and occult emotion caused by the meeting, an emotion which was not confined to himself alone.

'On the 13th he took tea with the lady, and returning after dinner, did not leave the suite until he had expressed (however unworthily) the nature of his feelings. On the 14th he dined with her, and after partaking subsequently of chocolate and rolls, left for the North of England.'

¹ In spite of this she married Dr. Gormley whom Crowley had entertained at Boleskine.

In *The Confessions* we are told about his meeting, in the Savoy Hotel, with Mary d'Este Sturges in a less mysterious manner.

A boisterous party was in progress. The dancer's lifelong friend, who I will call by the name she afterwards adopted, Soror Virakam,¹ was celebrating her birthday. This lady, a magnificent specimen of mingled Irish and Italian blood, possessed a most powerful personality and terrific magnetism which instantly attracted my own. We forgot everything. I sat on the floor like a Chinese god, exchanging electricity with her.'

Another love affair now began.

'After some weeks' preliminary skirmishing, we joined battle along the whole front; that is to say, I crossed to Paris, where she had a flat, and carried her off to Switzerland to spend the winter skating. Arriving at Interlaken, we found that Mürren was not open, so we went on to St. Moritz, breaking the journey at Zürich. This town is so hideous and depressing that we felt that our only chance of living through the night was to get superbly drunk, which we did.'

To return to *The Magical Record*. It was the night of the 21st November, 1911; they were staying at the National Hotel, Zürich.

'At about midnight she was in a state of excitement, exhaustion and hysteria so fierce and terrible as to be almost alarming to Fra. P. I must mention that he had hitherto regarded her only as a voluptuous and passionate woman of the world, or perhaps in part as a fellow-artist; no thought of her use in his occult work had ever crossed his mind.

'However, the state described, one little removed from that of an amorous but infuriated lioness, suddenly and without warning gave place to a profound calm hardly distinguishable from prophetic trance, and she began to describe what she was seeing.'

An old man with a long white beard had appeared to Sister Virakam. In his hand he held a wand, on his breast was a large claw, and on his finger a ring, beneath the transparent glass top of which was a white feather of a bird of paradise. He told her to make herself perfectly passive so that he might communicate with her freely.

Crowley, who was not particularly interested in Mary d'Este's ravings, suddenly began to listen carefully. He had recognized that she was in communication with an Intelligence—she called him Abuldiz—who was trying to get a message through to him.

¹ Virakam, Sanscrit stem RAK, meaning 'I construct, perform'.

P. then began to "challenge" the old man.

'The seer was not seeing clearly, and was terribly afraid of the whole business.

'He gave his name as Abuldiz.

'He promised to come and "make all clear", after seven days at 11 p.m.' (*The Magical Record of Perdurabo*).

The following day, the 22nd, Perdurabo and Virakam went off to St. Moritz and engaged a suite in the Palace Hotel.

'My first surprise was to find that I had brought with me exactly those Magical Weapons which were suitable for the work proposed, and no others. But a yet more startling circumstance was to come. For the purpose of the Cairo Working, Ouarda and I had bought two abbai; one, scarlet for me; one, blue, for her. I had brought mine to St. Moritz; the other was, of course in the possession of Ouarda. Imagine my amazement when Virakam produced from her trunk a blue abbai so like Ouarda's that the only differences were minute details of the gold embroidery! The suggestion was that the Secret Chiefs, having chosen Ouarda as Their messenger, could not use anyone else until she had become irrevocably disqualified by insanity. Not till now could her place be taken by another; and that Virakam should possess a duplicate of her Magical Robe seemed a strong argument that she had been consecrated by Them to take the place of her unhappy predecessor.

'She was very unsatisfactory as a clairvoyant; she resented these precautions. She was a quick-tempered and impulsive woman, always eager to act with reckless enthusiasm. My cold scepticism no doubt prevented her from doing her best. Abuldiz himself constantly demanded that I should show "faith", and warned me that I was wrecking my chances by my attitude. I prevailed upon him, however, to give adequate proof of his existence and his claim to speak with authority. The main purport of his message was to instruct me to write a book on my system of mysticism and magick, to be called *Book Four*, and told me that by means of this book I should prevail against public neglect. I saw no objection to writing such a book; on quite rational grounds it was a proper course of action. I therefore agreed to do so. But Abuldiz was determined to dictate the conditions in which the book should be written; and this was a difficult matter. He wanted us to travel to an appropriate place. On this point I was not wholly satisfied with the result of my cross-examination. I know now that I was much to blame throughout. I was not honest either with him, myself, or Virakam. I allowed material considerations to influence me, and I clung—oh triple fool!—to my sentimental obligations towards Edith [Y].

'We finally decided to do what he asked, though part of my objection was founded on his refusal to give us absolutely definite instructions. However, we crossed the passes in a sleigh to Chiavenna, whence we took the train to Milan. In this city we had a final conversation with Abuldiz. I had exhausted his patience, as he mine, and he told us that he would not visit us any more. He gave us his final instructions. We were to go to Rome and beyond Rome, though he refused to name the exact spot. We were to take a villa and there write *Book Four*. I asked him how we might recognize the right villa. I forget what answer he gave through her, but for the first time he flashed a message directly into my own consciousness. "You will recognize it beyond the possibility of doubt or error," he told me. With this a picture came into my mind of a hillside on which were a house and garden marked by two tall Persian Nuts.

'The next day we went on to Rome. Owing to my own Ananias-like attempt to "keep back part of the price", my relations with Virakam had become strained. We reached Naples after two or three quarrelsome days in Rome and began house-hunting. I imagine that we should find dozens of suitable places to choose from, but we spent day after day scouring the city and suburbs in an automobile, without finding a single place to let that corresponded in the smallest degree with our ideas.

'Virakam's brat was to join us for the Christmas holidays, and on the day he was due to arrive we motored out as a forlorn hope to Posilippo before meeting him at the station at 4 o'clock or thereabouts. But the previous night Virakam had a dream in which she saw the desired villa with absolute clearness. (I had been careful to say nothing to her about the Persian Nuts, so as to have a weapon against her in case she insisted that such and such a place was the one intended.)

'After a fruitless search we turned our automobile towards Naples, along the crest of Posilippo. At one point there is a small side lane scarcely negotiable by motor, and indeed hardly perceptible, as it branches from the main road so as to form an acute-angled "Y" with the foot towards Naples. But Virakam sprang excitedly to her feet, and told the chauffeur to drive down it. I was astonished, she being hysterically anxious to meet the train, and our time being already almost too short. But she swore passionately that the villa was down that lane. The road became constantly rougher and narrower. After some time, it came out on the open slope; a low stone parapet on the left protecting it. Again she sprang to her feet. "There," she cried, pointing with her finger, "is the villa I saw in my dream!" I looked. No villa was visible. I said so. She had to agree; yet stuck to her point that she saw it. I subsequently returned to that spot and found that a short section of wall, perhaps 15 feet

of narrow edge of masonry, is just perceptible through a gap in the vegetation.

“We came to a tiny piazza, on one side of which was a church. “That is the square and the church,” she exclaimed, “that I saw in my dream!”

“The lane grew narrower, rougher, and steeper. Little more than 100 yards ahead it was completely “up”, blocked with heaps of broken stone. The chauffeur protested that he would be able neither to turn the car nor to back it up to the square. Virakam, in a violent rage, insisted on proceeding. I shrugged my shoulders. I had got accustomed to these typhoons.

“We drove on a few yards. Then the chauffeur made up his mind to revolt, and stopped the car. On the left was a wide open gate through which we could see a gang of workmen engaged in pretending to repair a ramshackle villa. Virakam called the foreman and asked in broken Italian if the place was to let. He told her no; it was under repair. With crazy confidence she dragged him within and forced him to show her over the house. I sat in resigned disgust, not deigning to follow. Then my eyes suddenly saw down the garden two trees close together. I stopped. Their tops appeared. They were Persian Nuts!

“The stupid coincidence angered me, and yet some irresistible instinct compelled me to take out my note-book and pencil and jot down the name written over the gate—Villa Caldarazzo. Idly, I added up the letters. Their sum struck me like a bullet in my brain. It was 418, the number of the Magical Formula of the Aeon, a numerical hieroglyph of the Great Work. Abuldiz had made no mistake. My recognition of the right place was not to depend on a mere matter of trees, which might be found almost anywhere. Recognition beyond all possibility of doubt was what he promised. He had been as good as his word.

“I was entirely overwhelmed. I jumped out of the car and ran up to the house. I found Virakam in the main room. The instant I entered I understood that it was entirely suited for a temple. The walls were decorated with crude frescoes which somehow suggested the exact atmosphere proper to the Work. The very shape of the room seemed somehow significant. Further, it seemed as if it were filled with a peculiar emanation. This impression must not be dismissed as sheer fancy. Few men but are sufficiently sensitive to distinguish the spiritual aura of certain buildings. It is impossible not to feel reverence in certain cathedrals and temples.

“Virakam of course was entirely certain that this was the villa for us. Against this was the positive statement of the people in charge that it was not to be let. We refused to accept this assertion. We took the name and address of the owner, dug him out, and found him willing to give us immediate possession at a small

rent. We went in on the following day, and settled down almost at once to consecrate the Temple and begin the book.

'The idea was as follows. I was to dictate; Virakam to transcribe. . . .'

In this place and manner was created *Book Four*, by Frater Perdurabo and Soror Virakam, perhaps the clearest and wittiest account of those two cloudy and solemn subjects, magic and yoga. The spelling **MAGICK**, with the Saxon *k* added to the *c*, was here used by Crowley for the first time, to distinguish his brand, which was the Science of the Magi, from all counterfeits. *Book Four* contains that brilliant essay, 'An Interlude,' on the magical secrets concealed in nursery rhymes—it is Crowley at his best.

'I [Soror Virakam] wrote this book down from Frater Perdurabo's dictation at the Villa Caldarazzo, Posilippo, Naples, where I was studying under him, a villa actually prophesied to us long before we reached Naples by that Brother of the A.'.A.'. who appeared to me in Zürich. Any point which was obscure to me was cleared up in some new discourse (the discourses have consequently been rearranged). Before printing, the whole work was read by several persons of rather less than average intelligence, and any point not quite clear even to them has been elucidated.

'May the whole Path now be plain to all!

'Frater Perdurabo is the most honest of all the great religious teachers. Others have said: "Believe me!" He says: "Don't believe me!" He does not ask for followers; would despise and refuse them. He wants an independent and self-reliant body of students to follow out their own methods of research. If he can save them time and trouble by giving a few useful "tips", his work will have been done to his own satisfaction. . . .'

After completing *Book Four* 'the programme was cut short. The secret contest between the Will of Virakam and my own broke into open hostility. A serious quarrel led to her dashing off to Paris.'

From occasional lines in *The Magical Record* one can surmise that the stress of *magick* was sometimes more than Sister Virakam could bear. Thus:

'Seer being excited by a half bottle of Pommery 1904 and by Eros. . . . Towards the end [of the ceremony] she cried: "The Beast!" amid her groans.'

After Mary d'Este Sturges had rejoined Isadora Duncan, Crowley returned to Edith Y., for in the Summer of 1913 the violinist and the magician set off for Moscow together at the head

of a troupe of chorus girls whom Crowley called The Ragged Rag-Time Girls.

He claimed the credit for organizing this party and devising the show. On the 3rd of March they had appeared, he said, at the Old Tivoli and 'taken London by storm'.

If there was not some evidence for it, the whole story of Crowley the Impresario would seem too incongruous to be credible. He did not, however, sustain this role for long.

'It was a sickening business,' he wrote, 'but it brought me into contact with a class of society to which I had been altogether a stranger; from the coarse agent to the brutal producer and vulgar performer—all alike in their absolute absorption in money-making, all equally ignorant of and contemptuous of art in itself, all equally mean, cowardly, callous, and unscrupulous in everything that touched "the Show".'

'At the Russian frontier, we plunged from civilization and order headlong into confusion and anarchy. No one on the train could speak a word even of German. We were thrown out at Warsaw into a desolation which could hardly have been exceeded had we dropped on the moon. At last we found a loafer who spoke a little German, but no man knew or cared about the trains to Moscow. We ultimately drove to another station. A train was due to leave, but they would not find us accommodation. We drove once more across the incoherent city, and this time found room in a train which hoped to go to Moscow at the average rate of some ten miles an hour. The compartment contained shelves covered with loose dirty straw on which the passengers indiscriminately drank, gambled, quarrelled and made love. There was no discipline, no order, no convenience.

'At first I blamed myself, my ignorance of the language and so on for the muddle in Warsaw; but the British Consul told me that he had himself been held up there by railway mismanagement on one occasion for forty-eight hours. When we reached Moscow there was no one at the station who could take charge of our party. We found a hotel for ourselves, and rooms for the girls, more by good luck than design. About one in the morning they sent for Edith to rescue them. She found them standing on rickety tables, screaming with fear. They had been attacked by bed-bugs. Luckily I had warned Edith that in Russia the bug is as inseparable from the bed as the snail from his shell.

'In a day or two things calmed down. Then there came suddenly upon me a period of stupendous spiritual impulse—even more concentrated than that of 1911. In a café I met a young Hungarian girl named Anny T.; tall, tense, lean as a starving leopardess, with wild insatiable eyes and a long straight thin mouth, a scarlet scar which seemed to ache with the anguish

of hunger for some satisfaction beyond earth's power to supply. We came together with irresistible magnetism. We could not converse in human language. I had forgotten nearly all Russian; and her German was confined to a few broken cries. But we had no need of speech. The love between us was ineffably intense. It still inflames my inmost spirit. She had passed beyond the region where pleasure had meaning for her. She could only feel through pain, and my own means of making her happy was to inflict physical cruelties as she directed. This kind of relation was altogether new to me; and it was perhaps because of this, intensified as it was by the environment of the self-torturing soul of Russia, that I became inspired to create for the next six weeks.

'I saw Anny almost every day for an hour or so. The rest of my time I spent (for the most part) in the garden of the Hermitage¹ or the Aquarium [where the Ragged Rag-Time Girls were performing], writing for dear life. In Moscow, in the summer months, day fades into night, night brightens into day with imperceptible subtlety. There is a spiritual clarity in the air itself which is indescribable. From time to time the bells reinforce the silence with an unearthly music which never jars or tires. The hours steam by so intoxicatingly that the idea of time itself disappears from consciousness.'

In this atmosphere Crowley wrote his poem on Moscow entitled *The City of God*. The following January it was published in the opening pages of *The English Review*:

Gold upon gold, dome above dome, faint arrow
Kindling sharp crescent, as the sunrays swept,
Save for one midnight moment when one narrow
Fierce ray, exhaling from no eye that slept
Of God, our God, the sun—gold upon gold,
Fron'd upon frond, fold upon fold
Of walls like leaves and cupolas like flowers,
And spires and domes that were as fabled fruit
Of the low lands beyond the pillared seas . . .
Then was I caught up into rapture—yea!
From heaven to heaven was I swept away.
And all that shadow city past,
And I was in the City of God at last.
This city was alive, athrob, astir,
Shaped as the sacred, secret place of Her
That hath no name on earth, whose whisper we
Catch only in the silence of the sea.
And through it poured a river of sunset blood,

¹ The Hermitage is not in Moscow, but St. Petersburg (Leningrad).

Pulsing its coral and colossal flood
Throughout the city, and lifting it aloft. . . .

In Moscow at this time he also wrote the *Hymn to Pan*, the best known and most characteristic of his poems.

Sexual Magic in Victoria Street

DURING the last decade of the 19th century there travelled about the East in search of esoteric knowledge a wealthy ironmaster and high-grade mason called Karl Kellner. From one Arab and two Indian yogis of the Tantric school—their names have come down to us as Soliman ben Aifha, Bhima Sen Pratap and Sri Mahatma Agamyia Guru Paramahansa—he learnt a profound secret.

This secret is, essentially, the same as that which Freud was discovering through his investigations into the aetiology of hysteria: namely, that sex was the key to man's nature. In the history of Western thought the time was ripe for the acceptance of such views.

Kellner was a dapper-looking Viennese with a soft, impressionable air; he had neither the mystical gaze of his masonic brother, Franz Hartmann, nor the smug look of those two other brethren, Heinrich Klein and Theodor Reuss, all Grand Masters of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, and the Rites of Memphis and Mizraim, and probably of other masonic and Rosicrucian bodies as well. On his return to Germany, brother Kellner expounded the mysteries of yoga and the philosophy of the left-hand path which he called *sexual magic*. If, he reasoned, sex went to the heart of the matter, there was no need to wade through ninety-seven degrees (of the Rite of Memphis) to expound this mystery. The way to God, in the light of this newly acquired knowledge, was so profound and yet so simple.

O, disciple!
Who seeks it, will suffer;
Who finds it, conceal it;
Who uses it, let no one know.
He who is a true philosopher
Shall remain unknown.

The great secret could be told in nine degrees at most. And Brother Kellner proposed that they should rewrite all their rituals and form a new secret order, reserved for the few initiated, of their various masonic and Rosicrucian bodies. Thus, in the year 1902, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, or the Order of the Templars of the East, was founded. It claimed it could communicate in nine

degrees¹ the secrets, not only of Freemasonry, but of the Gnostic Catholic Church, the Rosicrucians, the Order of the Knights of the Holy Ghost, the Order of the Illuminati, the Order of the Knights of St. John, the Order of the Knights of Malta, the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, the Hidden Church of the Holy Graal, the Holy Order of Rose Croix of Heredom, the Order of the Martinists, the Order of the Sat Bhai, and many other orders of equal merit, if of less fame.

In the *Oriflamme*, the organ of the O.T.O., the nature of the teachings of this occult organization was in 1904 stated with calm and surprising clarity:

‘Our Order possesses the KEY which opens up all Masonic and Hermetic secrets, namely, the teaching of *sexual magic*, and this teaching explains, without exception, all the secrets of Nature, all the *symbolism* of FREE-MASONRY and all systems of religion.’

Now, Karl Kellner claimed, with the customary vagueness and mysteriousness of a leader of secret societies, that this new sexual teaching had been communicated to him through the *Hermetic Brotherhood of Light*, an international occult order which most probably never existed. And this order had kept the sexual teachings of another order, that of the Templars, which certainly once existed, but which may never have taught anything of the kind. (If a faction of them had done so, that teaching was never preserved to be handed over to Brother Kellner.)

The Knights Templars, whose monastic-military order was suppressed amid a great and tragic scandal in the beginning of the 14th century, supplied Kellner's society with its title, but the *Ordo Templi Orientis* was not the first secret society of modern times to give out that it preserved the rites of the original Templars.

It is thought that the charges against the Poor Knights of the Temple were no more true than those against witches during later times. Their confessions, extracted under torture, are naturally suspect. On the other hand, that great authority on witchcraft, demonology, and other quaint subjects, the Reverend Montague Summers, considered that the truth of the charges can hardly be denied; and he explained the Templars' satanism and homosexuality as due to their ties with the East. They were, he said, Gnostic heretics. Briefly, they were alleged to have denied Christ and to have spat on the Cross; to have given one another the obscene kiss, the *osculum obscaenum*, practised unnatural vice, and to have worshipped an androgynous idol called Baphomet—a name which has been the subject of much speculation and research.

¹ There was also a tenth degree of an honorary character to distinguish the ‘Supreme and Holy King’ of the Order in each country where the O.T.O. was established.

Whether or not the Templars really did these things—because they were atheists or Gnostic heretics or sat at the feet of the Old Man of the Mountains—I do not know. The only point that matters here is that Crowley, and the rest of these Continental ‘Oriental Templars’, thought they did. If the Templars indulged in a practice so horrible that the law will not allow its name to appear in print, and made it part of a ‘religious’ ritual, then, according to Aleister Crowley, they had indeed arrived at wisdom.

The appearance of Baphomet, the Templars’ idol, has been described in different and contradictory ways. He was a face; he was two faces; he was three faces; he had a beard; he was just a bare skull without any face or beard at all. Another opinion was that Baphomet had a beard all right, but that it was attached to the chin of a goat, symbol of lust.

The Templars called him their saviour; he could make the flowers grow, the earth to germinate. Because of him their coffers were filled. . . .

An Austrian orientalist of the last century, Baron Joseph von Hammer-Pürgstall, was the first to offer the true interpretation of the word Baphomet after examining in particular the inscription upon a coffer found in Burgundy. The name, he says, is derived from two Greek words βαφή μήτεος, meaning the baptism of Metis (Wisdom), or as Montague Summers has Englished it, the Absorption into Wisdom. It is equivalent to the word Wisdom itself.¹

The translation of the inscription on the Burgundy coffer examined by Baron Joseph von Hammer-Pürgstall yielded: ‘Let Metis (i.e. Baphomet) be exalted, who causes things to bud and blossom! He is our root; it is one and seven; abjure the faith and abandon thyself to all pleasures.’

In other words, Glorify Baphomet; he is the true god. Renounce Christianity and Do what thou wilt.

One night in 1912 there came a tap on the door of Crowley’s chambers in Victoria Street and a mysterious stranger with a

¹ There is no record of the word βαφή in the sense of baptism, whether in its literal or figurative sense, either in the classical Greek dictionaries or the dictionaries covering the Hellenistic period which includes the early period of Christianity. And the word βαφή written in English alphabetical characters would be BAPHE and not BATHE; for the English equivalent of the Greek consonantal sound of φ— which is the third letter of the word βαφή—is ph and not th (as in thin). I cannot think of a single Greek word in which a change of letters or sounds like the above has taken place. Therefore, I make so bold as to suggest that the first component word is βάθος (BATHOS) = the depth or height, as measured up or down. The word has always been used by the Greeks to describe the depth of wisdom as well as of folly, of Paradise and Hades, of man and beast. The word appears copiously in both meanings in Old, Early Christian and Middle Greek.

handle-bar moustache and pince-nez asked to see him. It was Theodor Reuss, head of the *Ordo Templi Orientis* since Karl Kellner had died 'in mysterious circumstances' in 1905. (Being an enterprising man and a patriot, Reuss was also a member of the German secret service.)

He did not waste his words. Straightway he accused Crowley of publishing the innermost secret of the O.T.O., the so-called secret of the IXth degree.

Crowley denied it. He didn't know, he said, what their secret was.



Reuss replied by going to the bookshelf and taking out that little book, each page of which is enclosed in a heavy black border, called *Liber CCCXXXIII: the Book of Lies*. He opened it at the page which begins, 'Let the Adept be armed with his Magick Rood and provided with his Mystic Rose', and showed it to Crowley.

Crowley had, of course, been poking about in the same dark corners of the mind as these German 'Oriental Templars'. Naturally he had discovered their secret, but it might equally be said that they had discovered his. Reuss begged him never to reveal it improperly: it was the most sacred secret in the world. Crowley, moved by Reuss's eloquence and the seriousness of what they were discussing, solemnly swore he wouldn't divulge it. It was, in fact, the only secret he ever kept.

The two adepts talked long into the night. 'Since,' argued Brother Merlin (Herr Reuss's magical name), 'you know our hidden sex teachings, you had better come into our Order, and be its head for Great Britain.' Crowley, who never declined a dinner, an adventure, or a title, readily agreed, and so, after a journey to Berlin, he was transformed with due ceremony into 'the Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains that are in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis'.¹ And with that keenness and audacity of mind which sees, and seizes, the main point, he gave himself the magical name, corresponding with his elevated position in this mystic order, of *Baphomet*.²

In the same year, at the Special Convocation (held in Crowley's Fulham Road studio) of the Supreme Sanctuary of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Masonry, Crowley was elected Patriarch Grand Administrator General 33°, 90°, 96° of the Order.

Crowley and Reuss pooled their other secrets. Brother Merlin explained to Brother Baphomet the theory behind that school of alchemy which uses sexual fluids and the 'elixir of life'. And Brother Baphomet made more explicit the (homo) sexual wisdom of *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz*. He also offered to rewrite the rituals of the Order of Oriental Templars—they were then only in skeletal form—as Yeats had rewritten those of the Golden Dawn for MacGregor Mathers. He was invited to do so, and speedily transformed them into honeyed English, inextricably wound them round *The Book of the Law* and made them unintelligible—in any final sense—without a knowledge of certain facts in the life of Aleister Crowley. In addition he wrote for the Order his Gnostic Mass (ECCLESIAE GNOSTICAE CATHOLICAE CANON MISSAE), in which the IXth degree secret of the O.T.O. is presented in fairly obvious symbols, and wound that, too, round the deification of himself.

And I believe in the Serpent and the Lion, Mystery
of Mystery, and his name *Baphomet*.
And I believe in one Gnostic Catholic Church
of Light, Love and Liberty, the Word of whose Law is
ΘΕΛΗΜΑ.

This Gnostic Mass was translated into German and published in the *Oriflamme*. It was received by the rest of the Templars with

¹ The name of the British section of the O.T.O. was the M . . . M . . . M . . . (Mysteria Mystica Maxima).

² It is from Crowley that I have taken the story of his elevation to the throne of Baphomet. As if the matter were not mysterious enough, he had to throw this contradiction into it: his book, *Liber CCCXXXIII*, was not published till 1913, a year after Reuss's visit! This makes nonsense of it all, but as there is no doubt that Reuss actually called on him about the year 1912, one can either believe that he confused this book with another—in most of Crowley's writings Reuss could have recognized the secret of the IXth degree—or that these two adepts were in a time-sequence one year in advance of the normal.

disquiet. They had not accepted *The Book of the Law*, and they objected to Crowley swallowing their Order. Theodor Reuss came in for a fair amount of criticism; but he also had found Crowley-anity rather too much. The glorification of Aleister Crowley had not been part of their bargain.

Two factors prevented Crowley's expulsion from the O.T.O. In spite of all its bombast and apparent activity, the Order was now more or less ineffectual, existing largely on paper. When it had been founded, it could count among its members that man of genius called Rudolf Steiner, who had been its head for Austria; but by 1914 the best German freemasons were cold-shouldering it, and looking upon Reuss as a kind of cad. And before the questionable character of Aleister Crowley could come up for debate, and he could affront the Order by further acts of personal expression, he moved out of their orbit by going to America.

The Wizard in the Wood

AT the outbreak of the First World War Crowley was in Switzerland. He quickly returned to England and made, he said, every attempt to persuade the Government to employ him. But they did not want Aleister Crowley. He attributed their refusal to his sinister reputation, which for some years he had been painstakingly building up. He had, it is true, some peculiar habits: that of giving women the Serpent's Kiss, for example, or of defecating on the drawing-room carpet or on the stairs of a friend's house. Like the Dalai Lama, Crowley considered his excreta sacred.¹

'Good heavens, look at that!' exclaimed a certain Mrs. Madeline B. to Isadora Duncan. The two ladies were sitting on the terrace of a café in Montparnasse.

A man was passing, clad in a sky-blue knickerbocker suit, with beret to match, and a walking-stick of the identical colour.

'Oh, it's Aleister Crowley,' replied Isadora.

Crowley came over and was introduced to Mrs. B. As he took her hand he said, 'May I give you the Serpent's Kiss?'

He didn't wait for an answer, raised her wrist to his mouth and bit the flesh between two teeth which (some say) had been especially filed for that purpose. He drew blood and infected her.

This revolting habit is described in Crowley's novel *Moonchild*:

'She was fascinated; she could not rise to greet him. He came over to her, caught her throat in both his hands, bent back her head, and, taking her lips in his teeth, bit them—bit them almost through. It was a single deliberate act: instantly he

¹ For information on this subject, consult Bourke, *Scatologic Rites*, 1891.

released her, sat down upon the couch by her, and made some trivial remark about the weather.'

The war had fulfilled one of the prophecies of *The Book of the Law*. Whilst the floods menaced the earth, the magical task of the brethren (according to an encyclical from *Baphomet* to all those within the Sanctuary of the Gnosis) was to build an Ark wherein the Sacred Phallus may be hidden—'so that although the Tradition be destroyed in the destruction of the Brains that bear it, it shall be possible for those coming after us to recover the Lost Word'.

On the 24th October, 1914, with fifty pounds and his wax paper charter of Honorary Magus of the *Societas Rosicruciana in America* in his pocket, Crowley departed in the *Lusitania* for the United States. His reputation had preceded him. *The World Magazine* had published in August an account of London devil-worshippers and of their leader, Aleister Crowley.

'I found myself in a large, high-ceilinged studio the atmosphere of which was coloured a deep blue by the reek of a peculiar smelling incense. In the first room stood row on row of books bound in black and marked on their backs with queer, malformed crosses wrought in silver. The second room was fitted up with divans and literally carpeted with multitudes of cushions tossed here and yon. In the third and largest room stood a tall, perpendicular canopy under which the high priest sat during the celebration of black mass. Directly in front of it, on a floor tessellated and mosaiced with parti-coloured patterns and marked with cabalistic signs, stood the altar, a black pedestal on top of which was affixed a golden circle. Across the latter lay a golden serpent, as if arrested in the act of crawling. I heard someone behind a curtain playing a weird Chinese-like air on some sort of stringed instrument.

'The feel of the whole place was decidedly uncanny. . . . One by one the worshippers entered. They were mostly women of aristocratic type. Their delicate fingers adorned with costly rings, their rustling silks, the indefinable elegance of their carriage attested their station in life. It was whispered to me that not a few people of noble descent belonged to the Satanists. Everybody wore a little black domino which concealed the upper part of the face, making identification impossible. Hung with black velvet curtains, the place presented a decidedly sepulchral aspect. The complexions of the women seemed as white as wax. There was a fitful light furnished by a single candlestick having seven branches. Suddenly this went out and the place was filled with subterranean noises like the sound of a violent wind moving among innumerable leaves. Then came the slow, monotonous chant of the high priest: "There is no good. Evil is good. Blessed

be the Principle of Evil. All hail, Prince of the World, to whom even God Himself has given dominion." A sound as of evil bleating filled the pauses of these blasphemous utterances. . .'

Indescribable orgies then followed.

These séances took place in Crowley's studio in Fulham Road. The poet Trevor Blakemore wanted Crowley to take him there so that he could meet the mysterious Mother of Heaven (Edith Y.), but Perdurabo refused, for that, he said, was where 'he caught the old cats'.

He was the grotesque showman of this diabolist circus, and his price of admission was rather high. But there was always a type of woman willing to pay. Poverty, which makes men commit all manner of things, had turned Crowley into an adventurer and, some said, blackmailer.

On the 13th December, 1914, *The World Magazine* introduced Crowley again to its readers.

'Aleister Crowley, who recently arrived in New York, is the strangest man I ever met. At times I have seen him look seventy, and at times barely twenty-five. His looks change seemingly at will. Now he is a priest-like old man; now apparently a somewhat effeminate youth with soft, plump hands and heavy, womanish face. The hands alone do not change, but they are very wonderful, and adorned with weird rings. On the thumb Crowley wears a heavy gold band with a blood-red cross on a white ground. On one of his fingers is a jewelled serpent, and next to it is a symbolic circle with large studded signet containing the mystic metals. Attached to the end of his watch chain and carried in the vest pocket is the white double-headed sword-bearing eagle, the last and highest degree of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Scottish Masonry. But the most striking thing about Crowley's appearance is the horn-like lock of hair that stands erect on his broad, high forehead. Sometimes he parts it in two and then it looks for all the world like a symbol of satanism.'

This, then, was Aleister Crowley when he appeared for the third time in America, at the age of thirty-nine.

He was staying at 40 West 36th Street, New York, and gave this address as the headquarters of the O.T.O. There was, at least, one other member of the Order on the American continent: the youthful neophyte, Charles Stansfeld Jones of Vancouver (not to be confused with George Cecil Jones of the Golden Dawn), otherwise known as Brother Achad.

'The ritual enclosed by you,' wrote Baphomet to Achad, 'is

very fine. . . . I hope you will arrange to repeat this all the time, say every new or full moon so as to build up a regular force. You should also have a solar ritual to balance it, to be done each time the Sun enters a new sign, with special festivity at the Equinoxes and Solstices. In this way you can establish a regular cult; and if you do them in a truly magical manner, you create a vortex of force which will suck in all the people you want. The time is just ripe for a natural religion. People like rites and ceremonies, and they are tired of hypothetical gods. Insist on the real benefits of the Sun, the Mother-Force, the Father-Force and so on; and show that by celebrating these benefits worthily the worshippers unite themselves more fully with the current of life. Let the religion be Joy, with but a worthy and dignified sorrow in death itself; and treat death as an ordeal, an initiation. Do not gloss over facts, but transmute them in the Athanor of your ecstasy. In short be the founder of a new and greater Pagan cult in the beautiful land which you have made your home. As you go on you can add new festivals of corn and wine, and all things useful and noble and inspiring.'

To himself, Crowley acknowledged his simple weaknesses and fallibility.

'I seem to have no creative power, or inspiration,' he wrote in his diary at the turn of the year. 'I don't work at all. It's funny; I don't feel bad: but there's something radically wrong in all I do.'

Later, on the 2nd January, 1915:

'I have just done a IX° [i.e. performed an act of sex-magic] to become a great Orator, invoked Tahuti, and delivered a sermon to the inhabitants of the Ten Thousand Worlds on the text "Oh my God! I swim in thine heart as a trout in a mountain torrent."'

* * *

One day early in 1915 Crowley was on top of a bus going up Fifth Avenue, reading some newspaper cuttings about himself which a London Press agency had sent him. A man sitting behind him, who guessed he was an Englishman, tapped him on the shoulder and fired the challenging question, 'Do you favour a square deal for Germany and Austria?'

This was a good enough introduction. Crowley was in favour of a fair deal for anyone. They chatted about the war, and as Crowley seemed to express sentiments not unfavourable to the Central Powers, the stranger, who jumped up to go when the bus

reached 37th Street, gave him his card and invited him to call on him.

Mr. O'Brien, for that was the stranger's name, was not in when Crowley came to see him a few days later. Instead, another 'came forward with extended hands, bulging eyes, and the kind of mouth which seems to have been an unfortunate afterthought'. This was George Sylvester Viereck, the German-American poet and writer of rather clever books. His eyes were bulging probably at the sight of Aleister Crowley, to whom he had been introduced by the editor of *The English Review*.

The face of Viereck was vaguely familiar to Crowley. Viereck reminded him of their last meeting, which had been in London during 1911. And meanwhile Viereck had abandoned poetry for propaganda and Crowley was now looking for a job. He had come to the only place that would give him one—the headquarters of the German Propaganda in America.

Thirty-five years later Mr. Viereck kindly gave me his version of this meeting:

'Crowley talked to me and turned on all the charm of which he was capable. He was opposed to British imperialism and so expressed himself. I believe he said he was completely or partly Irish. There were many distinguished Irishmen who refused to go along with Great Britain, including Sir Roger Casement. There were also some Englishmen who as a matter of high principle opposed the war. I could not ordinarily trust a traitor or a crank, but I remembered that several members of the cabinet resigned as a protest against the secret pledges given by Sir Edward Grey to France. Consequently, it seemed highly likely that Crowley was sincere.'

A few months later Crowley added colour to the belief that he was an Irishman by the following stunt. He collected a girl with a violin and 'about four other debauched persons' and went out in a motor-boat before dawn on the 3rd July, 1915, to the foot of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour and there made this brief speech:

'I have not asked any great human audience to listen to these words; I had rather address them to the unconquerable ocean that surrounds the world, and to the free four winds of heaven. Facing the sunrise, I lift up my hands and my soul herewith to this giant figure of liberty, the ethical counterpart of the light, life and love which are our spiritual heritage. In this symbolical and most awful act of religion, I invoke the one true God of whom the Sun Himself is but a shadow that He may strengthen me

in heart and hand to uphold that freedom for the land of my sires, which I am come hither to proclaim.

'In this dark moment before the father orb of our system kindles with his kiss the sea, I swear the great oath of the Revolution.

'I tear with my hands this token of slavery, this safe-conduct from the enslaver of my people . . .'

At this point Crowley tore up an envelope which was supposed to contain his British passport.

'I renounce for ever all allegiance to every alien tyrant; I swear to fight to the last drop of my blood to liberate the men and women of Ireland; and I call upon the free people of this country, on whose hospitable shore I stand in exile, to give me countenance and assistance in breaking those bonds which they broke for themselves 138 years ago.

'I proclaim the Irish Republic. I unfurl the Irish flag. *Erin go Bragh*. God save Ireland.'

One of the 'debauched persons' then waved the Irish flag and the girl with the violin (perhaps this was Edith Y., for in 1915 she followed Crowley to America) played the 'Wearing of the Green'.

This futile schoolboy escapade on the part of a man who had never set foot on Irish soil was reported in the *New York Times*, and Crowley later spread it further by letter to various editors.

The upshot of Crowley's meeting with Viereck was that he was invited to write for *The Fatherland* (sub-titled *Fair Play for Germany and Austria-Hungary*), which Viereck edited.

We now enter an aspect of Crowley's mind which is difficult to understand if we wish to get away from the idea that he was a plain and simple traitor. Without hesitation, or any searching of his heart, he began to publish in *The Fatherland* the crudest propaganda against England and in praise of Germany. And when *The International*, another magazine run by the same firm, was turned over to him to edit, he filled it up with balderdash and *magick* under the names of Aleister Crowley, Baphomet, The Master Therion, Lord Boleskine, Edward Kelly, Adam d'As, Cor Scorpionis, etc., and printed notices of his own works on the advertisement pages.

The disgust and grievance that had been pent up flowed forth, but without much conviction, as if he didn't care whom he was abusing and could, with a little persuasion, turn it all against someone else; the main thing was to keep it flowing. The little asides in his articles of hate show that Crowley was still a schoolboy.

'For some reason or other in their last Zeppelin raid on

London the Germans appear to have decided to make the damage as widespread as possible, instead of concentrating it in one quarter. A house close to my lawyer's office in Chancery Lane was entirely destroyed. . . . A great deal of damage was done at Croydon, especially at its suburb Addiscombe, where my aunt lives. Unfortunately her house was not hit. Count Zeppelin is respectfully requested to try again. The exact address is Eton Lodge, Outram Road.'

Why did Crowley scribble so furiously for the enemy? Because he believed in their cause? Not a bit of it. It was his method of helping the Allies. He was trying 'to wreck the German propaganda on the roof of *Reductio ad Absurdum*'. Through his advocacy of unrestricted German submarine warfare, for example, he (indirectly) brought America into the war. He should have been given the V.C.

Viereck and Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, thought otherwise. The former considered he was getting good propaganda value out of employing a distinguished English poet—Austin Harrison, the editor of *The English Review*, had described Crowley to him as the greatest metrical poet since Swinburne; the latter was alarmed at the harm he imagined Crowley was doing to the Allied cause.

Crowley's own summary of these activities sounds too much like a man trying to double back on his tracks. He had supported the losing side and, with characteristic effrontery, he tried to make out that he had been doing his best for England all along.

'I decided,' he wrote, 'on a course of action, which seemed to me the only one possible in a situation which I regarded as immensely serious. I would write for *The Fatherland*. By doing so I should cut myself off temporarily from all my friends, from all sources of income, I should apparently dishonour a name which I considered it my destiny to make immortal. . . .'

With the confidence of the insane he urged those who did not believe him to ask 'his friend' Commodore (now Admiral Sir Guy) Gaunt, head of Naval Intelligence in America.

Crowley would have found the Admiral's reply—for I wrote to him—disconcerting.

'Re the man you mention I think you describe him exactly when you refer to him as a "small time traitor". As regards his activities I think they were largely due to a frantic desire for advertisement—he was very anxious to keep his name before the public somehow or another. I knew all about him at the time and for a short time either Grey or Balfour was very worried about him. I went over to London and had a long talk with

Basil Thompson at Scotland Yard and I preached "Let him alone, I have got a complete line on him and also *The Fatherland*."'

Gerald Kelly, who was working as a secret agent in Spain during the war, was also asked for his opinion of Crowley. He, too, advised leaving Crowley alone: the clownish friend of his youth could only be an ineffectual tool in the hands of the enemy. They had not met for some years, and what Kelly had heard of Crowley's antics had seemed to him drear and shabby. Crowley's marriage with Rose and his attitude towards Kelly's parents had, in the end, destroyed their friendship, which had once been so keen.

Crowley was rather puzzled at finding himself a traitor and he was furious when one of his English acquaintances pointed it out to him. When, in the Spring of 1917, the British authorities replied to his abuse in *The Fatherland* by raiding the London headquarters of the O.T.O., he was aghast. Did they believe him a traitor?

'The Stupids have misunderstood my whole attitude and raised trouble,' he wrote in his diary after hearing the news. 'Now I go direct to Washington to straighten this out; if I fail this time to get them to listen to sense, at least I can go to Canada, and force them to arrest me.'

But he did nothing about it. He could not persuade anyone that, by his *reductio ad absurdum* method of propaganda, he was really working for the Allies, for he himself was not convinced of it.

On the 14th June, 1917, he analysed his mind in general and his attitude towards the war in particular, and concluded with the view that his psyche was divided, split into two independent halves, on one of which was written 'patriot' and on the other 'traitor'.

'I am getting quite to the point of habitual recognition of myself as Aiwass, and it does much good. But I have seen lately the danger of having a mental machine which functions so independently of the Self, and even of the human will. E.g. all my sympathies are most profoundly with the Allies; but my brain refuses to think as sympathizers seem to do; so in argument I often seem "pro-German".'

In the Autumn of 1915 Crowley left New York for a trip round the coast. Hilarion, his Scarlet Woman, accompanied him. In Vancouver, British Columbia, they called on Charles Stansfeld Jones (Achad) and performed together a magical ceremony whereby Brother Achad was turned into a *Babe of the Abyss*. Nine months later he was born (re-born?) as Crowley's *Magical Son*.

From Vancouver he went right down the coast to San Diego and from there to New Orleans, and somewhere en route Sister

Hilarion, though *enceinte*, magically speaking, with Mr. Jones, was discarded.

Crowley's account of his adventures in the United States is veiled and fragmentary. With his poetry he had had a certain literary success in England, and his reputation as a poet had been carried across the Channel; but in America few magazines would publish him; and in spite of lecturing to large audiences, he made no following as a magician. He was often ill and frequently penniless. His only success was with women, and since we don't know what they were like that may not have amounted to much.

In an epistle to Brother Achad (from *Baphomet*, Palace Hotel, San Francisco, Sol in Scorpio, Luna in Libra) Crowley threw back his hood and gave his honest opinion of that great mystery, the American Woman.

DISCOURSE ON WOMAN,

BY THE PHILOSOPHER KWAW

Every woman has a sensitive spot. Do not think to puzzle Sir Almroth Wright by asking him to point out its locality. He knows about it all, he knows, he KNOWS. The great American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, has, however, indicated this truth but vaguely, and emphasized it but inadequately. American men are consequently ignorant or careless of the same, and a great cry has therefore gone up from American women that their husbands and lovers are useless. In order to obtain the satisfaction of being excluded from this category, it is only necessary to find this spot, and to caress it continuously, persistently, watchfully, tirelessly, with the various instruments which bountiful Nature and benevolent God have provided expressly for this purpose. Your sole duty and pleasure with regard to yourself is delay. Pay no attention to petitions for mercy, and firmly but gently repress any struggles. There are various holds which enable one to do this with ease. Remember above all that if the victim is capable of moving a limb for hours afterwards you will be despised. However, a certain amount of tact is necessary. The slightest appearance of brutality is always to be avoided unless the woman is of the type that desires it, a type common enough; but even in this case it must be assumed and not real. . . .

During the summer of 1916 Crowley was on a Great Magical Retirement near Bristol in New Hampshire. He was meditating in his cottage in the woods. . . .

And there came unto him a sign from the heavens that the Secret Chiefs wished him to ascend from the exalted grade of

Master of the Temple 8°=3□ (which he had assumed in China in 1906) to the more exalted grade of Magus 9°=2□ in the Brotherhood of the A .: A .: He described the nature of the sign in a letter to Brother Achad.

'I am indeed cheerful. An hour ago I was in the depths of despair, wondering if I was any good at anything any more, etc. Then a globe of fire struck within a few inches of my feet, one spark leaping to the middle finger of my left hand—a particularly sacred finger by the way. I had actually been struck by lightning before on a mountain in Cumberland. At the beginning of the storm, a father, mother and child had taken shelter under my roof—which rather completes the omen. As far as I can see no damage was done to the house. Anyhow, this is a clear message that I'm going through with this initiation. . . .'

We know, more or less, the nature of this blasphemous and horrible initiation, because Crowley afterwards wrote a paper on it. To prepare the temple of the New Aeon of Crowleyanity, the rubbish of its ruined predecessors must be thoroughly cleared away. The magical operation was therefore to banish the 'Dying God'.

Σταυρὸς Βασιλίσκου

*He had crucified a toad
In the basilisk abode,
Muttering the Runes averse
Mad with many a mocking curse.*

O

In this Ritual the Chief Officer representeth a Snake, because of Mercury. (The proper food of snakes is frogs.) The Mystery of Conception is the catching of the frog in silence, and the affirmation of the Will to perform this ceremony.

I

The frog or toad being caught is kept all night in an ark or chest; and it is written 'Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's Womb.' Presently the frog will begin to leap therein, and this is an omen of good success. Dawn being come, thou shalt approach the chest with an offering of gold, and if available, of frankincense and of myrrh. Thou shalt then release the frog from the chest with many acts of

homage and place it in apparent liberty. He may, for example, be placed on a quilt of many colours, and covered with a net.

II

Now take a vessel of water and approach the frog, saying: In the Name of the Father + and of the Son + and of the Holy Ghost + (here sprinkle water on its head) I baptize thee, O creature of frogs, with water, by the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

III

During the day thou shalt approach the frog whenever convenient, and speak words of worship. And thou shalt ask it to perform such miracles as thou desirest to be done; and they shall be done according to Thy Will. Also thou shalt promise to the frog an elevation fitting for him; and all this while thou shalt be secretly carving a cross whereon to crucify him.

IV

Night being fallen, thou shalt arrest the frog, and accuse him of blasphemy, sedition and so forth, in these words:

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Lo, Jesus of Nazareth, how thou art taken in my snare. All my life thou hast plagued me and affronted me. In thy name—with all other free souls in Christendom—I have been tortured in my boyhood; all delights have been forbidden unto me; all that I had has been taken from me, and that which is owed to me they pay not—in thy name. Now at last I have thee; the Slave-God is in the power of the Lord of Freedom. Thine hour is come; as I blot thee out from this earth, so surely shall the eclipse pass; and Light, Life, Love and Liberty be once more the Law of Earth. Give thou place to me, O Jesus; thine aeon is passed; the Age of Horus is arisen by the Magick of the Master the Great Beast that is Man; and his number is six hundred and three score and six.

Love is the law, love under will.

(A pause.)

I, Τὸ Μέγα Θερίον, therefore condemn the Jesus the slave-god to be mocked and spat upon and scourged, and then crucified.

V

This sentence is then executed. After the mocking upon the Cross, say thus:

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

I, the Great Beast, slaying thee, Jesus of Nazareth the slave-god, under the form of this creature of frogs, do bless this creature in the name of the + Father and of the + Son and of the + Holy Ghost. And I assume unto myself and take into my service the elemental spirit of this frog, to be about me as, a lying spirit to go forth upon the earth as a guardian to me in my Work for Man; that men may speak of my piety and of my gentleness and of all virtues and bring to me love and service and all material things soever whereof I may stand in need. And this shall be its reward, to stand beside me and hear the truth that I utter, the falsehood whereof shall deceive men. Love is the law, love under will.

Then shalt thou stab the frog to the heart with the Dagger of Art, saying: Into my hands I receive thy spirit.

VI

Presently thou shalt take down the frog from the cross and divide it into two parts; the legs shalt thou cook and eat as a sacrament to confirm thy compact with the frog; and the rest shalt thou burn utterly with fire, to consume finally the aeon of the accursed one. So mote it be!

An XII

⊙ in 00

⊕ in 88

Θηρίον

The Adams Cottage

Near Bristol

New Hampshire

U.S.A.

Thus Crowley ascended to the grade of Magus 9°=2□ in the Great White Brotherhood of Light (A. . . A. . .), and took as his magical title Τὸ Μέγα Θηρίον, the Great Beast, or, as he expressed it on occasions of public utterance, the Master Therion.

‘The result,’ he wrote, ‘was immediately apparent. A girl of the village, three miles away, asked me to employ her as my secretary. I had no intention of doing any literary work; but as soon as I set eyes on her I recognized that she had been sent for a purpose, for she exactly resembled the aforesaid toad. . . .’

He wrote down in his diary (*The Magical Record of The Beast* 666) his most intimate actions: they were mainly connected with *magick*. The women—their number is not small—with whom he invoked the gods, the drugs he took for the same purpose, and many other intimate and mysterious matters, are all described in detail.

That most fascinating, all-pervading and most deeply penetrating of things, sex, had become for him the means whereby he reached God. It was his vehicle of consecration, his daily prayers. He performed the sexual act not just for the emotive relief, or for the making of children, but 'to start a new current', renew his energy, or to produce a windfall of gold. Any sexual act (hetero-, homo-, or autosexual) was, in his eyes, a sacred, magical deed; he likened it to the blessed sacrament.

*A prolonged orgie in honour of the Great God Pan
All in due order and proportion, very admirable.
Amen.*

The word with which he described the sexual act was *opus*, 'work'—it was always, in fact, part of the Great Work. Sometimes during the climax of these *opera* he came face to face with his God.

*Operation prolonged and intense: orgasm multiple
... the God clearly visualized and alive ...*

These sex-magic rituals are the most closely guarded secrets of the O.T.O., the secret teachings which were communicated by word of mouth from *Baphomet* to his holy initiates. They are recorded in an MS. entitled *Agape: Liber C*, 'The Book of the Unveiling of the Sangraal'; they cannot, of course, be disclosed to the profane.

One item in Crowley's diary, for the 6th May, 1917, arises above the clouds of incense.

'Had news of my mother's death. Two nights before news had dreamed that she was dead, with a feeling of extreme distress. The same happened two nights before I had news of my father's death. I had often dreamed my mother had died, but never with that helpless, lonely feeling.'

The records for Crowley's American period are incomplete and a little confusing. Apart from outstanding events, we know little of what he was doing and with whom he was doing it. His mistresses for these years are too many to disentangle. Of some of them we have only the barest account. For example, while in New Orleans during December 1915 there were 'I—S—, extremely voluptuous and of the greatest possible skill and goodwill'; 'E—J—, Claims to be "pure American" (!), but is, I think, a mixture of

negro and Japanese'; and 'A— G—. Big fat negress, very passionate.'

He lived in Greenwich Village, the artist and bohemian quarter of New York, and took up painting. His advertisement for models is characteristic:

WANTED

DWARFS, Hunchbacks, Tattooed Women, Harrison Fisher Girls, Freaks of All Sorts, Colored Women, only if exceptionally ugly or deformed, to pose for artist.—Apply by letter with a photograph.

In 1918 he was praising and probing the immortal gods as he ascended the Hudson in a canoe with a lady whom he called Ahitha. He gave her the drug anhalonium, and according to the visions that it produced in her he decided what the future held in store for him.

Crowley: Shall I seek work outside my regular magick? I shall take beautiful visions as yes. Ugly ones as no.

Ahitha: A blue bird is turned loose and flies through deep, dark woods with large beech trees. A big bull snorts; it is magnificent. A mountain with many stones—ready to roll down if disturbed. The bird and the bull are beautiful. There is water . . . and a nest with eggs. Beautiful bird flies down from sky and into water and sits on eggs. Tall, snow-capped mountains and trains climbing around winding track to the top. Fields of fine ripe tomatoes growing. A horse is killed . . . rushing torrents of water . . . Summer cottages, some empty, some full. Water in the distance with ducks upon it. A boat and hunters.

Crowley's comment was that a wizard let loose the blue bird for happiness, and the bull for strength and virility.

'*Anhalonium lewinii*,' he wrote in his diary at the conclusion of this evocation, 'is a mercurial drug.' And immediately added: 'Ahitha has been rolling about in agony, the God Mercury being too pure for her corrupt mind and body.'

The Scarlet Woman

DURING the early part of 1918 Crowley gave in New York a lecture on magic to a small group of curious people who listened in silence to everything he had to say, and who dispersed without comment when he had finished. The lecture was hardly a success, but one member of his audience, 'the only one having even a remote

resemblance to the human species', came up and spoke to him. This was Renata Faesi, later High Priestess of Oom.¹

He said of her that she had been deceived by a charlatan and was pathetically anxious to find a Master. He also described her, in his characteristically abusive way, as 'a poor old woman'. Two months later she unexpectedly called at his studio at Number 1 University Place, the corner of Washington Square, accompanied by one of her younger sisters, Leah.

He described Leah as tall and strangely thin, with luminous eyes and a wedge-like face. These were her physical characteristics; but they were misleading unless we know, as well, that she was about thirty-six years old. I suppose Crowley, who does not tell us this, thought of her as ageless. There is another account of Leah Faesi, whom he called Alostrael, which gives us a more detailed picture. In his description of the goddess Astarte, whom The Beast met in many a vision, he said that she was 'most strangely like Alostrael'.

'She was a slim, lean, nervous girl with a long face, a Roman nose, rather full lips, very strong from constant exercise, a habit of wriggling as if consumed by an inward itch, abundant and wiry black hair which she sometimes dyed, strong, very sharp, regular teeth, deep violet eyes, set wide apart, and obliquely like Chinese eyes. Her cheek-bones were high, and her expression fierce. Her breasts were quite undeveloped, and her body like a man's, or rather, like a boy's. Her vulva was lean and muscular, the nymphae hardly developed at all.'

He does not tell us anything of Leah's personality, for he was incapable of drawing a likely portrait of anyone. His summary of her as having 'a poignant sadness and a sublime simplicity', the perfect psychological equipment for a heroine of a Gothic novel, does not describe any real woman, and is untrue of Leah Faesi (who kept in step with Aleister Crowley for six years) in particular.

Leah was Swiss born, but had been brought up in America since the age of two. From Renata Faesi's dramatized views of herself—it can hardly be called an autobiography²—we learn that Leah had five sisters and three brothers, that her father was a drunkard and that her mother brought all nine children to America to get away from him.

At the time Leah met Crowley she was teaching singing in New York City schools. She reminded him of Solomon's friend, 'for she had no breasts'.

'Without wasting time on words, I began to kiss her,' he said.

Renata watched this remarkable performance, as much surprised

¹ The cult of Pierre Bernard ('Oom the Omnipotent'), called *The Secret Order of Tantricks*, one of the many sects found between New York and San Francisco.

² *My Life in a Love Cult: A Warning to all Young Girls*, 1928.

by Leah's apparent enjoyment of being immediately embraced by the Master Therion as by the latter's mode of saluting a strange woman. 'It was sheer instinct,' Crowley commented.

They continued kissing with occasional interruptions, 'such as politeness required', to speak to Renata, who had so conveniently brought them together.

Then they began to admire his paintings, especially the large screen in three sections which concealed the bed. Upon its canvas surface he had painted a symbolic design of the Sun, Moon, and Holy Fire (Agni) of the Hindus.

Renata Faesi's story of this meeting with Crowley does not tally with Crowley's version, but the essential facts are the same.

According to the one account, Crowley and Leah met and fell in love; according to the other, he hypnotized her as a fakir puts a cock on its back. 'The little mouse-like creature, pure and sweet' of Renata Faesi's version, lost—or perhaps found—her soul after Crowley had singled her out in a crowded room with his fiery gaze. From that moment there was no dragging her away, and Renata, who had brought Leah to the Magician's cave, left without her.

In January, 1919, they met for the second time. 'She swears I telephoned to ask her, and perhaps I did. I have my moments of imbecile impulse,' said Crowley. The two sisters came to ask his advice on how to find accommodation in Greenwich Village, or so runs Crowley's version of the story. Leah was attending a series of lectures on law, and wanted to be near New York University. And in the meantime she had given birth to a child, whom Crowley called Dionysus.

While they were talking he took off her clothes and started to make a rough sketch of her. 'What shall I paint you as?' he asked.

'Paint me as a dead soul,' she replied.

He could not sleep that night; the thought of his abortive drawing of Leah gave him no peace, and he got out of bed to examine it. Suddenly he realized that if he looked at the drawing vertically, instead of horizontally, it took on some meaning. A burst of creative energy seized him, and all night long he painted the surface of a second three-fold screen he had acquired for the other side of the bed.

By the morning it was finished. He called it 'Dead Souls'. Leah stands in the middle of the central panel, her head the keystone of an arch of monsters. Her face is ghastly green and there are blue-grey shadows beneath the ribs of her emaciated body. On the left-hand panel is a kneeling negress with an enormous parrot on her shoulder; her gaze is fixed adoringly on the Queen of Dead Souls. The third canvas is covered with another woman on her knees; she is huddled together as if in agony, a cascade of lustreless hair tumbling to her hips. And along the entire base of the screen are

rows of misshapen heads, 'all anguish, all perversity, all banishment from the world of reasonable things.'

'The screen is grotesque, yet it is undeniably a work of genius. It possesses a unity. The dead souls have composed a living soul. Everyone who saw it went away horror-struck,' wrote Crowley of his masterpiece.

When Leah called later on in the day The Beast drew her to him, told her to kneel down within the magic circle painted on the floor. He performed the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram and then proceeded to consecrate her as his Scarlet Woman, the companion of The Beast.

The ceremony concluded with his uncovering Leah's breast and, with a Chinese dagger already heated in the fire, branding her with the Mark of The Beast—the cross within the circle, or the sun, moon, and balls dependent.¹ Thus was born the Ape of Thoth, which is the magical title Leah Faesi took as she entered the portals of the A. A. A.

William Seabrook, the American writer of occult books, whom Frank Harris introduced to Crowley in New York in 1917, had plenty of opportunity of seeing the Mark of The Beast upon the Ape of Thoth, because Leah, in her exalted state, sat about all day stark naked.²

Number 1 University Place was too small for both of them, and within a short time they found a much larger studio at Number 63 Washington Square South, its three windows on the third floor looking out across the tree-tops to the opening of Fifth Avenue. Crowley packed up his paintings and books and his new love, Leah, and moved in. Soon afterwards he was interviewed by *The Evening World*.

The photograph of Crowley that stares out of the page is recognizable, for who else could it be? But he has greatly changed; a flabbiness has arisen and the little cupid-bow mouth is lost in the fleshy immensity of the face with its staring, demoniac gaze.

The room the reporter described was one of luxury: cavernous easychairs, mahogany davenports, expensive tapestries, a fine rug or two, an expensive and many-pillowed divan, and here and there a rosewood antique.

'The walls of this studio are covered with the wildest maelstrom of untamed and unrelated colours ever contained under one roof. They look like a collision between a Scandinavian sunset and a paint-as-you-please exhibit of the Independent Artists' Association. The effect is riotous, blinding—but not distressing, after one gets used to it. Mr. Crowley helps one to do that with a dash of cognac. . . .'

¹ *New York Journal*, 13th March, 1926.

² *Witchcraft: its Power in the World Today*.

He also painted, with evident honesty, a neat little legend about himself during recent years for the entertainment of the readers of *The Evening World*: at the outbreak of the Great War he was in the confidential service of the British Government. The dream-clouds mount . . . in this service he was shot in the leg. Then he was sent to America on a special mission.

Poverty and humiliation are the words with which Crowley described his five years' stay in America. He had no money of his own, apart from the pittance he earned as editor of and chief contributor to *The International*, whose circulation could only have been tiny. How, then, did he furnish a luxurious flat and have expensive cigarettes and cognac? Had he learnt the secret of making Abra-Melin gold? One of the chapters of this old grimoire of spells is: *How to obtain as much gold and silver as one may wish, both to be able to provide for the necessaries of life, and to live in opulence.* Leah had no money. Perhaps the women who appear in *The Confessions* before her, the Cat and the Snake (or those other two, whose identities are also discreetly concealed—the Owl and the Monkey), poured out their wealth freely, as Victor Neuberg had done, supplying both the necessaries of life for the Master who called himself Therion, and even enabling him to live in opulence.

The interview with *The Evening World* brought forth Crowley's ideas on himself as a painter.

'What sort of artist am I? Oh, I don't know just what to call myself. I'd say, off-hand, that I was an old master, because I'm a painter mostly of dead souls.

'Study art? Never have and never intend to.'

In his work some knowledge of draughtsmanship is apparent, but the ideas, or psychic images, are invariably much more compelling than the form or colour. As an artist, Crowley never made the grade. He did not paint for painting's sake or for beauty's sake; he always chose subjects which illustrate his far-flung ideas, his fascination, illumination, disgust. He painted, like other artists, to express himself and follow out his unconscious urge . . . and produced dead souls, hideously ugly men and women, monsters, the phallus and the wise man.

So here they lived, Crowley and Leah, in this studio of three windows, one of which was twenty feet wide. Volume III, Number 1 of *The Equinox* now appeared. Why Volume III? What of the ten numbers of Volume II (and each number, let us not forget, is a thick quarto volume)? Well, for five years or so Crowley had been unable to produce his magazine, formerly issued twice a year. So Volume II (comprising ten fat books) became a volume of *Silence*, after one of *Speech*, self-denial and circumstance joining to keep it unpublished.

Volume III, Number 1, the so-called 'blue' *Equinox*, because it

has a blue cover, is the one published in America by the Universal Publishing Company of Detroit, whom Crowley castigated in *The Confessions*. It was the last throw in this venture, written almost entirely by Crowley himself, with a colour reproduction of the Master Therion 'in His Holy Meditation' from a painting by his Dutch friend and pupil, Leon Kennedy. Half-way through the book the stern features of Crowley in evening dress, covered with medals and the insignia of office, stare out of a photograph. This is the head of the O.T.O., *Baphomet*, 'Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona, and all the Britains that are in the sanctuary of the Gnosis,' etc., etc.

The volume opens with the *Hymn to Pan*, Crowley's most effective poem. As an evocation it achieves, I think, its aim, and was used during many a magical operation. After fourteen hundred years of Christianity one is thrown back by its ancient pagan frenzy; it is the dance of Pan and the dissolution of consciousness. This is the Dionysian aspect of life rediscovered by Nietzsche. Pan is the Antichrist, symbol of lust and magic.

HYMN TO PAN

Thrill with lissome lust of the light,
 O man! My man!
 Come careering out of the night
 Of Pan! Io Pan!
 Io Pan! Io Pan! Come over the sea
 From Sicily and from Arcady!
 Roaming as Bacchus, with fauns and pards
 And nymphs and satyrs for thy guards,
 On a milk-white ass, come over the sea
 To me, to me,
 Come with Apollo in bridal dress
 (Shepherdess and pythoness),
 Come with Artemis, silken shod,
 And wash thy white thigh, beautiful God,
 In the moon of the woods, on the marble mount,
 The dimpled dawn of the amber fount!
 Dip the purple of passionate prayer
 In the crimson shrine, the scarlet snare,
 The soul that startles in eyes of blue
 To watch thy wantonness weeping through
 The tangled grove, the gnarléd bole
 Of the living tree that is spirit and soul
 And body and brain—come over the sea,
 (Io Pan! Io Pan!)
 Devil or god, to me, to me,
 My man! my man!

Come with trumpets sounding shrill
 Over the hill!
 Come with drums low muttering
 From the spring!
 Come with flute and come with pipe!
 Am I not ripe?
 I, who wait and writhe and wrestle
 With air that hath no boughs to nestle
 My body, weary of empty clasp,
 Strong as a lion and sharp as an asp—
 Come, O Come.
 I am numb
 With the lonely lust of devildom.
 Thrust the sword through the galling fetter,
 All-devourer, all-begetter:
 Give me the sign of the Open Eye,
 And the token erect of thorny thigh,
 And the word of madness and mystery,
 O Pan! Io Pan!
 Io Pan! Io Pan Pan! Pan Pan! Pan,
 I am a man:
 Do as thou wilt, as a great god can,
 O Pan! Io Pan!
 Io Pan! Io Pan! I am awake
 In the grip of the snake.
 The eagle slashes with beaks and claw;
 The gods withdraw:
 The great beasts come, Io Pan! I am borne
 To death on the horn
 Of the Unicorn.
 I am Pan! Io Pan! Io Pan Pan! Pan!
 I am thy mate, I am thy man,
 Goat of thy flock, I am gold, I am god,
 Flesh to thy bone, flower to thy rod.
 With hoofs of steel I race on the rocks
 Through solstice stubborn to equinox.
 And I rave; and I rape and I rip and I rend
 Everlasting, world without end,
 Manikin, maiden, maenad, man,
 In the might of Pan.
 Io Pan! Io Pan Pan! Pan! Io Pan!

Moscow.

Among other items in this number of *The Equinox* is 'Liber CI', an open letter to those who wish to join the Order of the Orienta I Templars. After the style of that young Russian nihilist, Nachaev, who informed his five followers that he was head of a vast organ-

ization spread over the whole of Russia, Crowley offered membership of his august and ancient 'body of initiates' to the people of America, and printed the regulations of the Order which 'come into force in any district where the membership exceeds one thousand souls'.

'Liber CI' starts with an Epistle from Baphomet to Sir George Macnie Cowie, Very Illustrious and Very Illuminated, Pontiff and Epopot of the Arcopagus of the VIIIth Degree O.T.O., Grand Treasurer General, Keeper of the Golden Book, etc., etc., who at that moment was absconding with the funds of the Order in England. Or so Crowley said. According to *The Confessions* written some years later in Tunis, a certain Mr. George Macnie Cowie, also described as the Grand Treasurer, Art Editor of Nelson's the publishers of Edinburgh, 'deaf and dumb',¹ is blamed for defrauding the Order ('The Order had been systematically defrauded. Let me instance only one item. A sum of £500 was entered twice.'). and for making Crowley upon his return to England penniless. Finally Mr. Cowie is described as insane.²

Among the regulations of the good conduct of the Order set out in 'Liber CI' is the ambitious, not to say snobbish, injunction (which has irritated at least one humble would-be follower) that

'Every Brother is expected to use all his influence with persons in a superior station of life (so called) to induce them to join the Order. Royal personages, ministers of State, high officials in the Diplomatic, Naval, Military, and Civil Services are particularly to be sought after.'

The 'blue' *Equinox* contains many other mysterious occult matters which Crowley had been waiting for an opportunity to publish, and the work was finally issued with the assistance of the Ape of Thoth on the 21st March, 1919.

Most of the Summer of that year Crowley spent at the extremity of Long Island. This was another Magical Retirement. There is no mention of Leah. But of course she was not with him, not when the Master was on a Magical Retirement, whether it was a Great Magical Retirement or merely a Little Magical Retirement. The Beast had retreated to his lair; he was communing with his Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwass, and neither man nor woman must disturb

¹ The late Mr. Cowie was, in fact, only deaf. 'There is a lion in my path in the shape of total want of hearing,' he wrote.

² When Crowley accused someone of robbing him, the truth of the matter was usually the other way round. In the case of Mr. Cowie, this is certainly so, for Crowley's letters to him before 1915 invariably begin by thanking him for a donation—such as one hundred pounds or a mere fifty. The only occasion on which Crowley sent Cowie anything was just before The Beast's departure for America. He addressed Cowie with the customary pomposity of freemasonic bodies—Very Illustrious Sir Knight, Most Wise and Excellent Councillor of His Most Sacred Majesty and Most Dear Brother—and enclosed a cheque for six pounds which was dishonoured at the bank.

him. And from this retirement he learnt that the current was exhausted. 'I had finished my work in America and began to prepare my escape.'

But first of all he set out on a holiday to the south, stayed with his friends of Greenwich Village, William and Kate Seabrook, who were spending the summer at their farmhouse near Decatur, Atlanta. Crowley had a great affection for Seabrook. He said of him that he was one of the four men that he truly loved.

The local Press interviewed him, the 'Poet-Painter who Studied Magic Under Indian Savants', and printed a summary of his life.

'Twice he has walked across the Sahara Desert; many times across Broadway; he has led mountain climbing expeditions into the most remote corners of the earth; he has been everywhere, done everything, except visit Georgia, and now he's doing that. Certainly Atlanta has never had a more unusual visitor.'

In the photograph accompanying the article he has his one lock of hair on his otherwise bald and shaved head, and sits in his plus-four suit before the easel, paintbrush in hand and cigar in mouth.

But where Leah was and how she paid the rent of the studio with three windows, and what she thought of her lover sitting alone in a tent beyond Montauk, and then disappearing down south without her, we do not know.

Concubines One and Two

THE war was over and Crowley wanted to go back to Europe. He was not sorry at the thought of leaving America, for he had accomplished nothing there. He summed up his past five years as a failure and, by way of explanation, added the surprisingly modest statement, for a man who rarely stopped boasting, that he 'was simply too young, ignorant, and biased to make any impression on the United States'. At most, he described his wanderings in America as an unconscious preparation for his real mission yet to come; for, magically speaking, he had grown in stature and was now a Magus $9^{\circ} = 2\Box$.

'I cried, like Elijah: Alas! This is no country for the poet Aleister Crowley, or the Adept, *To Mega Therion*, whose hope to help his fellow men has this one anchor: Truth shall make you free!'

On the 16th December, 1919, he left Detroit for New York and then sailed homewards with enthusiasm for England and his future magical mission, leaving behind him, according to his friend,

Frank Harris, a string of worthless cheques. And upon his arrival in England (thanks to Commodore Gaunt's advice to the British authorities) all he received for his pro-German activities during the war was a trouncing from *John Bull*. He proceeded to the house of his aunt at Eton Lodge, Outram Road, Croydon, the very house he had urged Count Zeppelin, through the pages of *The International*, to bomb to smithereens, and made himself comfortable amid the Victorian furniture. 'Here I am safely at home. Not only has the war changed nothing in this house of my aunt's where I have roosted, but they haven't altered the position of a piece of furniture since Queen Victoria came to the throne,' he wrote to a certain Elizabeth Fox.

He looked for his former *chela*, Victor Neuberg, but failed to find him: with Crowley out of sight, but not out of mind, Brother Omnia Vicam had got married and settled down; and when he heard from the gossip in Soho that The Beast had returned, he lay low.

Crowley had no intention of remaining in England. His asthma and bronchitis made it advisable for him to seek a warmer climate. Besides, England was upside-down after the war. He had in mind his old playground, the north coast of Africa. His original plan was to join the Ape of Thoth in Switzerland, where she had gone with one of her sisters, but for a reason he was not clear about—it was never sufficient for Crowley to say he had just changed his mind—he wired Leah to meet him in Paris instead. And in Paris on the 11th January 1920, exactly a year after Leah had decided in New York to become his Scarlet Woman, she put her hands into his and together they swore to start in the Old World a temple to their religion which they had failed to establish in the New. With the Ape was her two-year-old son, Dionysus.

The memory of all those women who could still evoke chords of love in Crowley's romantic heart subsided before the idea of a Hollywood actress who had been writing to him since 1919. This was Elizabeth Fox, an actress who had played in films for the Pioneer Picture Company. She was interested in occultism, and when, one day during 1917, an Englishman called Sheridan Bickers told her about Aleister Crowley, he seemed to be the Master she felt she was in need of. After studying his works for two years she had a vision of him and this prompted her to write to him through *The International*.

His letters were soon expressing sentiments of love, faltering at first, then, in sudden sentences, overbold. He saw her *astrally*: 'Now I see you before me shining in the dark.' But not actually, for they had never met. When he left America he invited her to come to Europe and put herself into his hands, an invitation which she accepted.

He thought of her continually. 'Elizabeth Fox haunts me—a

Ghost of the Future! Ghostly indeed; her picture and her letter tell me little.'

He carefully considered her for the role of Scarlet Woman, in spite of having one already—Leah Faesi. She had sent him her horoscope, without, however, divulging the year of her birth, and from it he compared her with previous Scarlet Women. 'The question arises, is Elizabeth Fox, who is extremely Lunar, the Scarlet Woman? None of the other women have been of Lunar type. Ouarda was Fire, of the Archer; so was Hilarion; Virakam was Air, of the Balance; Ahitha, Fire and Earth, of Ram and Bull; Almeira, Air of the Twins.' This is, of course, only a short list of the principal Scarlet Women of The Beast.

The Ape of Thoth was pregnant. He was worried about her. Who was to look after her and where was she to have the baby?

During the Atlantic crossing the Ape had become friendly with a Provençal girl who had spent some years in America as a nursery governess. Her name was Ninette Shumway (*née* Fraux). She, too, had a child, a boy about the same age as Dionysus. The father, an American, had been killed in a car accident, so Ninette, now husbandless, was looking for another job of nursery governess.

'Well, why not ask her to join us?' Crowley suggested. It seemed an excellent idea, and after depositing the Ape and Dionysus at Fontainebleau, he went to Paris to meet this nursery governess.

He said he received a shock at the sight of Ninette: she was drooping like a thirsty flower. Her brat, whom she dragged along listlessly, had a ghastly white face and limbs like a damp rag. He was swept away by pity and became determined to begin his work of saving mankind by knocking these two into shape.

A house at 11-bis rue de Neuville, Fontainebleau, was rented; and there they all encamped until they could decide where to begin the Great Work and establish a permanent centre for magic. The nursery governess was given the magical name of Cypris, and her child dubbed Hermes, the herald of the gods, in the Great White Brotherhood of the A.·. A.·.

At this time he received another sign from the gods of his mission on earth. On the 30th January, 1920, he went to Paris to buy pencils, Mandarin, palette, Napoleon brandy, canvases, 'and other appurtenances of the artist's dismal trade'. And while there he looked up a former mistress, Eleanor Mezdrov, to whom he had dedicated some poems published in *The Equinox* before the war.

She is like a flower washed up

On the shore of life by the sea of luck,

A strange and venomous flower . . .

In his novel *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* this lady is the model from whom he drew the face and personality of Haidée Lamoureux, with

hollow cheeks, crow's feet at the corners of her eyes, deathly thin fingers covered with enormous sapphires and diamonds: the ideal Scarlet Woman, in fact.

He had a threefold reason for calling on her: he wanted to see a man with whom she was living, to make love to her, and to smoke with her a few pipes of opium—'she being a devotee of that great and terrible god'.

He obtained none of these objectives, and was just about to depart when she said, 'Wait a minute,' and produced from a drawer a folded cloth. 'Shut your eyes,' she said. He did as she bid.

The cloth fell open to about four feet in length; upon it, in silk embroidered appliqué, was the stele of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu.

Eleanor Mezdrov explained. In February, 1917, she and her young man had gone to the South of France to get cured of the opium habit. In such cases insomnia is frequent. One night, however, she had fallen asleep immediately and on waking in the morning found that she had copied the stele on a great sheet of paper.

Crowley was thunderstruck. From what on earth had she copied the stele? he asked. She had taken with her number seven of *The Equinox*, in which the stele is reproduced in colour.

The sceptical will think this a simple and complete enough explanation and will deride perhaps the deeper significance Crowley saw in it.

'It is very remarkable,' he commented, 'that so large a sheet of paper should have been at hand; also that they should have taken that special book on such a journey; but still more that she should have chosen that picture, nay, that she, who had never done anything of the sort before, should have done it at all. More yet, that she should have spent three months in making a permanent thing of it. Most of all, that she should have shown it to me at the very moment when I was awaiting an "unmistakeable" sign.'

All this, he summed up, was clear proof of the power and inscrutable wisdom of those who had sent him to proclaim the Law.

He walked in the forest of Fontainebleau with Sister Cypris; Sister Alostrael, on account of her condition, having to remain at home. He saw, on one such outing, the trunk of an exceptionally large tree lying on the ground. Its circumference was eight times larger than that of any other tree near it. The Father of the Flock, he poetically called it, and wondered whether it could be taken as a sign that he was about to die.

It didn't take Crowley long to knock Cypris into shape: she flourished under his care, he said. She did more than this: she fell in love with him.

'She saw me as her saviour no less than Jairus's daughter must

have seen Jesus, and her gratitude soon turned to an ecstasy of romantic love,' wrote Crowley.

And on one spring-like day, after lunch at the Barbison, the wine went to their heads. While Alostrael rested at home they raced through the forest and, in a glade, fell down upon a mossy bank and there and then, without preface of words, clasped each other in their arms.

'We walked home on air and the next few days passed like a pageant of purple pleasure and passion.'

Naturally, or perhaps, in the light of the new law of life which Crowley was preaching, unnaturally, Sister Cypris grew violently jealous of The Beast's attachment to the Scarlet Woman, Alostrael. Cypris wanted him entirely for herself. Did he not love her? Couldn't they get married: In a riot of emotion she did not consider the First Concubine of The Beast, neither the Law of Thelema, and she was amazed and angry when the Magus failed to agree with her.

Crowley patiently explained why he would not desert Alostrael. He was above such pettiness; as a human being he had evolved to a higher ethical plane. It was not that he loved Sister Cypris less, but the Law of Thelema, the Law of Do what thou wilt, more.

He awoke early in the morning, gathered his flock around him, and went out to greet the Sun, his Father. This was the Dawn Meditation:

'Hail unto Thee who art Ra in Thy rising, even unto Thee who art Ra in Thy strength, Harmachis in Thy Beauty, who travellest over the Heavens in Thy bark at the Uprising of the Sun.'

Then he went back to bed.

Where should they go to do the Great Work? The *Yi King*, that ancient Chinese book of oracles, was consulted. Should they go to Algeria? Or the Italian lakes? How about Spain? Naples or Sicily?

The answer of the hexagram was indecisive.

At the end of February a child was born to Alostrael. It was a girl. They called her Anne Leah, and for domestic purposes Poupée, which was the little Hermes' spontaneous name for her. And soon afterwards Cypris became pregnant. She could not shake off her desire to have The Beast all for herself. She loved him deeply, and hated her more exalted sister, the Ape of Thoth. Ninette's thoughts, full of bitterness and gloom, were carefully recorded in her magical diary which Crowley had told her to keep.

'She went from bad to worse during the following months, but I maintained firm correctness and at last she gave up trying to drag me down to her ignoble ideal.'

He taught her to rise above the meanness of the monogamic ideal, until out of her despair grew a glimmer of understanding and hope.

One day Crowley picked up Sister Cypris's diary, read it, and pronounced it an unsurpassed masterpiece, although written by 'an ignorant, untrained nursemaid'. She had analysed herself so deeply and so accurately, and had dramatized her tragedy so powerfully, that the heart of The Beast was moved. He called it a marvelous manuscript, and added an opinion which, from a man who had himself published four works of pornography and whose own magical diary overwhelms one by its prurience, is baffling. 'We must, I fear, bow in the Temple of Rimmon to the extent of editing such passages which I hate to do; their brutal obscenity is an essential element in her character.'

On the 1st March, 1920, at half past five in the afternoon, he again consulted the Chinese Oracle. Where should he start the Great Work? For nothing but the universal acceptance of the Law of Thelema as the sole and sufficient basis of conduct could save the world. He must found a community, the archetype of all future communities, whose only code of convention will be the one law of Do what thou wilt.

Shall I spend April and June in or near Marseilles?

Fire of Water. No.

Capri? Earth of Air. No.

Cefalù? Earth of Lingam. This couldn't be better.

The Chinese oracle had spoken and Crowley made a very emphatic note in his diary that it was solely on this answer from the *Yi King* hexagram that he went to Cefalù.

He began straightway to make the necessary arrangements. On the 8th March Alostrael returned from the hospital with Anne Leah. On the 21st March he said good-bye to his house in Fontainebleau and led his two concubines with the children to Paris. The next day he saw Alostrael and the baby off to London and went south to Bordeaux with Cypris and the two little boys. On the 27th they arrived in Naples. The object of an act of sex-magic in the Hotel Metropole of that city was 'successful and speedy arrival at Cefalù'.

The Sacred Abbey of Thelema

It was inevitable that Crowley, who had made out of Rabelais's *Fay ce que voudras* a solemn Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law, and who had taken for his magical word *Theleme* (the country in which Gargantua's monk built his fantastic Abbey), should sooner or later attempt to establish his Abbey. The idea must have been with him for long. But it was not till he came to Cefalù that he decided the time was ripe and the place suitable.

There is, alas, nothing new under the sun; when Sir Francis Dashwood, England's eccentric Chancellor of the Exchequer,

established his Brotherhood of Saint Francis, he anticipated The Beast by nearly two centuries. Crowley's simple villa at Cefalù looks pale, of course, beside the wealth and ornateness of Medmenham Abbey in West Wycombe. But although both men dedicated chapels to Satan, the parallel cannot be carried far for the intention of these two founders of Thelemic Abbeys was different. Sir Francis would never have pretended that his Abbey was other than for frolic and debauchery; whereas Crowley's establishment (in which not orgies took place but *The Orgia* were performed) was designed for the serious purpose of bending the world to his demoniac vision. 'And my house is going to be The Whore's Hell, a secret place of the quenchless fire of Lust and the eternal torment of Love.'

He praised the local gods for directing him, the day he arrived, to the vacant villa on the hillside half a mile beyond Cefalù, the fishing village on the northern shore of Sicily.

'We are high on the neck of the peninsula,' he wrote, 'and can see West to Palermo, East over the sea, North is the mighty rock of Cephaloedium and behind us to the South rise hills, green with trees and grass. My garden is full of flowers and promise of fruit.'

The villa, set amid olive groves, was promptly taken; later the lease was signed jointly by Sir Alastor de Kerval and the Contessa Léa Falkland, the names Crowley and Leah assumed during their stay on the island.

The Abbey of Thelema at Cefalù in the island of Sicily is housed in a villa on the hillside above Santa Barbara, occupied by the Great Wild Beast, To Mega Therion, 666, a Magus 9° = 2□ A. . A. ., Alastor de Kerval, the Wanderer in the Wastes, by Ninette Fraux his Second Concubine, by Howard her son born in wedlock, and by . . . , the son born in love of his First Concubine, Alostrael, the Scarlet Woman, to one . . . , from the second day of April, 1920, *Era Vulgari*, that is, in the Sixteenth Year of the Aeon of Horus, the Sun being in 12° of Aries and the Moon in 7° of Libra.

Crowley was elated, and in the twilight of his first day at Cefalù his act of sex-magic with Sister Cypris had for its object: 'Salutation to the Gods and Goddesses of this place! May they grant us abundance of all good things, and inspire me to the creation of Beauty.'

During his third day he saw a 'wonderful ugly girl with a big mouth' among the local inhabitants, just the kind of girl he loved to paint.

Betty May, a later visitor to the Abbey, has recorded her impressions of the place. From the village of Cefalù one has a long walk up

a narrow, winding, mountain path. To Crowley the villa was an Abbey, a *Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum*—he had cards printed with this title as his address—but to Betty May it was just a farmhouse without any sanitary arrangements. It was certainly not a patch on the abbey, or temple, which Crowley wanted to build on top of the hills at Cefalù, and for which he tried to raise a loan from the director of an Italian bank. The plan of this ideal temple, circular in design, has eight pillars to hold up a glass-domed roof, 44 feet high, with outer courts and buildings for every kind of magical and social purpose. But the actual Abbey of Thelema at Cefalù in Sicily, the villa which Aleister Crowley rented in the spring of 1920, was quite suitable and sufficient.

It was a one-storeyed building of stone, plastered over and painted white, with a tiled roof, and walls of eighteen inches thick. Five rooms were planned around a central hall, the Sanctum Sanctorum, or the temple, of the Thelemic mysteries. On the red-tiled floor were painted a magic circle and a pentagram, its five points touching equally the circumference. In the centre of the circle was the six-sided altar, which contained a copy of the stele of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu, with four candles on either side of it, *The Book of the Law* with six candles either side, and other odds and ends, such as the Bell, Burin, Lamen, Sword, Cup, and the *Record* of the Abbey, not forgetting the Cakes of Light, the composition of which is given on page 56.

To the east of the circle, facing the candle-lit altar, was the throne of The Beast, and between his throne and the altar stood a burning charcoal brazier, hung with ritual daggers. The throne of the Scarlet Woman was in the west. And around the inside of the circle were the Hebrew names of God.

On the walls of the temple and of the other rooms in the Abbey were Crowley's own startling paintings of every kind of sexual act in every conceivable position. Their purpose was to induce, through familiarity, indifference to, or forgetfulness about, sex.

When the Magus, with his black staff, a crowned lion at the top of it and a snake of eleven coils around it, rose to commence his invocations, he faced Boleskine in Scotland, where, nearly a quarter of a century before, he had made his first magical currents, after the directions of Abra-Melin, the mediaeval Egyptian mage.

Here the Thelemites took their high offices, the daily prayers called Pentagram and the dread Gnostic Mass, sacrificed animals to their gods, evoked and banished many a demon, and performed, amid the clouds of incense, those *Orgia* which so shocked the readers of the *Sunday Express* and *John Bull*; although through ignorance of magic and *magick*, these two papers could only hint at the nature of the Thelemic ceremonies.

The Magician, his breast bare, stands before an altar on which

are his Burin, Bell, Thurible, and two of the Cakes of Light. In the Sign of the Enterer he reaches West across the Altar, and cries:

'Hail Ra, that goest in thy bark
Into the caverns of the Dark!'

He gives the sign of Silence, and takes the Bell, and Fire, in his hands.

'East of the Altar see me stand
With light and musick in my hand!'

He strikes Eleven times upon the Bell 333—55555—333 and places the Fire in the Thurible.

'I strike the Bell: I light the Flame;
I utter the mysterious name
ABRAHADABRA'

He prayed and danced like the dervishes he'd seen in the desert, lashing himself into an ecstasy, his sword whirling madly above his head and the heads of his followers.

On the 14th April, 1920, the sun, according to the *Record* of the Abbey, being in 24° of Aries, and the moon in 4° of Pisces, Alostrael with Poupée arrived—'the First Concubine of The Beast, His Scarlet Woman and their bastard free-born Anne Leah, or Poupée'—and she was given the additional title of Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal. Poupée was ill. Crowley suggested that a little goat's milk, which nourished Jupiter, might help her.

During the spring months he explored the countryside and climbed the hills around Cefalù with Sister Cypris, whom he also called Beury. And when the weather grew warm they bathed naked in the sea. '*Les jours se suivent*; this is really a perfect place,' he pronounced. The only disturbing influence was the continued illness of Poupée. Wisely a doctor was summoned, and on the magical plane Crowley cast the *Yi King* sticks.

'Will Poupée grow up to be a big girl? Air of Fire. The opposite to the first symbol Sun. It might be all right.'

He had established a centre for occultism where pupils could come and study, but he was uncertain about the nature of the magical work he should commence. So meanwhile he painted and wrote, settled into his Abbey, smoked opium, sniffed snow (cocaine), ate grass (hashish), and helped himself to liberal doses of laudanum, veronal, and anhalonium, the last of which he claimed to have introduced to Europe. Crowley certainly gave anhalonium to many people in London and Paris, and one of the recipients of this magic potion was Katherine Mansfield. But instead of having visions, she

only felt sick, upset, and unduly irritated at the sight of a picture not hanging perfectly straight. Crowley met Katherine Mansfield in the house of Gwendoline Otter, the last of the Chelsea hostesses.

On the day the sun entered the sign of Taurus, i.e. the 20th April, The Beast celebrated this event by an act of sex-magic in which both his loves participated. In the middle of it a violent quarrel broke out between Sisters Alostrael and Cypris, and the latter, bursting into tears, snatched up a thin cloak to cover her nakedness and ran out into the rain and the darkness. The Beast wandered about the mountainside looking for her, afraid she had fallen over the precipice. After calling her name for an hour (her little son Hermes helped by yelling from the Abbey window), he found her and dragged her back. Meanwhile Alostrael had been at the brandy and was now drunk. She greeted Sister Cypris with a curse and the fighting began again. With difficulty Crowley persuaded Concubine Number Two to go to bed. Then Alostrael, as if to have the last word, began to vomit and throw a fit.

By 1.15 a.m. all was quiet. To spread balm over their souls and to remind them of higher things, The Beast, between puffs at his opium pipe, began reading aloud the *Tao Te Ching*, one of the world's great religious books.

'Next, please! Let's all live up to—"Never dull where Crowley is."'

Now it was Alostrael's turn to become insanely jealous. In disgust Crowley ceased arguing with her and merely reflected that it was a waste of time making love to a jealous woman, for she just regarded his love as her right, not a favour.

Poupée grew worse; she was incapable of absorbing any food and was literally wasting away. Crowley consulted her horoscope and worked out its progressions for the immediate future. The approach of her Sun in opposition to Mars gave him cause for alarm, especially as the latter was in radical opposition to Saturn. He prayed she would continue to survive till the following week, when the Sun would be in 7° of Taurus. He was really very worried, and described his feelings with the entry: 'I have been howling like a mad creature nearly all day. I want my epitaph to be "Half a woman made with half a god". Is it My Will to save my baby's life?' The Chinese Oracle was invoked again and the sticks returned the answer which he feared might mean Release from Earth. To escape from his anxiety he began painting a big landscape: a background of sombre mountains through the valleys of which winds the Phallus, surprising a group of figures frolicking beside the river in the foreground.

Having only two wives who can grow insanely jealous of each other was a problem which preoccupied him. When one falls sick a strain is thrown on the other. The Koran, which allows four wives, has found the ideal. A Muslim might find Crowley's interpretation

amusing. With two women you have to explain each to the other; with three, two compare notes while you're with the third; but four make a crowd, and can be neglected.

During the beautiful spring evenings, the rays of the setting sun coming from behind Palermo, he painted and looked down into the wine-coloured ocean. He was moved by the beauty of the world and observed that he could count on two hours' 'visual opera' every night.

'The Sun never repeats Himself. Tonight His shafts fell in front of the mountains and dissolved them, so that one could not tell them from the clouds, except by one's memory of the skyline.'

He painted a group of figures he called 'The Lesbians', and touched up 'The Fisherman', a large canvas he had brought with him from Fontainebleau, 'putting in a whore for him as he was lonely'.

The spectacle of The Beast, the lobes of his ears pierced and hung with rings, dabbing oil-paints on to the canvas, or smoking his opium pipe on the couch inside his villa, even in the company of two wives, approaches the bourgeois ideal of the respectable, although eccentric, gentleman on holiday.

He suffered from insomnia and would gratefully dose off when and where he could. On the 2nd May, at ten to two in the afternoon, he suddenly awoke from a deeper sleep than usual, and sprang to his feet in horror, 'every nerve taut as a whip to the point of positive pain, my mind blank but almost insane with nameless apprehension'.

He searched for an analogy with which to describe this condition, Poe's 'Buried Alive' perhaps, or some ghastly state of mind from Baudelaire.

It had happened several times before. Half asleep, half awake, he had heard a sound in the adjoining room. Suddenly he had become conscious of some unauthorized, alien presence in the house, combined with the overwhelming feeling of being stifled. He admitted that both he and Alostrael had had hallucinations recently. He had heard sharp, clear raps, sometimes single, sometimes a cadence; also human footsteps. The Virgin Guardian had had hallucinations of vision as well, seeing The Beast outside the house or in the kitchen, wherever, in fact, she turned her gaze.

Crowley's feeling of being stifled was connected with his asthma and dyspnoea, which a sniff of cocaine would relieve. Opium, cocaine, ether, morphine, heroin, and hashish, as well as wine and liqueurs, were kept in his room. Drugs were available for all, and the brandy bottle for the baby, Dionysus, who, according to Renata Faesi, was curious to know what brandy was like.

The Beast's heart was softened at the thought of Poupée. She seems to have been the only feminine creature he loved without exception and without reserve. He sent a wire to Naples for some

Allenbury's babies' food, and once again consulted the Chinese Oracle, who took rather a poor view of the baby's chances of recovery.

Between struggling against inertia and asthma, he slashed at the canvas, dictated plays, stories, essays, devised new magical rituals. He began to think of a major work which, of all his writings, he felt sure would attract the dull, stubborn public: the story of his life, the autobiography of the Master Therion.

But for the present things must be pulled into shape, otherwise the Great Work would be held up. Crowley sketched out a routine for the daily life of the Abbey. On awakening, the Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal would beat a gong and proclaim the Law: *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law*. To which everyone, including the children, had to reply: *Love is the law, love under will*.

Next, Adoration of Ra, that is the prayers to the sun. Everyone trooped outside and made obeisance to the All-Seeing Eye.

Grace before breakfast. This consisted of the reading of some versicles to the effect that Man's will is supreme and that there is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.

Man has the right to eat what he will:
to drink what he will:
to dwell where he will:
to move as he will on the face of the earth.

The meal was then eaten in silence.

The main meal at noon was preceded by similar prayers. About tea-time there was the Evening Adoration of the Sun; and at 6 p.m. more versicles for supper and the reading of some extracts from *The Book of the Law*.

Finally, ritual work, which meant putting the Thelernites through their magical paces—summoning up devils, banishing them, conversing with Holy Guardian Angels, raising magical currents, etc.

The routine for newcomers to the Abbey was more rigorous.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1st week. | Three days' hospitality. One day's silence. Three days' instruction. The Magical Oath, followed by four weeks' silence and work. |
| 6th week. | One day's instruction. |
| 7th to 9th week. | Three weeks' silence and work. |
| 10th week. | One week's instruction and repose. |
| 11th to 13th week. | Three weeks' silence and work. |

But none of the rambling bohemians from Paris, London, or New York who turned up at the Abbey ever adhered to this plan.¹

¹ The 'Eleusinian' part of the Abbey's mysteries interfered with the ascetic part. Crowley never found, alas, the balance between meditation and sex.

Crowley himself humorously commented upon it by calling the disciple who saw it through to the end 'the survivor'.

There was still no news of Elizabeth Fox, who was supposed to be en route to the Abbey: 'I have a sort of passing curiosity to know what the bloody hell has happened to Elizabeth.' He asked the Sacred Oracle of Thelema to give him word of her, and received this enigmatic reply: 'I know that awful sound of primal joy; let us follow on the wings of the gale even unto the holy house of Hathor; let us offer the five jewels of the cow upon her altar!' He analysed his love for her and found these reasons: 'I rather like the glamour of her being a "movie star"; it adds variety to a lady! I admire her intensely for her courage in coming so far to find me. I adore her name. I hope she is hungry and cruel as a wolf.'

It was the last week of May and the weather had grown warm. There were now two people ill in the Abbey, for Leah had gone down with dysentery. Some days later, while Crowley was writing poetry in the middle of the night, Alostrael's illness reached the acute stage. For an hour she screamed horribly. The local doctor had been prescribing laudanum. Crowley, on the principle of too many cooks, was apprehensive about treating her himself; but unable to bear her screams any longer, gave her an eighth of a grain of heroin under the tongue. This sent her to sleep and he was left in peace and quiet to write two more poems.

Although Crowley's amorous hopes were expressed at this time in the idea of Elizabeth Fox, he proposed marriage to another lady who came, pale ghost, out of the past. Who Helen Hollis was—or is—and in what continent she had met The Beast, I have been unable to discover; but whoever she was—or is—and wherever she was at the time Crowley wrote offering marriage, the reply—if there was a reply—was no. And he awoke from a dream in which he was being married to 'some deformed and imbecile creature', with fingers twisted into strange zig-zags, so that the ring had to be bent to fit. And Crowley, the bridegroom, had to be persuaded to say 'I do.'

On the stroke of midnight he entered the temple and made the Adoration to Khephra.

Hail unto Thee who art Khephra in Thy hiding, even unto
Thee who art Kephra in Thy silence, who travellest over the
Heavens in Thy bark at the Midnight Hour of the Sun.

From where he stood by the altar he could see Leah through the open door. Moved by her luminous eyes and her other-worldly expression, he began to draw her as she lay—she, Babalon,¹ his

¹ Crowley adopted this unusual spelling, because the cabbalistic number of Babalon (as opposed to Babylon) equals 156, which is also the number of Zion, the symbol of the Primaeva Mother.

Scarlet Whore of the Stars. He reflected that the word *thelema*, the Greek for 'will', the will of *Do what thou wilt*, had as its magical combination Babalon and The Beast. They were entwined together in a magical formula. He had finished sketching her and entitled the drawing, 'Leah with enteritis'.

Yes, but who was Leah in herself? Who was Beatrice before Dante set eyes on her? From a 'dull, ugly schoolteacher, ignorant, tired and common', he had made her his Scarlet Whore, perfect beyond all praise, an adept in all arts, a daughter of Dionysus. Her ardour, her faith, her courage was unmatched in the world. With him she had passed through the pylons, through everything. 'No deed but they had dared it; no sorrow but they had suffered it.'

Meanwhile Elizabeth Fox was sitting in Bou Saada in the interior of Algeria, waiting for Crowley to arrive. He had, it seems, forgotten about this arrangement. 'Has anyone seen my Liz?' he wrote. 'I shall certainly not wait for more than two weeks for her; one only has to wait three for Syphilis herself.' And he consoled himself with the woman he possessed already. Leah by now had recovered, although little Poupée was still very ill. But Leah, Leah! And in his diary he wrote:

'I love Alostrael; she is all my comfort, my support, my soul's desire, my life's reward, my dream's fulfilment! but for her I were indeed Alastor of the Solitude. She loves me for my work; whether she understand it or not doesn't matter either to her or to me; her soul tells her that my work must be great because it is the image of the God who has made her High Priestess in his temple. She knows and loves the God in me, not the man; and therefore she has conquered the great enemy that hides behind his clouds of poisonous gas, Illusion.'

Crowley was wrong in this view. The Ape of Thoth loved him still as a man; the stage when she would detest him as a man and love him only as a god, as the instrument of the Great Work, had not yet arrived.

And if it is doubted that he saw in her more than a partner for his sex-magic practices, let him answer in his own words:

'Even as in me she divined and loved God, veil over veil of my man-shadow hiding Him, so I pierced through the painted ape's face, the live Death of her loose skin on her grim skeleton, and came to a great Goddess, strange, perverse, hungry, implacable, and offered up my Soul—Godhead and manhood slain at one stroke of Her paw—upon Her altar. So loving Her, rejoicing that she had accepted me for Her slave, Her Beast, Her victim, Her accomplice, I must love even Her mask, the painted simper, the lewd doll-monkey face, the haggard shamelessness of her flat

breast . . . the insolence of Death pushing through flesh's flimsy curtain. . . .'

He had one dream, or rather nightmare, in which Elizabeth Fox was present: she was immensely fat and white—the rest of the dream, as Crowley would say, is of interest only to Anglican clergymen and mental pathologists. A few days later he heard from her: she had arrived at Palermo, and he went to meet her. When he learnt that she had been waiting for him in Bou Saada, he explained that he had intentionally sent her there in order to test her fortitude and confidence in him, an ordeal for which he was now prepared to give her full marks. The following day he took her to Cefalù and marked her admission to the Abbey on a clean page of the *Record*.

Now then on the twenty-third day of July, 1920, *era vulgari*, the Sun being in 0° of Leo and the Moon in 8° of Scorpio, did Elizabeth Fox arrive in Panormus [Palermo], and at the Abbey on the day following, there to abide as a Guest, towards the Accomplishment of the Great Work.

She was not, alas, as he had imagined and hoped. 'I now find Elizabeth Fox, refusing her year of birth, misled me—I am like the girl who was to meet a "dark, distinguished gentleman" and did, he was a nigger with one eye.'

Now he drew her horoscope accurately. Yes, she would be able to help him in the Great Work all right. The nearness of her Venus to his Saturn showed her love for his wisdom. In spite of his dashed hopes, he found her a gracious and serious person, eager to help in the Great Work for mankind.

A few days after Elizabeth had been initiated into the A. A. ., and taken the magical name of Metonith, she began her first month of training. The Beast gave her some books to study, and a razor to cut herself on the arm every time she said 'I'. She was soon practising the postures and breathing exercises of yoga, smoking opium, and keeping a magical diary. Her dreams, the idle thought, the seemingly irrational moods, were all recorded and analysed.

'A current of irritation deep within all day,' she wrote. 'Now it all pops to the surface and I feel like beating Leah to get it out of my system.' To which Crowley commented—in the margin in pencil—'You must analyse (and so destroy) all this sort of thing'

The traditional method of getting in touch with spirits is through another person. The medium is often a child, a virgin receptive to the difficult atmosphere of this rare art. When Benvenuto Cellini and a sorcerer raised departed spirits one night in the Roman Coliseum, they had with them a boy who cried out what was to be

seen in the swirling smoke of the magical fire. That learned mathematician and mage Dr. John Dee, Queen Elizabeth's astrologer, had Sir Edward Kelley to gaze for him into a crystal, the shew-stone, 'the Stone brought me by an Angel', and tell what he saw therein.

Crowley also used a crystal, and for his medium the maid-of-all-work, Alostrael, whose vision was sharpened by the aid of drugs. Dee and Kelley began their sittings at Mortlake with a Christian prayer, Crowley and Leah with the invocation to The Beast's Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwass.

'Leah had been invoking Aiwass, and got a small black figure hiding among rocks. I told her to accept this, as there is None beside Him.

'Ask Aiwass! Manifest, be content with one other,' instructed The Beast.

The Thelemites crouched around Leah in the candle-lit Abbey.

'He stands on a cliff. . . . She goes out to him. . . . He's in a black robe, short, and wears a round black hat. . . .'

'Go to him!' cried The Beast.

'I must use a scythe or something before I can get there,' stuttered Leah. 'He torments me. He's stripped: fine big body, long, oval face, close-shaven. He takes The Beast's form. . . .'

'Alostrael rides upon the phantom,' interpreted Crowley with triumph, for, as it is written, the place of the Scarlet Woman is astride The Beast.

Leah spelt out the word she could dimly see: 'L A C H O T.'

'Ask,' commanded Crowley, 'for a definite statement why the word is spoken to us.'

And so on through the night until the early hours.

Sometimes the crystal was dispensed with, and opium, which Crowley called 'Our Lady's breath', was alone used. He lay on his back, the stem of his long Chinese opium pipe in his mouth, trying to fix down, amid the variegated vision, the fleeting shadow of Aiwass. After a while he would pass the pipe to Leah. 'For Lust's sake, let us lust, for Smoke's sake, let us smoke!'

Somnolently she told him what she saw:

'Outlines . . . birds, flowers, wheat in sheaves, stars, lamps, *et cetera.*'

'Their colour?' asked The Beast.

'Yellow . . . and blue,' breathed the Ape of Thoth. 'The blue predominating. Brighter than the yellow, which fades away.'

'Invoke Aiwass,' he urged her.

She pronounced the sacred name, and with her free hand made the Cabbalistic Cross.

The vision grew cloudy; then in place of birds and foliage came

trees, landscapes, buildings, a palace, a whole town with red roofs. 'Reject everything but Aiwass,' instructed Crowley.

Ruins appeared and, in the middle of them, a long passage leading to a door. Then the mighty arm of Aiwass swept across the vision, hurling away the world of things, till nothing remained but this enormous swinging arm.

'Is this His message?' Crowley asked, as he caught the description from the lips of his Concubine-Seer.

'His left eye appears . . . like a Tibetan mandala, all colours, dazzling. Amid the concentric rings is the pupil of azure light,' said Leah, seeing more. 'It turns into a flower, the eternal lotus. Then a radiant blue cross and, within it, a circle.'

'How do you know it is Aiwass?'

The vision replied with a black hand, the nails long and pointed, the fingers jewelled, corresponding with Crowley's own vision of Aiwass; then appeared a golden rose of four petals.

'Give me a word!'

'Sen.' Leah paused. Her eyes stared glassily into space, into the past and the future. 'Yen,' she said.

The arm in her vision began to swing again, in broader and slower strokes. Now she was lost in Aiwass's eye, and could see over all the water, and could say no more.

* * *

On the whole, the summer of 1920 passed for the Thelemites successfully and without too many worries or upsets. Sometimes during these days and nights The Beast reached heights of maniac intensity, ran screaming into the temple, 'went all but insane'. He roared out words magical, names barbarous, and in an ecstasy performed his mysterious acts of sex-magic. His succinct and curious explanation of these shamanistic performances is not inaccurate: 'The cudgel of jolly Friapus beat me about the head and drove me mad.'

And so it went on, unending, incredible, the Dionysian cries from the *Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum* making passing Sicilian peasants hastily cross themselves and hurry home.

There is no reference in *The Magical Record* to Elizabeth Fox's becoming the third concubine of The Beast—where, if it had happened, it would, assuredly, appear. Crowley had hoped for a lover and found only a disciple. Perhaps it was just as well, for jealousy between Concubine One and Concubine Two continued unabated, in spite of the other half of the Thelemic law: *Love is the law, love under will*. Alostrael was jealous of any other woman The Beast cast his eyes upon. He recorded that she 'flamed up into mania' when he looked too keenly upon a Sicilian girl. And there is a passing reference to Sister Cypris's threatening The Beast, her Master, with a revolver.

The good astrological aspects changed, unhurriedly but un-faillingly, into bad. In spite of the exhilarations of bathing, hill-climbing, and beneficial magical currents, The Beast was ill: there are many references to vomiting, insomnia, lassitude. He said he was upon his cross, but it was 'a senseless pain that purges not, that warns not.' He was bucked up by drugs (supplied by the dope peddler, Amatore, in Palermo), but sometimes even heroin and cocaine failed to drag him out of his depression and sickness.

Poupée had been transferred to the hospital in Palermo. She was very sick indeed. After consulting the *Yi King*, Crowley decided to go to her. Leah, apparently, was at the hospital already. 'I think it may be her Will to die; as when I thought I would do Magick for her, I couldn't,' he entered in his diary.

He was referring to an act of sex-magic which he had performed with Leah with the object: *To help Poupée*. But during the middle of the operation he had grown apprehensive and had broken it off.

The next day, the 12th October, he described as his saddest birthday, and he went back to Cefalù and tried to overcome his melancholy by painting. On the 14th, while at work on his 'Dead Emperor' picture, Alostrael returned with a bent, sad head. Poupée had died that morning.

The Beast was heart-broken. Alas, he was born in the old aeon, the Christian era, the era of suffering and of death (in contradistinction to the aeon which he himself had founded, the aeon of liberty, love, life, and light); and in spite of his Godhead he was only 'human, all too human'. He led the weeping Leah into the temple, where he waved his magic wand and blessed the baby's departing spirit; then he wrote the following quaint, sad words into the Abbey's *Record*:

On the fourteenth day of October, 1920, *era vulgari*, the Sun being in 21° of Libra and the Moon in 2° of Scorpio, did Anne Leah, or Poupée, the first bastard of The Beast and of Alostrael, depart from the City of Panormus, going up on Her Way, so that Her bodily veils were no more seen of us by our bodily sense. Well may She steer Her ship amid Her sister stars over the seas of space!

To them whose flesh she had borrowed, in their mortality not understanding, came agony beyond all word most fearful, so that in silence they supported Time and its Burthen of Woe.

Alostrael was ill (she had miscarried six days after the death of the baby). The Beast covered in boils and generally rather low so that 'the Great Work was hindered, and the hearts of all assailed most sorely, even by fear, bewilderment, doubt, and distrust', to quote again from the Abbey's *Record*. Events of this nature were

not interpreted as bad luck, least of all as due to their own neglect. If the gods, or the Secret Chiefs, had not decided against them, who then? The death of her child and her miscarriage of 'a man child in the third month of gestation' seems to have driven Alostrael temporarily insane. Her long-standing distrust and jealousy of Sister Cypris erupted again. Leah had lost her children, the born and the unborn; the little Frenchwoman still had hers—she was in her eighth month of pregnancy. For a fortnight Leah argued with The Beast that it was all Ninette's doing—she had worked witchcraft against the Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal! The Beast picked up Cypris's diary and began reading recent entries. Crowley seems to have been unduly sensitive to the outspokenness of others. The contents of Cypris's mind were not new to him. In Fontainebleau he had been amazed at the revelations in her diary. Now he was appalled for the second time. The horrors of the human heart overwhelmed him. He had never dreamt such things were possible. He felt physically sick.

He went into the temple and started exorcising the hostile forces through which Cypris had worked her evil, and burnt assafoetida as a final argument against the malevolent powers. Then he gave a copy of the Exorcism to the culprit.

'NINETTE FRAUX. *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.* Initiation purges. There is excreted a stench and a pestilence. In your case two have been killed outright, and the rest made ill. There are signs that the process may lead to purification and things made safe within a short time. But we cannot risk further damage; if the hate is still in course, it had better coil back on its source. Keep your diary going carefully. Go and live in Cefalù alone; go to the hospital alone; the day before you come out send up your diary, and I will reconsider things. I shall hope to see the ulcers healing. Do not answer this; simply do as I say. *Love is the law, love under will.*

'The Beast 666.'

And an old peasant woman who lived near by led Sister Cypris away. After she had gone The Beast took up the *Record* from the altar, and in his sprawling handwriting added another couple of pages:

Now then at last upon the fifth day of November, 1920, *era vulgari*, the Sun being in 13° of Scorpio and the Moon in 11° of Virgo, did The Beast harken to the Words of Alostrael His concubine, perceiving clearly the Magical Need of making sure the circle against the Horror that had invaded it to such most cruel and deadly purpose; wherefore with Wisdom of Tahuti did he conjure, exorcise and expel the aforesaid Ninette Fraux,

casting her out from the Abbey for a season. And this Work not in hate nor in fear but in love and in pity did he do, seeing that solitude purgeth the Soul by forcing it to feed on its own poisons.

On the 21st November there turned up at the Abbey a young man whom Crowley had known in America, a former naval hospital attendant with a penchant for occultism. (He had invested a hundred dollars in a complete set of *The Equinox*, which contains most of Crowley's magical pronouncements.) His intellectual attainments, which Crowley praised highly, seem to have been equalled by his recklessness, for, wishing to experiment with drugs, he began by injecting himself with forty grains of cocaine, half a grain having been known to cause death. Then he tried to set a piece of glass on fire by the strength of his will. The naval surgeons managed to save his life.

In 1918 he visited Crowley in New York and asked him for a job. Now, at last, a job was vacant for him, that of 'an High Priest of Thelema in the Abbey where The Beast hath His sojourn'. He accordingly took the oath, and the magical name of Fiat Lux, 'Let there be light'.

The Confessions, or Autohagiography, of Aleister Crowley, written with a eye to publication, only skim the surface of his deeds and thoughts; there the story of The Beast seems a mere shadow-play compared with the full tide of his priapic cries in *The Magical Record*. Here is a rising up of subconsciousness, the emergence from darkness of the Vision of *The Beast*.

On the surface was mock insolence and contempt for the new arrival, Frater Fiat Lux. The Beast sneered at his experiments with ether, and his habit of saying 'God damn' at frequent intervals.

Brother Fiat Lux seems to have interpreted the commandment *Do what thou wilt* in the simplest and most inaccurate manner, laughing coarsely at the lascivious paintings on the Abbey walls. To the outward eye he was merely 'a drunken sailor boy, whose ideal was a seventeen-year-old, with red gold hair.'

But all this, of course, only concealed the Great Adept. It was up to the Holy Guru (i.e. Crowley) to work upon the outer husk of vulgarity. Fiat Lux was a kind of Jude the Obscure, even 'a potential Saint in the bodily garb of a Hooligan'.

Soon The Beast's heart warmed to his new assistant in the Great Work. Perhaps Fiat Lux would become, as Achad had become before him, his magical Son, of whom *The Book of the Law* had prophesied. Perhaps, too, he could solve that intractable riddle in *Liber Legis* represented by 4 6 3 8 A B K 2 4 A L G M O R 3 Y X 24 89 R P S T O V A L ? Crowley began to lecture Fiat Lux on art, literature, magic, and manners.

And then The Beast hurled himself over the brink of conscious-

ness in an ecstasy of ambivalent feeling towards this neophyte of the A ∴ A ∴

'Come, seize me, master me, come, Bull of mine, reach out and take me roaring!'

Yea, his new disciple would be of considerable assistance in the Great Work, and at two o'clock in the morning The Beast laid his hand on the Sacred Lotus of Alostrael and swore a number of solemn Oaths, and called down Nuit, Hadit, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit to bear witness thereof.

The Ipsissimus

CROWLEY began the new year with a despairing cry: The financial position is desperate, a promise to pay in \$1500 having completely collapsed. What shall I do?'¹ The *Yi King* advised him to retire. On this he commented: 'Sleep, take me! Death, take me! This life is too full; it pains, it slays, it suffices.'

A few days later these problems had subsided before that of Crowleyizing mankind. Puffing his opium pipe, he invoked Aiwass by the ritual of the Headless One. How should he put over the Law of Thelema? That was his message to the god.

Aiwass answered through the medium of a dream: two huge quadrangles, countless people in them. Aleister Crowley said something he had to say, very loud, attracting everyone's attention. Immense applause repeated in the far court. 'Then into that court came the assent of a sort of Headmaster person; all applauded him, & and so it came back to me. Moral: Make yourself heard, & and say plainly what you want!'

He decided to go and try his luck in Paris for a while, and marked the 1st February as the date of his departure.

He could not understand why his labours failed financially, and asked the *Yi King*, the unfailing Chinese Oracle, to explain it to him.

'What is the cause of my general failure to make a business success of my work?'

'The business is too big for its organization.'

'What will enable me to establish my work on a satisfactory business footing?'

'Some sudden event.'

'Of what type will be this event?'

'A woman.'

'What relations am I to have with this woman?'

¹ Crowley's original fortune of £30,000 had been, of course, truly, if not well, spent. He had also three sums of £1,000 each, left him by three aunts who died, it seems, within a short time of one another. This £3,000 he must have collected on his return from America: it was the money with which he rented the house in Fontainebleau and started the Abbey.

'Marriage.'

'Describe the woman.'

'Wealthy, frank, passionate, impulsive, hot-tempered, impatient, cruel, possibly has known disgrace.'

'By what means do I meet her?'

'In connection with some secret or difficult matter.'

'Describe the place of the meeting.'

'During your journey to Paris. Possibly in the house of an intellectual acquaintance, but it might be in a wood.'

Finally, Crowley asked the *Yi King* for a symbol for the fate of his work in the world during the next five years, and received the answer: 'Sudden rise to fame, though starting slowly.'

The flow of fantastic events in *The Magical Record* suddenly stops and does not begin again until two months later when The Beast returned, brideless, to his Abbey, sweating up the mountain path, after a fruitless sojourn in the city of Lutetia.

'I have been living a spineless life, on my nerves; spasmodic activities, some very good, others sheer hysteria. I have not even recorded the Operations of the Gnosis [i.e. acts of sex-magic]. I leave tomorrow for Paris. My diary will be in the 0° until I arrive & get a decent book to write in & a pen that works and ink that is ink.'

He left Leah in charge of the Abbey and imposed a vow of silence upon everybody during his absence (certain circumstances excepting); kissed the children good-bye; enjoined Concubines One and Two (Sister Cypris with her baby had been readmitted to the Abbey) not to come to blows, and off he went.

Upon his arrival in Paris he bought a little book of handmade paper, bound in red morocco, in which to record briefly his main activities: sex-magic, oaths, instructions from the *Yi King*, and other messages. His name and status are inscribed on the first page:

6 6 6

TO MEFA ΘHPION

THE BEAST

○

Alastor de Kerval
Grand Master of the Knights
of the Holy Ghost
The Wanderer of the Waste

ΛΟΓΟΣ ΑΙΩΝΟΣ

There were too many geniuses in Paris already for Crowley to be conspicuous among them. The anxieties of the war had passed into the excesses of the peace. A chamber-pot entitled 'Fountain',

amid other curiosities, was shown to the public at an art exhibition. The world had never seen anything so startling. The Russian ballet and Russian bolshevism, psychoanalysis, and dadaism were the new currents everyone wanted to talk about, not the Great Revelation in Cairo and the divinity of Aleister Crowley.

Among the crowd of acquaintances The Beast met this February in Paris, were Mary Butts, English novelist and short-story writer, her friend Cecil Maitland, and the elder sister of Ninette Shumway, Helen, all of whom put down their names for a pilgrimage to the Abbey. He ran into Nina Hamnett, who introduced him to that talented thinker, the late J. W. N. Sullivan and his wife Sylvia. Sullivan, whose main interest was music and science, was drawn to The Beast, whose peculiar genius was so sharply in contrast with his own. They played chess together; Crowley expounded *The Book of the Law*; they chatted and argued all night. The Beast finally extracting a promise from Sullivan that he would do his best to discover his True Will.

'I, J. W. N. Sullivan, in the presence of The Beast 666, solemnly pledge myself to the Great Work: which is, to discover my own True Will and to do it.

'Love is the Law, love under Will,

'Witness my hand,

'J. W. N. Sullivan.'

Crowley produced before the Sullivans such a vortex of intellectual and sexual attraction that on the very next page to the one which contained the oath of the husband is recorded The Beast's acts of sex-magic with the wife; Sullivan had been sent south in pursuit of his True Will, Sylvia following a day later.

There are other names in the record of these two months in Paris and Fontainebleau, of men and women with whom The Beast invoked the demons of the air and forest. But to give a list of them would be meaningless, for some of them were mere prostitutes and the rest unknown.

No, his trip to the city of Lutetia had not been a success, and by the 6th April he had returned to Cefalù, bringing back with him the same leeches of boredom and inactivity that he had taken away. And the month of May arrived before he was able to shake them off.

'I am about at the end of my tether in the matter of my Work. It becomes more and more difficult to force myself to do anything. To record my own thought it is enough to say "Wow!" or to keep silent.'

There had been an almost uninterrupted use of heroin. Without it, he confessed, he would have been unable even to get out of bed.

'Yesterday I resolved to use no heroin after 11 a.m. At night I suffered intensely with nervous pains and insomnia; but I stuck to it and, after a nightmare or two, got a good night's rest. In the morning I was subject to great weakness and some dyspnoea, which disappeared instantly on a dose of heroin at 10.30 a.m., thus indicating that the symptoms were due to the abstention.'

He threw the Chinese divinatory sticks on the bed. What course should he take to rid himself of the 'tendency to the habit'? By Will-Power came back the answer.

The rest of this stretch of *The Magical Record* is like the chart of a hospital patient: he can't sleep, he can't eat, he can't breathe, his bowels won't stir, and he hasn't any money. The position seems so hopeless that even that remedy of the doctor in *Gil Blas*, who got rid of his patient's illness by getting rid of his life, could almost be counted a blessing.

Each morning he dragged himself out of bed and began painting. Work is a latent prayer and there was much work to be done. Slowly his courage and energy returned; his constipation was changed to diarrhoea and his inactivity replaced by an orgy of painting. He went for long walks amid the hills, shying away from the phantom of heroin. He decided that, in withdrawing a drug, it is less important to reduce its quantity than to break up what is called the physiological cycle by increasing the periods of abstention. When he was tired of painting and walking he took a broom and swept the floor.

He found a parallel between Gauguin's life and his own. Like Gauguin, he had forsaken everything, travelled towards the sunset, and covered the walls of his house with the splendours of his vision. And like Gauguin he had only taken up painting late in life. Finally, he noted that the Frenchman had been a 'high initiate' who had heard an undine by day.

Why, he could have known Gauguin, for the painter had not died till the 8th May, 1903. Then raising his hands up to the sun, he offered his body, 'well consecrated by years of intimate union with black, brown and yellow men and women', to Gauguin's manes, his departed spirit, should he need a vehicle of flesh for further expression.

So, by the Power and Authority invested in Me, I, Baphomet 729, ordain the insertion of the name of

PAUL GAUGUIN

among the more memorable saints in the Gnostic Mass.

BAPHOMET XI° O.T.O.¹

I.I. et O.B.

¹ 'The X° is merely honorary,' said Crowley, 'but recent researches into the mysteries of the IX° [i.e. the degree which is on the plane of sex-magic] have compelled me to add an XI°.'

He was tremendously impressed by the fact that Gauguin had painted *the whole house*. What genius! Had he painted the furniture as well? It is easy enough to paint a wall to look like a jungle, but can one paint the toilet-table to look like a python?

'The harmony will be found by making the whole house a perfect expression of myself; the style will be the common factor. There is no reason for crying contradiction when one compares one part of me, fighting my way up the glazed rocks on the Meije in a hurricane, with another, smoking opium between my negro lover and my monied mistress, in my Charvet pyjamas. My soul shall sing a thousand songs which are one song; my house shall be a mirror.'

The Beast meditated on his canvases.

'Suppose one of my pictures cocked a snook at me? Suppose it said, "I can paint as well as you can, and I don't give a hoot"? I should be pleased with such spirited conduct; if I were capable of feeling insulted or jealous, and of inflicting some spiteful unjury on my creation, I could never have created it.

'Each painting reveals an unknown part of me to myself: I gain real knowledge through my art. Is not that better fun than if it merely recorded my thought with mechanical precision?'

A psychologist would not disagree with this. Painting is, in fact, used as a therapeutic technique by Jung and others. 'Art is God's way of discovering His own mysteries, the most enthralling, most tireless of pleasures,' Crowley added, expressing, I think, the same idea in a mystical way.

It seems that at times Crowley wasn't sure whom he really loved, God or Satan. But by God he meant the Secret Chiefs. Like the ancients of the earth, he attributed his own ardours to them.

'We are God's poems,' he wrote, 'due to inspiration, His children, begotten in his love-madness; and we should not be of Him and His nature if we are not ourselves capable of inspiration and of ecstasy, free to soar and to swoop.'

Finally he came to his greatest paradox, which suggests that his satanism was an inverted godliness.

'The man who makes idiotic jokes and devises obscene cruelties proves himself of the seed of the God who filled the Universe with these forms of amusements. And "Blasphemy", which is the Indignation of the Created at his Creator, is the Proof that the Created is a live and independent Being, fulfilling

the true purpose of that Creator. Therefore, of all acts, Blasphemy is the most pleasing to God.'

This is probably bad theology, because it makes Crowley 'God-intoxicated', whereas he was, in fact 'Satan-intoxicated', tirelessly seeking for evil (power) and indulging every sense until he was disgusted by his own excesses. His sensuality, however, was not entirely grossness, for it had its other side. Like the Frankists of the 18th century, and Rasputin¹ in the 20th, he sinned for God's sake, and in sexual and other ecstasies found communion. In his own view he was a man of purity wearing a mask of vileness.

'I am myself a physical coward, but I have exposed myself to every form of disease, accident, and violence; I am dainty and delicate, but I have driven myself to delight in dirty and disgusting debauches, and to devour human excrement and human flesh. I am at this moment defying the power of drugs to disturb my destiny and divert my body from its duty. I am also a mental and moral weakling, whose boyhood training was so horrible that its result was that my will wholly summed up in hatred of all restraint, whose early manhood, untrained, left my mind an animal soul like an elephant in rut broken out of the stockade. Yet I have mastered every mode of my mind, and made myself a morality more severe than any other in the world, if only by virtue of its absolute freedom from any code of conduct.'

He had a strong presentiment that something untoward and disastrous was about to happen. Things could not go on like this indefinitely. The activity of the Abbey had grown into a routine, but one of indifference instead of discipline. He urged that everyone should pull himself together and cast off sloth. They must all begin their magical work again and keep things up to standard, not just dart into the temple for an invocation or an oath when they felt like it. What does the Chinese Oracle say?

The answer was that they had come to the end of a cycle. The restrictions they were meeting, summarized The Beast, were of brute fact, beneath which their ideal was squashed. It wasn't a case of 'we want money and where the devil can we find it'? But of 'we must prove that it is possible to start with no assets beyond our own naked, bodily, mental and moral qualities'.

In the end Crowley had to stare the brute facts a little more closely in the face. They hadn't enough money to run the Abbey. They had better, therefore, earn some. But how? The Beast himself was the weakest link in the chain, having no experience whatsoever of earning a living or of doing any work, 'though my

¹ The French paper *Detective* called Crowley *Le Raspoutine anglais*.

ingenuity enables me to find a fairly good way of getting anything done when I want it done'. Alostrael was completely and hopelessly incompetent, but 'capable of unusual endurance'. Elizabeth Fox had no private bank balance to offer to The Beast. He took rather a poor view of her financial qualifications. And as for Frater Fiat Lux, although physically strong, and with experience of various jobs, such as typist, waiter, hospital attendant, he failed 'to make such work his magical formula'. In plain English he was no good either when it came to raising the wind. Finally, Sister Cypris, poor, hardworking, now thoroughly broken-in Ninette Shumway—well, she had her baby to look after.

The Chinese Oracle was consulted again on this question. The second half of the answer was puzzling. Each, it said, should work strictly according to his own nature; and reap where he has *not* sown.

'Does this suggest we should become Robber Barons?' queried Crowley.

The sun entered the sign of Gemini and in celebration of this event The Beast and his Scarlet Woman, Alostrael, performed a Work of the Gnosis to release the magical power of BABALON.

Then shall the Master appear as He should appear—in His glory. He shall stretch himself upon the altar, and awake it into life and into death.

The temple shall be darkened, save for the fire and the lamp of the altar.

There shall be kindled a great fire and a devouring.

Also He shall smite the altar with His scourge, and blood shall flow therefrom.

The next day The Beast took stock again of the lamentable position. He was being slowly killed by the python of poverty; his strength was being sapped by the knowledge that everything he did was useless.

He sprawled over his desk in the corner of his room which he had called *La Chambre des Cauchemars*, The Chamber of Nightmares (the walls of which were painted with horrors, or ennobling visions, according to one's point of view), his eyes flecked with tears. His Scarlet Woman, his Whore, gazed silently at his trembling figure. Suddenly the opium pipe fell from his small, woman-like hands.

Oh, in spite of everything, he could not remain silent: he must speak out, his Oath of Magus forced him to utter the Word to man.

'And yet I have done much, yes, more than any man has done for many centuries. For it has been given to me to utter a Word¹ whose virtue is to impose a new Law,² a new Magical Formula,

¹ Thelema.

² Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

upon the World; and I have the witness of my worst enemies themselves that my work has had more influence on initiated thought than that of any one else in my generation. So mighty among men is even my failure.'

Yes, he had fought the good fight, and accomplished part of the Great Work, so why now let the sword slip from his nerveless hand?

It was the Seventeenth Year of the Aeon, that is the seventeenth year since the Great Revelation in Cairo, or 1921 *era vulgari*. He had nothing to regret, nothing to fear; for he was in the hands of the gods. If they willed him to live and to continue the Great Work—so mote it be!

A stillness came over him. He slowly rose, removed, with mechanical precision, all his clothes, and with his heart beating fearfully entered the temple. He was going to take the Oath of Ipsissimus, the highest possible grade in the whole hierarchy of the Great White Brotherhood of Light, where stands the Lord of Life and Death Himself.

He was afraid of what he was about to do, afraid lest it might call forth from him 'some insane act to prove his power to act without attachment'.

He braced himself for the deed: to stand squarely before the phantom of his own defying and deriding self and announce that he, even he, was by insight and initiation The Ipsissimus.

I will invoke Insanity itself; but having thought the Truth, I will not flinch from fixing it in word and deed, whatever come of it. 9-34 p.m. As God goes, I go.

10.5 p.m. I am back at my desk, having done the deed, before The Scarlet Woman as my witness, I swore to keep silence, so long as I live, about the fact of my attainment. (The Scarlet Woman is not thus bound, of course.)

Having taken the oath, he described himself as in Samadhi, a state of the highest bliss, detachment, and enlightenment. He was 'nameless nature', Hegel's pure being, and like Hegel's pure being contained within himself the Absolute. There is nothing higher; there is nothing more. Crowley was in Samadhi and Crowley was God.

Cakes of Light for Mary Butts

At the end of June, 1921, Mary Butts and Cecil Maitland, accepting Crowley's invitation, arrived at the Abbey. The Beast's savage pen described Butts, who was then twenty-eight, as

'a fat, bold, red-headed slut . . . a white maggot. She was pompous, pretentious, and stupid. She gave herself out as a great authority on literature; but all her knowledge was parrot, and her own attempts in that direction the most deplorably dreary drivel that ever had been printed.'

For Maitland he felt slightly less aversion: after a long diatribe on his appearance and character, The Beast examined him under the magnifying glass of philosophy and classified him with Victor Neuberg.

'The great value of such men as Maitland and Neuberg to me has been to strengthen my conviction that in the absence of will-power the most complete collection of virtues and talents is wholly worthless.'

A calm was spread over the little community. Sister Metonith (Elizabeth Fox) was no longer gazing 'with dropped jaw and glassy eyes' at the obscene paintings on the walls of the Abbey. When she found, said Crowley, that the Thelemites were not, through their guiding principle of *Do what thou wilt*, 'shrieking with agony in the madhouse, the gaol or the lock hospital', she took all these conventions for granted. She had started a Great Magical Retirement in a tent in a nearby cave, which Crowley called 'Liz's hole'. Apart from a stone-throwing visit from some Sicilians who had decided that she was isolated on account of having the black death, and a raid from the police, all was well with her.

Maitland began with a swim in the bay (the Caldara) with The Beast, who seems to have tried his best to drown him. He lost portions of his skin but saved his life by making for the cliff and climbing the rough rocks to the top, to Crowley's immense amusement. The Knight Guardian of the Sacred Lance described him as bleeding all over by the time he regained his clothes. The following day the ceremony of preparing the Cakes of Light took place. All the Thelemites, except Sister Metonith, who was in a yoga trance in her sandy cave, were assembled on the hillside, beneath the brilliant sun. The Beast was draped from head to foot in a robe of black and crimson, a dagger in his hand. The horoscope and the Chinese Oracle were cast and consulted. As both gave their blessing the ceremony commenced.

The Beast faced the East, touched his forehead with the dagger, saying, *Ateh*; his breast, uttering the word *Malkuth*, then his right and left shoulder with *Ve-Geburah* and *Ve-Gedulah*. He sheathed the dagger, clasped his hands together, pronounced *Le-Olam*, and finally *Amen*, with the dagger between his upward-pointing fingers.

He struck the magic bell eleven times and chanted:

I burn the Incense-cake, proclaim
These adorations of Thy name.
Behold this bleeding breast of mine
Gashed with the sacramental sign!
I stanch the blood; the wafer soaks
It up, and the high priest invokes!
This Bread I eat. This Oath I swear
As I enflame myself with prayer:
'There is no grace: there is no guilt:
This is the Law: Do WHAT THOU WILT!'

A précis of this ceremony is given in *The Magical Record*.

'2.0 P. M. The Ceremony of Preparing the Cakes of Light. A young cock is to be baptized Peter Paul into the Catholic Church by C. J. A. Maitland, the son of an apostate Romish Priest, and therefore the ideal "Black" Hierophant. Mary Butts and I are its sponsors. Peter and Paul are the founders of the Christian Church, and we want the cock's blood to found our own Church.

'Alostrael then dances against the will of Mary, on my swearing to give to her the half of my Kingdom. She demands P.P.'s head on the Disk.

'I behead him, and the blood is caught in the silver "charger" on the Disk. In this charger is the meal &c. for the Cakes of Light, ready except for the blood.

'I conjure the spirit of P.P. to serve these Cakes to found our Church with, as we may use them.

'The cock is slain in honour of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, who is invoked before the killing.'

This ceremony lasted over two hours. It was Mary Butts's and Maitland's introduction to the religious life of the Abbey and a spectacle of some amazement to passing Sicilians, who stopped and stared. The same day Mary and her lover both signed the Oath of Affiliate.

During the next month Sir Frank Bennett, a seventh-degree member of the O.T.O., put ashore at Palermo and came on to Cefalù, seeking initiation and higher instruction under the personal guidance of the holy leader of the Order of Thelemites. Sir Frank Bennett¹ was a fifty-three-year-old Lancashire working man who had emigrated to New South Wales, where had had established a

¹ There was a rather unkind little notice about Mr. F. Bennett in the *Australian Manufacturer* thirteen years later. 'Crowley had another disciple in Sydney of the name of Bennett, whom I remember as a dull sort of person who used to frequent the old Roma café. He was credited with performing gyrations in the nude for the purpose of revealing occult secrets to the people who parted up fees at the rate of two or three guineas a time. Bennett is supposed to have been a member of Crowley's notorious settlement in Sicily.'

branch of the Order. But his title is misleading, like the letters M.D. which Crowley sometimes put after his name.

The new arrival caused a slight contretemps in the Abbey, for where was Sir Frank to sleep! An additional building had been acquired (called 'Under the Hill' in honour of Aubrey Beardsley; also '*Ad Umbilicum*', as it was the children's nursery); but accommodation was still insufficient for the friends and followers who were now crowding on to the Abbey.

Brother Progradior (to give Sir Frank his magical title) was Fiat Lux's superior both in age and rank, and therefore it was only right—even good manners—that F.L. should, temporarily, give up his room to him.

But Brother F.L. thought otherwise, for how could he carry on the Great Work without a private room for study and meditation? And he retired in a sulking fit.

It is depressing to read that in this young Brother's interpretation of the one rule of the Abbey, *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law*, should have been on such a low, non-magical level.

'I pointed out quite kindly,' wrote the head of the Abbey, 'the various considerations which applied. I might as well have talked to a turnip—better in fact, for a turnip's eyes would not have got bloodshot, nor swollen with blood almost to bursting.'

The tension increased. Sister Metonith, who had returned from her Great Magical Retirement, generously offered her room instead. She would, if necessary, go on another Magical Retirement. But Crowley rightly refused to accept this solution.

In the end The Beast picked up a towel and told Brother Fiat Lux that his work didn't matter a tinker's cuss and that he'd better be out of his room by the time he, Crowley, had returned from his bathe.

I have only The Beast's side of the story, but the situation is one which does not admit of many interpretations. After all, it was Crowley's Abbey.

The Beast came back from his swim and, finding Fiat Lux still adamant, retired to his room to ponder on the situation. Finally in his wisdom he decided it would be of enormous advantage to Fiat Lux's health if he took a holiday from the Abbey. He had been working far too hard recently, and The Beast was quite anxious about him.

The idea was proposed, but immediately interpreted by F.L. as a banishment. Instead of calmly going off to Palermo, in a rage, and provisionless, he flew up to the top of a nearby peak, called The Rock, under the self-imposed oath not to wash or to come down before eight days had passed.

He was still there the following morning. Sister Cypris, going

outside the Abbey and shading the sun from her eyes, saw him amid the scorched crags, pacing backwards and forwards like the possessed of Godara among the tombs. She felt so sorry for him; she preferred him to all the rest. She begged The Beast to intervene, urging that F.L. was irresponsible, that he was just a child who would behave differently if treated gently. But Crowley, although moved by her appeal, remained firm. He would do nothing; he had said all he had to say. At most, he would not prohibit any assistance Cypris might care to give him. 'Let him come down,' said the Knight Guardian of the Sacred Lance. 'He's up there by no will of mine. Whenever he chooses he can come down and eat and drink, and sit with us, clothed and in his right mind.'

So Sister Cypris, the Second Concubine of The Beast, somewhat neglected of late, filled a rucksack with food and drink and dragged herself up the sweltering slopes to a ruined stone hut which the delirious Brother 'Let there be light' had made his headquarters.

Crowley said that F.L. refused to speak to her, but accepted the water she offered, for without it he would have perished from thirst.

The next day saw the end of this drama. The Beast, who was dozing after lunch on a couch by the door of the Abbey, was suddenly awakened by a hoarse, angry shout of 'Aleister Crowley!'

With rolling eyes, unshaven and unkempt, and with the jerky, uncoordinated movements of the insane, Brother F.L. appeared, flung a rucksack at Crowley's feet, and ran off laughing wildly.

The rucksack contained some fragments of Fiat Lux's magical diary, described by Crowley as 'an incoherent jumble of crazy and violent cries', a diary of hatred against The Beast and his Whore, the Scarlet Woman. Its author had gone, fled along the road to Cefalù.

Arriving in the town, F.L. entered a barber's shop and ordered a shave. But he was no sooner thoroughly lathered than he remembered his oath not to let water touch his face for eight days, so he sprang up, bolted out of the shop, and stampeded down the street, the foam on his face flying in all directions.

'Poor — tried to smother his shame by piling pride upon it. His megalomania grew on him at a frightful pace. His conscience was crushed into a pulp, and his common sense scattered to the winds. Our relationship ended, bar occasional correspondence towards the end of the year, when he left us to go to Australia avowedly to help Frater Progradior in establishing the Law. However, he only stayed a short time in Sydney, and went back to America, where, free from all guidance or control, he broke out into a series of spasms of which I do not know the details,

and which are of little interest as being merely casual symptoms of a state of mind which I had already studied sufficiently.'

These were Crowley's last words on Frater Fiat Lux, a probationer of the A. ∴ A. ∴. The Beast had expected much from this young man, even that he might become his 'magical son', and continue the Great Work after the dryads had joyously carried off Crowley into the Underworld. In Fiat Lux Crowley thought he had found a Great Adept.

Come brother mine in the One Order, elect thy brow as mine to bear the Silver Star!

When The Beast saw his disciple fleeing from him his heart hardened. He had sought for community and found only treachery. And he re-entered the cave of his gloomy, impenetrable mind, cast the *Yi King* sticks, and waited for a sign.

* * *

The summer was drawing to an end. Mary Butts and Cecil Maitland had returned to Paris, filled with much *magick*. They had seen many a wonderful spectacle in the Abbey, such as a goat, symbol of generative power, possessing the Scarlet Woman, and, immediately afterwards, The Beast cutting its throat so that the blood spurted over Alostrael's fair, white back. Herodotus had observed the identical rite in ancient Egypt and called it a 'prodigy' (τέρας). The Thelemites were not original in their exhibitionism. This may be a modern perversion, but it has an ancient, non-perversed precedent. Athenaeus reports that the women of Thessaly considered it no disgrace to participate in sexual acts in front of everybody, and Crates of Thebes and Hipparchia consummated their marriage before onlookers.

Crowley praised Mary's clairvoyant capacity. Her visions were, at least, clear: she saw blue lights and on one occasion 'a huge Assyrian Bull demon'. Maitland heard voices from the astral plane. But they left, nevertheless, on the 16th September, after only three months' training at the *Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum*. According to their friend, the writer Douglas Goldring, they said that their sojourn at the Abbey had permanently injured their health and given them the drug habit.

Crowley painted, wrote essays and poems, devised impractical schemes, and anxiously probed the future. The Sun, with stately progress, entered the sign of Libra, and the digestive and respiratory systems of His viceregent on earth. The Beast 666, grew more disordered. He struggled against insomnia on the one hand and lassitude on the other. 'Yesterday afternoon I sank down exhausted

in the shade of a byre on the hillside, and slept on the stony ground for nearly three hours. When I awoke I was aware of a passionate impulse to bolt, bluff my way to England, and compel some of the thieves and traitors who have robbed me to restore my property.' He asked the Chinese Oracle, 'Shall I go to England immediately?' and was answered by, 'He has lost his horses, but let him not seek for them; they will return of themselves.'

The Abbey had been established for a year and a half. The Law of Thelema had been taught there by precept and practice, and the minds of his few disciples had been opened and enlarged. The Beast had thrust his way to the very top of the magical hierarchy by assuming the grade of Ipsissimus, and on frequent occasions he had made himself invisible; but he had only succeeded in achieving the Great Work in one of the esoteric meanings of the phrase: the act to produce children, coition.¹

The situation was summed up by Crowley in one sentence: 'There is a sort of formless horror "round the corner" so to speak.'

He received a letter from Erna, a lady whose identity I have been unable to discover. 'How shall I reply?' he asked the *Yi King*, and sat up straight at the answer: 'The little gone: the great come.'

A few days later he received another letter from Erna. She had decided to come to the Abbey. The thought of Erna was sufficient to fill him with enthusiasm. 'The feeling that Erna thinks of me as the important thing in her life is making me quite my old self.'

He went off alone to Palermo to meet her. While waiting for her to arrive he wrote in *The Magical Record*: 'For some Freudian reason I am as mad as hell this morning. I wish Erna to the devil. Symbol of sex-relations with Erna?' The *Yi King* replied, 'Restraint,' which he interpreted as 'Let the passions cook up slowly.'

Unfortunately both Erna and Leah arrived simultaneously, the latter with bad news from the bank. The Beast was pained to observe that Alostrael was succumbing to the unthelemic emotion of jealousy. That day he managed only to kiss Erna. He ordered Leah back to the Abbey and set his mind to the serious business of sex-magic with his new disciple.

He returned with Erna to the Abbey, and wrote in *The Magical Record*: 'Erna jealous of Leah.' Erna wanted The Beast to come with her to Nice, a proposition which appealed to the Knight Guardian of the Sacred Lance. The tension between Leah and Erna rose perilously. 'What shall I do?' he asked the Oracle. 'Be dignified,' was the reply. But it all quickly ended in a row and the hurried departure of Erna.

He directed his infinite longing towards another lady called Aimée, to whom he had already proposed marriage and been

¹ *Revue des Sociétés Secrètes.*

refused. He wrote to her again; then went to bed and dreamt that he had been made Pope 'by some illegal means'.

Soon Sister Cypris's elder sister arrived. There is a very unflattering account of Helen Fraux in *The Confessions*. Whatever the reasons, she did not get on with Crowley, or fit into his community, or like the Thelemic system of bringing up the children. After five weeks, following a severe altercation with The Beast, she, too, departed.

'The bowels of the Abbey moved at last, and H. Fraux was evacuated. The baffled malice in her shifty little spiteful pig's eyes was very interesting.'

On the way out, as a parting touch, she called upon the Palermo police and complained of all sorts of immoralities in the Abbey. The Sotto-Prefetto came to look for himself, poked around, found nothing, and withdrew.

'The Fountain of Hyacinth'

THERE is a break in *The Magical Record*. Suddenly, towards the end of January, 1922, this strange narrative ceases. The Beast had prowled from his lair and gone abroad; he had left the long hours for jotting down every thought and a description of every spasm which came to him.

The little red pocket-book, with the symbol for the sun on the title page, and the Wanderer of the Waste among the names of its author, gives some exact dates. On the 30th January he arrived at Palermo on his way to Paris.

'Greeted New Moon, very clear and brilliant.'

Two days later he was in Naples, and the following Monday, exactly a week after he had left the Abbey, he arrived in Paris. Then, on the 14th February, he went alone to Fontainebleau, the town whence, two years before, he had set off to Cefalù with such high hopes.

Liber 2221, subtitled *The Fountain of Hyacinth*, now helps to fill the gap. He was staying at an inn called *Au Cadran Bleu*. He had come there for a purpose. These two ruled copybooks, written on one side of the page in Crowley's slashing handwriting, are the diary of a drug addict, the record of a regimen imposed to overcome a habit which leads rapidly to misery, insanity, and death.

'I, The Beast 666, wishing to prove the strength of my Will and the degree of my courage, have poisoned myself for the last two years and have succeeded finally in reaching a degree

¹ The Book of the Host.

of intoxication such that the withdrawal of the drugs (heroin & cocaine) produces a terrible attack by the "Storm Fiend"¹ The acute symptoms arise suddenly, usually on awakening from a nap.'

His brain cells had been poisoned by drugs. All the symptoms are recorded in *The Magical Record*: a tormenting itching of the skin, vomiting, insomnia, diarrhoea, inflammation of the mouth—to mention some of the physical effects. He was going to pieces; the brake must be put on. Heroin (two or three times stronger than morphine), which had been prescribed for his asthma by a Harley Street physician on his return from America, had been his final undoing. 'The formless horror round the corner' was an apprehension of insanity.

Crowley knew the dangers of drugs; he also knew the heights of pleasure to which they could take one. He therefore concluded that they should be the food only for the gods, great poets, the strong and kingly men: such as was Aleister Crowley.

'Look at this shining heap of crystals! They are Hydrochloride of Cocaine. The geologist will think of mica; to me, the mountaineer, they are like those gleaming feathery flakes of snow, flowering mostly where rocks jut from the ice of crevassed glaciers, that wind and sun have kissed to ghostliness. To those who know not the great hills, they may suggest the snow that spangles trees with blossoms glittering and lucid.'

Those who seek the ecstatic moment, at no matter what cost, let them take drugs. 'There is a happy land, far, far away,' wrote Aleister Crowley, quoting from a hymn, in his essay on cocaine.

'Give it to no matter whom. Choose me the last losel on the earth; let him suffer all the tortures of disease; take hope, take faith, take love away from him. Then look, see the back of that worn hand, its skin discoloured, and wrinkled, perhaps inflamed with agonizing eczema, perhaps putrid with some malignant sore. He places on it that shimmering snow, a few grains only, a little pile of starry dust. The wasted arm is slowly raised to the head that is little more than a skull; the feeble breath draws in that radiant powder. Now we must wait. One minute—perhaps five minutes.

'Then happens that miracle of miracles, as sure as death, and yet as masterful as life; a thing more miraculous, because so sudden, so apart from the usual course of evolution. *Natura non facit saltum*. True, therefore, this miracle is a thing as it were against nature.'

¹ The demon who sends down avalanches on Kangchenjunga: it was Crowley's expression for an asthmatic attack.

He had taken drugs for the Great Work, begun with Allan Bennett in Chancery Lane, to part the veils of the world of matter, to discover the philosopher's stone, to establish the Law of Thelema.

'I possess a secret remedy which I call laudanum,' wrote Paracelsus 300 years before.

And Aleister Crowley :

'Mine inmost identity says: "To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet, and be drunk thereof!"¹ It is lawful to do this, for to worship Him is to make Him manifest, and so to fill the world with truth and beauty.'

But, alas, he had gone too far. He had erred, the worship had become forced, and fallen into frenzy which blasphemes Him.

'He bids us also to "exceed by delicacy", to "drink by the eight and ninety rules of art"; but I have exceeded by depravity and drunk by the three hundred and thirty-three rules of the toper.'

Restlessness, another symptom of drug poisoning, had obliged him to pack up and retrace his steps.

'Part of my plan in coming here is to dig up the bitter memories which had been killing me. I was so happy and hopeful here two years ago; and now my little Poupée has been dead over a year, and her little brother never came to birth; and my manhood part is crushed.'

He had been taking heroin continuously; three or four doses to help him get up, and doses at short intervals *practically all day*. At the same time he had been having 'two or three prolonged bouts of cocaine every week'. He does not divulge in *Liber 228* the amount of these heroin doses. But it is clear from this record, and from other references, that the total daily dosage added up to at least four or five grains, a phenomenal quantity which only Crowley's strong constitution and his body's acquired toleration could withstand.

And the result? He had become listless and idle. Everything bored him. He was unable to count his money, inspect bills, enjoy a meal or a drink. He grew indifferent to washing and shaving; his memory became dull; his creative life stopped. He was surprised that so complete a cachexia should be unaccompanied by even the slightest mental derangement; for he could find in him-

¹ *The Book of the Law*.

self no traces of hallucination, of persecution mania, or of tendencies to duplicity or concealment, and no delusions or defects of judgment. He joked about his inability to sleep. Did he sleep at all? he asked himself, and gave the reply: only at the extreme of exhaustion, 'say after fifteen hours' painting and dictating, followed by perhaps six hours' sexual frenzy, reinforced by veronal and heroic doses of strong alcoholic drinks'.

During the first day at *Au Cadran Bleu* he went for a walk before dinner, avoided alcohol, and sniffed heroin and cocaine until eight o'clock. When he finally went to bed he tossed and turned for most of the night. He was awake at nine-thirty the following morning. 'Struggled hard to get up, but relapsed and slept till after 11.' About midday he went for a walk, ate a light lunch; then, at three-thirty, he returned to his hotel, fagged out and retired for a nap. He recorded his walk: 'The breath of the forest hit me like a club the moment I left the town. I felt cured of everything. I broke into a series of storms of sobbing; great relief.'

He slept for half an hour and was then seized by the Storm Fiend 'with terrible and unendurable violence'. He suffered for four minutes and drove away the phantom with a big sniff of heroin. But relief, although instantaneous, was only partial. 'The residual symptoms abated slowly, and I was normal, nearly, at 4.17. From then I got worse again slowly.' From four-thirty till six o'clock he took four doses of heroin, two small doses, a medium, and a big dose.

He had devised a simple plan for his cure. The day was divided into an Open and a Close Season; times for taking heroin and cocaine and times when they were strictly forbidden. The Open Season was to be decreased each day by an hour, until it was squeezed right out. The exception to the rule was when the Storm Fiend was 'actually on the job', as he lightly put it. He did not wish to cure himself so completely that he would no longer want to take drugs (they were, after all, part of his magic), but to maintain a pleasant equilibrium with them, as he had always been able to do. One can give up opium by taking morphine instead. An ingenious gentleman of Hong Kong 'cured' a large number of addicts in this way.¹ Fortified by heroin, Crowley found he could bravely dispense with cocaine 'right away'. He commented:

'One returns to it [cocaine] from the normal impulse to "get going". This impulse appears to depend upon external circumstances. (I am now, by the way, slightly intoxicated [with heroin]—positively pleased, not merely negatively relieved by the 5 doses of the last 2 hours.)

¹ *Phantastica*, L. Lewin.

'I am combating my access of hunger for the drug by strychnine and by eating.'

Like a good country doctor, he advised himself to stop thinking about his craving. The hunger for heroin, he reasoned, was in part caused by the mental obsession. If his mind were distracted, if he had something to do, this would help outwit the Storm Fiend. His most distressing symptom was his insomnia.

Other aids for his cure were: (1) Use of 'IX° formula' (sex-magic); (2) Hard physical exercise every day, with a walk of at least half an hour after dinner) (3) Hydrotherapy—a hot bath with eau-de Cologne rub before going to bed, and a cold bath on waking; (4) Alcohol before retiring; (5) Soporific, unless asleep within half an hour of lying down.

His programme for the third day was: forced waking at half past eight. Breakfast, bath, walk. Lunch in forest. No heroin until 1 p.m. And then doses at pleasure until curfew at 6 p.m.

Whether or not he managed to struggle up at half past eight he does not say, but at half past six in the evening, i.e. half an hour after 'Curfew', he took a medium dose of heroin. He made the honest comment in his record:

'This was a real indulgence in the worst sense of the word. It has occurred very frequently that I have taken a dose for reasons at present utterly unfathomable. (This is a confession indeed, for Me, who claim to be the foremost living psychologist!) There is not the slightest discomfort to be removed, or the faintest wish to reach some still superior state. It is an absolutely perverse impulse.'

A quarter of an hour later he helped himself again. '6.45 p.m. Small dose. Taken partly to prove to myself that I was not alarmed by the reflection above set down.'

This was, of course, only a rationalization, and Crowley knew it. In a melancholy mood he wrote down 'certain pathological points', extending the catalogue of his ills. A year ago he noticed that his sight, which had always been so good, was weakening: now it had grown worse. There was an increasing indifference to matters of 'cleanliness and vanity'; and there were 'alarming mental symptoms' which could be summed up as a feeling that nothing was worth while.

'Medium dose. Excuse, a perverted sense of duty. The clock had struck 7. There are several audible clocks in the town, and I wanted to assert my right to take a last dose between the competing chimes.'

Idiosyncratic and poetic—but so much for curfew! He was now 'nice drunk', as Alostrael would say. The day had been one of anguish and defeat. As he had lumbered about the forest 'Poupée had peeped from every alley. I think of her now without the least tendency to emotion of any kind at all; it is even hard to remember that I ever regretted her for an instant.'

Fuddled, he put a cigar in his mouth 'as the safest place', intending to smoke it after dinner, but instead lit it immediately, and only discovered his error after he had half smoked it.

'I am now not only "nice drunk" but "very drunk", not far short of "bloody drunk". My eyes are swimming; my ears are singing; I feel "floppy"; and I radiate beatitude of the most beatific blessedness. My middle name is Benedict; they call me Felix for short.'

The ghosts of his old friends, Kelly, Back, Eckenstein, Bennett, from whom he had long since parted, floated in from outside and took up their places around him. He was enjoying 'a formless ecstasy', unsurpassed by anything in his experience. He must take courage. 'Be strong, then canst thou have more rapture,' he quoted. It had not been a day of defeat; on the contrary . . . the nectar he had drunk could not have served him better.

'It is my will to eat and drink that my body may be fortified thereby that I may accomplish the Great Work. *En avant, Pegase!*'

At ten past ten he had dinner; he seems to have thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the wine; then he sallied out to the local brothel.

'I went to number 4 and number 6, to look for a female primate, genus *Homo Rapiens*; the best of a banal bunch was a short and sturdy creature called Paulette. I hardly felt justified in robbing Pierrette to pay her! I drank a vieux Marc and a Cointreau to pay my footing.'

He came home in the rain to bed. End of a perfect day; and at one o'clock in the morning he wrote in *The Book of the Host*: 'The mechanism of insomnia is extremely interesting. . . .' He then fell asleep.

He began the new day by making some observations. Heroin, which stopped at once the distressing symptoms of his bronchitis, had no effect on his asthma; if anything, left it worse than before.

'I feel no temptation to take heroin in order to acquire strength to get up. Things could hardly seem more favourable; but of course they may be the prelude to all sorts of horrors.'

'12.0. Awake at last after several relapses.'

He had to pay for his extravagance of yesterday. The weather was damp and dull and his thoughts and feelings were damper and duller. After lunch he crawled up the Rocher d'Avon and described his mood as without enthusiasm, vigour, or courage. He observed that, as the important part of the treatment was to increase the period of abstinence, and as heroin postpones sleep, he must be very rigid about curfew, but, letting out the line at the other end, 'allow a little latitude to reveille'. He sniffed heroin the whole afternoon.

'There is a dull malaise, combined lack of any interest in anything, & the knowledge that Cocaine would put me right at once. Cocaine is barred altogether, of course. The reason is this. The hunger for it is strictly normal, and a man ought to be able to master his normal passions. Physical torture, on the other hand, simply throws the moral apparatus out of gear. . . .

'I was slightly asthmatic, by the way, during my whole walk today. But I felt no temptation to take any cocaine on that score. I am tempted strongly, though, now—for I resent the tedium of my state. I want to smoke, eat, read, write, drink, and sleep—all at once; & I cannot settle to any one of these with the least enjoyment. The feeling resembles that of subconscious worry. But I am unable to worry about anything, my affairs, Leah, old memories, nothing seems to matter. I want to be able to get into some positive state of mind, no odds on what subject; and I can't. Only cocaine could help me, and I won't take it.'

The strain increased; he felt a strong urge to throw the whole cure overboard and plunge into a heroin and cocaine jag.

'5.15 p.m. Heavy with sleep, & on the verge of "nice drunk."

'5.28. Small dose. I did not want this dose; but I want to take 7 in the 3 hours, so as not to diminish the ration too quickly. I want to take 6 doses tomorrow, for prudence's sake, and yet to take one less than on the previous day. If I took 6 today & 6 tomorrow, I might feel that I was failing to make progress; while tomorrow it might well be that 5 were not enough to carry me over till Saturday.'

His spirits picked up after dinner. He had not broken curfew, and after being revived by coffee and two glasses of brandy he took a short walk,

'feeling as I used to in 1896 on a bright May morning in a new suit, strolling up Trinity Street.

'I wish to note that one of the nuisances connected with the legends current as to the effects of drug-taking is that one is apt to attribute any and every unpleasant symptom either to addiction or to abstinence . . . after a bad night and weary walk in wet weather I wonder whether my asthma, depression and other disagreeable phenomena are due to (a) lack of cocaine, (b) too much cocaine, (c) too much heroin, (d) too little heroin. The fundamental trouble about drugs is then that they tend to obsess one.'

He decided that he had nothing to fear. He was far from being a drug addict. But:

'There is yet, I regret to say, one super-subtle whisper: is not your freedom from apprehension a device of "the devil" to induce you to disdain your manifold precautions, and to go on the loose in order to show your superiority to the whole situation?'

Ether, hashish, mescal, opium, and morphine had, he said, no habit forming influence on him whatever. On the contrary, he had had only the most pleasant and profitable experiences from them. But as for heroin and cocaine, they had caused him a lot of annoyance—he is shy of the word 'addiction'. One sniff of heroin and most of his unpleasant symptoms 'depart unceremoniously'. And without heroin life was hell.

'3.58 p.m. Medium dose. This final dose was taken with a certain anguish (I use this word as equivalent to *angoisse*) which I instantly recognized as saying: "All very well for today but what about tomorrow when the limit is 4 doses?"'

As he cut down the Open Season the misery increased.

'2 a.m. One spasm follows another, each ending in complete exhaustion. I have tried inhaling eau-de-Cologne: no good, I will make one last stand at Fort Vaux.

'2.31 a.m. Useless sacrifice of human life. Retire on second line. *Ils ne passeront pas.*'

After curfew this day he took one small dose which brought 'relief very slight'.

Almost immediately after that he took a larger, a medium, dose, and felt almost calm. Then, ten minutes later, another medium dose.

'I could almost certainly have cut short the attack with less

trouble if I had not let it go so far. I am "all in" from exhaustion—every muscle aching from the strain—breath still quick and laboured—traces of "phlegm-ball" still in throat.'

Touched with remorse at these lapses, he decided to consider the three above doses as borrowed; they must be paid back by abstentions during the next Open Season.

Moods of elation alternated with his depressions. As soon as he felt things were going right, his confidence returned.

'I have made one gigantic stride towards recovery. I have regained my belief in myself as a World-Force.'

He had not the faintest idea how *The Book of the Host* could ever be published (with other MSS. it was, in fact, seized by his creditors when in 1935 he was made bankrupt), but he could still write:

'I am tremendously encouraged by the thought that this record will be a model which may serve men to work out their own mastery of "habits" without compulsion or alien assistance.'

And in the depressive phase of his feelings he wondered, indifferently, whether he would be dead by the morning.

What had happened to the cure? He had expected success too soon. He thought he had broken the back of the habit after a week, but at the end of a month he was still feeling seedy and taking 'extra' doses of heroin.

Thoughts of Alostrael occasionally floated to his mind. He missed her; he needed her. Soon he packed up and went to Paris, where they met. It was not a successful meeting. For the first time since they had faced each other in New York in 1918 a dividing gulf appeared at their feet. His cure was a failure, and his love for the Ape of Thoth, a curse.

'This whole period since my return to Paris can be summarized "From Bad to Worse". Leah is violent spiritual poison to me. We love deeply and truly; we sympathize; we do all we can to help each other; but we act on each other like cancer.'

As for his heroin habit, he must find some other way to cure it. And he sat down and wrote to a certain Dr. Edmund Gros, telling him the whole story and asking him to find a sanatorium for him where he could direct his own treatment. For

'to submit to medical treatment would be to destroy my whole theory, and blaspheme the Gods whose chosen minister I am.'

After an interview with Dr. Gros, who prescribed luminal and suggested a sanatorium in Divonne-les-Bains, Aix, he felt better, and decided to continue curing himself.

He returned to Fontainebleau, and one spring evening, in the twilight, he struck the magic bell, uttered the holy names, and called upon Aiwass, his Holy Guardian Angel.

That Thou leave Thine abodes and habitations, to concentrate about me, invisible, intangible, as a shroud of darkness. . . .

Behind the locked door of his room in the Blue Dial he cried out for succour. And it did seem to him that there, amid the darkness, a presence moved.

I am the Lord of Thebes, and I
The inspired forth-speaker of Mentu:
For me unveils the veiled sky,
The self-slain Ankh-f-n-Khonsu
Whose words are truth. I invoke, I greet
Thy presence, O Ra-Hoor-Khuit!

From this invocation he expected only 'great good fortune' to come to him. He did not try to divine what this might be. The gods proceed in mysterious ways, and he was in their hands entirely.

A few days later a young Englishman, called Wright, turned up to see him.

From 8.30 p.m. to 1.30 a.m. Crowley expounded to him the Law of Thelema; and when Wright retired The Beast was highly pleased. Was this young man the 'great good fortune' promised by Aiwass? They had understood each other perfectly, and Wright, who felt it in him to be a leader of men, had recognized the greatness of Crowley's word for mankind. Thelema was a battle-cry! Crowley thought pleasantly about Wright during the night while he struggled with his insomnia. Here was another disciple for the Abbey. Leah could make him their Commander-in-Chief in the field.

'He is in financial straits because of his pride—his! The poor parasite of the terrene crust who could be God's Archangel if he would only do his Will.'

Crowley's practical plan for this young man, sent by Aiwass, was that he should immediately wire his mother for funds. The Beast mentioned two likely sums, one of which he should ask for, £93 or £418, both numbers, especially the latter, of high Thelemic significance.

He speedily worked out a course of action. Wright should report at once to Alostrael and say: 'I am the babe in the egg; in you is all power given; The Beast has sent me to take command of the active promulgation of the Law; and I am the First of those who work under the new regimen'.

Meanwhile Crowley went on taking heroin and cocaine, in and out of season, until he could write down that nothing mattered any more to him but the Great Work, just as Van Gogh had cried out that he only painted to escape from the misery of his existence. But unlike the painter, he couldn't make up his mind. For in Crowley there was always the wretchedness of doubt: he wished to die but he still had the strength to live; and amid the encircling wall of madness gleamed a streak of sanity, or something which looked like sanity. His measure of sanity, perhaps, is in his wish to go mad.

'I invoke Aiwass to break down my resistance, to whirl me away in the wind of His word, so that I rage ruthlessly through the world like a dust-devil in the desert. I invoke Him to destroy my consciousness of everything but His current. If that is the equivalent of insanity, very good: sanity has not so many claims that I should cling to the old coarse creature when the adulterous arms of my hot harlot are open, and her wet red mouth pants with passion, and her eyes gleam with evil glamour, and her belly twitches with savage spasms, while she hails me hoarsely with a voice, vividly vicious, screaming its horror around the brazen domes of hell.'

Wright had first to be initiated into the Order of the Silver Star. His message, or magical motto, was—Crowley chose carefully for him—'I am unique and a conqueror'.

Opening his little red notebook on a clean page, Crowley wrote: 'I, Nathaniel Timothy Wright, in the presence of The Beast 666, solemnly pledge myself to the Great Work,' and offered it to his new disciple to sign, but Mr. Wright, thinking better of it, refused to do so and brought down upon his head instead the anathema of The Beast.

People came to Crowley for help. He was the wonder-worker who could cure them of all their ills, and not by the hard but the easy path. There was no one more keen to discuss their problems. The surging desire of the aspirant swelled from his breast till he felt the very gates of heaven must burst open before his eyes. The conversation went on long past midnight. The brandy bottle was drained. Finally the seeker after truth and harmony staggered off into the darkness burning with hope and enthusiasm, his ears echoing the battle-cry of this strangest of men: *Do what thou*

wilt shall be the whole of the Law! And only later, perhaps, he would wonder why the author of this creed for redeeming humanity had eyes that glittered so, and why he greedily sniffed up every now and again a mysterious white powder.

There is no doubt that Crowley possessed hypnotic power. With his penetrating gaze, he could stir the depths, and influence the actions, of the person he desired. As this book goes to press, Mrs. Eileen Bigland tells me the following story—it was told to her by her mother:

There was once a beautiful, rich and titled woman. She was also happily married. One day, while up in town from her country home, she was returning to her hotel, the Ritz, and stopped to look into the window of Fortnum & Mason. Suddenly she became aware of a presence—something remote and yet terrifyingly close. With a start she glanced up and saw the reflection in the window-pane of a man standing behind her.

The stranger introduced himself. His name was Aleister Crowley. He was a poet. The two vanished into the Ritz, where they remained for ten days. Shortly afterwards her marriage broke up.

Crowley Upsets James Douglas

NEITHER Crowley nor Leah—who also was suffering from drug poisoning, and, she feared, from tuberculosis of the lungs—was in a hurry to get back to the Abbey. Should she go to Switzerland for a cure? Or to London? The Chinese Oracle seemed to suggest London, so The Beast looked towards England and decided that the return to his native land would be 'like the self-immolation and self-renewal of the Phoenix'.

Clad in Highland dress, and with his face well painted and powdered, he set off for London, his Scarlet Woman on his arm. This was his best, and only, outfit. He had recently retrieved it from the cleaner's, where, with two other tartan kilts, a green military tunic, and a waistcoat of many colours, it had been waiting for him since 1914. In the Hotel Christol, at Hardelot, near Boulogne, he was mistaken for an absconding financier with a price on his head and arrested. His disguises were pulled off him—beneath his glengarry cap he was wearing a jet-black, frizzy wig. No, he protested, he was not Gerard Lee Bevan the crook, but Aleister Crowley the distinguished English poet and mountaineer, and he produced in addition to his passport Guillarmod's

book on the expedition to Chogo Ri, which contained his photograph. This incident greatly elated him. By the time the detectives released him, his boat had left, 'but I had not enjoyed myself so much in five years'.

During the first week of May they arrived in London, where, after the First World War, it was as difficult to find accommodation as it is after the second. The Beast, however, was assisted by circumstances of magic. His old friend, Gwendoline Otter, had advised him not to trudge back to his Hotel in Russell Square, but to look for something in Chelsea. He wandered along the King's Road, and coming to Wellington Square, inspiration told him to try the sacred numbers, especially the Secret Key to *The Book of the Law*, 31. A furniture van was outside the door of Number 31—the landlady herself was just moving in, and there was still a vacant room or two. 'The bow drawn at venture had hit the ideal at the first twang of the string,' wrote Crowley gleefully.

He called on Austin Harrison, the editor of *The English Review*, and the July (1922) issue of this magazine printed three of Crowley's articles under three different pseudonyms, all in the same florid style and with the same undercurrents of Thelemic propaganda. At least one other article was taken by *The English Review* for a future number, and Crowley's contributions might have continued had he been able to avoid quarrelling with Harrison. According to Crowley, they disagreed over the fees.

'He would argue for an hour that he had said pounds and not guineas. I can hardly explain why I enjoy watching such contemptible wriggings. I suppose it is the same sort of fascination as makes one stop to watch a street squabble between two prostitutes.'

Whether the *Yi King* had prophesied it or not, a piece of good fortune suddenly came his way. Sullivan had suggested to him that he should take the idea of writing his autobiography to Grant Richards, the well-known publisher, who had a reputation for treating sympathetically poets and magicians. There was a good chance, thought Sullivan, of Richards' commissioning this work and Sullivan, who knew Richards, promised to put in a good word for him.

Grant Richards was dubious about the success of such an undertaking; he also found Crowley's terms unacceptable. As a last throw The Beast suggested, entirely on the spur of the moment, that he should write instead a 'shocker' on the drug traffic; this would be a welcome relief from the epidemic of novels on the white slave traffic.

Crowley argued warmly; he knew something about drugs. He had travelled widely in the East, and recently in America, and

had come across enough evidence of illicit cocaine and heroin sniffing. He sketched out a brief synopsis on a sheet of note-paper, entitling it there and then *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*.

Grant Richards excused himself from undertaking such a work; it wasn't his line of country; he suggested Hutchinson or Collins. Neither publisher meant anything to Crowley, but he looked in at Collins's first 'because he was on my way home'.

The gods had directed his steps to the right place. Through the recommendation of J. D. Beresford, the novelist, who was Collins's adviser and whom Crowley had met fifteen years before, the projected book on the drug traffic was accepted, the contract signed, and an advance royalty of £60 paid.

Crowley got down to the job with alacrity. Alostrael had gone back to Paris, so he sent her a wire telling her to return immediately; and as soon as she arrived he began dictating the novel in his room overlooking Wellington Square.

The Diary of a Drug Fiend is the story, of two people, Sir Peter and Lady Pendragon, who, seeking to heighten their pleasures by heroin, ruin their health and lose their sanity instead. At a stage when they seem to be in an inextricable mess, they are saved by a mysterious man of unusual fascination and strength, King Lamus, who takes them to his Abbey of Telepylus, where they are promptly cured and made whole again.

Sir Peter Pendragon was a composite figure, but Crowley said he drew the worst elements in his character from Cecil Maitland, and the darker elements from himself for King Lamus. One of the characters says about King Lamus:

"I don't know how he dares to come to England at all. He lives in a place called Telepylus, wherever that is. He's over a hundred years old, in spite of his looks. He's been everywhere, and done everything, and every step he treads is smeared with blood. He's the most evil and dangerous man in London. He's a vampire, he lives on ruined lives."

Of course King Lamus wasn't really like this, but it is nice to frighten people!

When Sir Peter and his drug-crazed wife arrived at the Abbey, Crowley could not refrain from delivering another blow at Mary Butts and Cecil Maitland. Says King Lamus:

"We had two people last year, absolutely hopeless rotters. They called themselves writers, and imagined they were working if they retired solemnly after breakfast and produced half a page of piffle by lunch. But they didn't know the meaning of work; and the place nearly drove them insane. They were bored with the Abbey. . . ."

The Diary of a Drug Fiend was a good effort. It requires ability to write within a few weeks even an indifferent book. Crowley had reserves of strength and creativeness. Three months earlier he had been almost dead from heroin poisoning. 'I think I have killed myself pretty thoroughly all over at last; it is rare that a severed antenna twitches,' was one of the last entries in *Liber צבא*. He had been in the same dismal state as Sir Peter and Lady Pendragon, and no Mr. King Lamus had come to his rescue; and the real Abbey of Thelema, haunted by formless horrors, from which he had fled, was far different from the idyllic Abbey in *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*. I wonder whether the contrast ever struck Leah Faesi, the Abbey's Virgin Guardian, as she took down the happy ending at Telepylus, set within scenery she knew so well? Apparently not, for the Abbey at Cefalù, devoid of all personal privacy, and with all sorts of people blowing in, staying a while, and blowing out again, was the first home she could call her own. She infinitely preferred it to the prim little New York apartment with cut glass and her mother as housekeeper. And then there was no comparison in her mind between her former dull existence as singing mistress and her present exalted position as Scarlet Woman to Aleister Crowley, who was the Prophet of the Sun and of the God of War and Vengeance, Ra-Hoor-Khuit. No, Leah was completely identified with her master's demoniac hopes.¹ For the first time in Crowley's life a firm of commercial publishers had paid him to write a book. From Alostrael's diary, *The Magical Diary of Babalon*, we know that she considered *The Drug Fiend* to be one of the great events in The Beast's life, the reward of the gods.

He had also discussed with Collins his *magnum opus*, *The Confessions*, and given them a synopsis of the work. On the day he delivered the completed manuscript of *The Drug Fiend*, Collins agreed to publish *The Confessions*, a work which would be half a million words or more, and gave him a cheque for £120 as an advance royalty.

Alostrael's work was now done. *The Confessions* would wait. London's atmosphere was bad for her lungs, so Crowley sent her back to the Abbey. It would be uncharitable to suggest that he wanted to get rid of her. However, when back in Cefalù, a love affair with one of the town's personalities soon put her right. Crowley notes with satisfaction in his little red book that by this method she cured herself completely.

Four months after the delivery of the MS. *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* was published. *The Times Literary Supplement*, sagest of literary reviews, pointed out that it had neither the literary fascination of a De Quincey nor the power and stark realism of a Zola, but 'the book teems both with an immense

¹ From the diary of Leah Faesi.

fertility of incidents and idea; and with an amazingly rich crop of rhetoric'. And, to quote their final verdict, 'It is all a phantasmagoria of ecstasies, despairs, and above all verbiage': a summary which, I think, hits the nail on the head.

It gathered the usual indifferent review. No one hailed it as a work of genius. Within a month or two it would have been submerged by other novels, but suddenly it was introduced to the widest possible public, for the egregious James Douglas—to use Mr. V. S. Pritchett's well-chosen adjective for him—selected it as the subject of his article in the *Sunday Express*. Douglas, who had denounced Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* for its 'ordure and blasphemy', coupled *The Drug Fiend* with James Joyce's *Ulysses* (a real blunder as far as literary parallels are concerned, their only similarity being that Douglas disliked both books), called for its immediate extirpation, and described it as 'an ecstatic eulogy of the drug'.

I do not see how this charge can be maintained. Whatever were Crowley's private habits, the novel was far from being propaganda for drug-eating. On the contrary, the account of the dismal effects of the habit offered a sufficient warning. But Crowley had, of course, advertised himself and his Order in the novel. Before the third and last section was this notice:

'The Abbey of Thelerna at "Telepylus" is a real place. It and its customs and members, with the surrounding scenery, are accurately described. The training there given is suited to all conditions of spiritual distress, and for the discovery and development of the "True Will" of any person. Those interested are invited to communicate with the author of this book.'

There were quite a number of responses. One applicant wrote:

'Dear Sir,—Your amazingly interesting book, *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, has left a vivid impression on my mind, and I wonder if your friends at the Abbey of Thelerna could possibly help me discover what *my* Will is? I am quite serious about this, so please do not imagine that I am indulging in any "funny business".'

'I was born in Ireland (where I spent the first twenty years of my life), and have travelled extensively in North and South America, with shorter visits to the Continent. I served in the Boer War of 1899, and also in the last little scrap, but was knocked out at Gallipoli. In all these years I have been connected with soft goods—first in shops and warehouses and, since 1917, as the Representative of a New York firm. I have no love for the game, and have only succeeded in making a com-

fortable living by it, but apparently I am doomed to spend the whole of my life among soft goods!

'My only hobbies are Music, Photography and Amateur Theatricals, and I have one obsession. I have a positive mania to be the slave of practically any good-looking youth who crosses my path! Please do not jump to the conclusion that I am simply a degenerate of the Oscar Wilde type. I have never been "intimate" with any human being in my life, and have no desire for sexual intercourse of any kind, though I feel quite sure that if any man (for whom I had any affection) wanted to abuse me I should not refuse his request. The dominant desire is just *to serve*, with a morbid wish to be whipped by any youth who captivates my fancy. This mania has been with me for over twenty years, but it has only been indulged on two separate occasions—once in New York in 1909 and in London in 1919—by two youths who took me at my word and flogged me, just for sheer devilment I suppose, and I enjoyed the experience, but neither of the boys would continue the game.

'That is my story, and I wonder if your friends can help me overcome this mental "habit". It has not interfered with my health or business, and is, of course, unsuspected by my nearest friends. Perhaps this will not be within the scope of your Order, but I could not let the opportunity pass. I have no real bent of any kind, and yet I feel that I am a square peg in a round hole—the only dominant desire I possess is the will to serve others. Trusting that your Order may be able to help me find my "Will", I remain,' &c.

'You don't tell me your age,' replied Crowley, 'but you can't be very old, and messing around with these assorted nuts may find you a very dry and dusty raisin at 50. Come to me that I may trample you underfoot and press out wine for the Lord Dionysus.'

The following Sunday the *Express* attacked again, and with new ammunition, for they had meanwhile interviewed Mary Butts. 'COMPLETE EXPOSURE OF "DRUG FIEND" AUTHOR. Black Record of Aleister Crowley. Preying on the Debased. His Abbey. Profligacy and Vice in Sicily' were the headlines on the front page.

'The story of the bestial orgies conducted by Aleister Crowley in Sicily sounds like the ravings of a criminal lunatic, made mad by his own depravity . . . unspeakable orgies, impossible of description.'

And a certain Mrs. E—— Z——, who had known Crowley in

America, added her drop to the ocean by telling the *Sunday Express* that the Master Therion had given two lectures at her house and borrowed money from her.

The Beast had returned to his Abbey and was reading the *Sunday Express* in the Mediterranean sunshine. After consulting the *Yi King* on his line of action, he dictated a letter to Lord Beaverbrook urging fair play and an independent inquiry. To some extent he enjoyed these reviews of his character: they gave him a sense of power, but he was annoyed with the *Sunday Express*. Obviously the founder of a new religion would be attacked and vilified by the supporters of the old. And he made the sign of the Pentagram and dismissed the unhappy thoughts from his mind.

What is bad about *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* is not its ideas but its style. To have attacked it for immorality, because of the reputation of its author, was to stir up mud. Messrs William Collins and Sons replied to James Douglas by announcing their intention of selling as many copies of the novel as they could, but after the second onslaught in the *Sunday Express* they allowed the book to go out of print and decided to drop Crowley.

The Gods Claim a Victim

IN the summer of 1922 an Oxford undergraduate called Raoul Loveday—his real Christian names were Frederick Charles—married an artists' model known in London's bohemian circles as Betty May. Loveday was her third husband.

The ring slipped from Raoul's nervous fingers and rolled into a corner of the Oxford registry office—an evil omen, exceeded only by a mysterious, ectoplasmic-like outline of a young man lying horizontally above Raoul's head in a photograph of the married couple taken in the gardens of St. John's College on the afternoon of the same day.

'It was as though the form was asleep or dead, and the arms were raised slightly behind the head, while the head drooped gently to one side,' said Betty May.

Earlier, there was another untoward incident, presaging disaster. Raoul was a talented, intelligent, if somewhat unbalanced, young man of twenty-three. Egypt, the land of magic, fascinated him. He dragged his fiancée round the galleries of the British Museum and introduced her to the mummy of a royal priestess of Amon-Ra. And he told Betty a legend: Amon-Ra, 'lord of the thrones of the earth', had brought destruction upon all those who had offended him.

Betty smiled, then, suddenly, she put out her tongue at the

high priestess. Raoul, horrified, seized her arm and hurried her away from the scene of her blasphemous act.

He returned alone and prostrated himself before the spirit of the great Egyptian god and begged that the curse should fall upon him instead of upon the foolish, ignorant Betty.

Soon, with a First in History, Raoul came to London to look for a job. He had no money, so his wife had to keep him with what she earned as a model. She sat for Epstein, and from her strange, vivid face, with its dilated nostrils, he made the bust 'The Savage'.

One night, while they were in a Soho café called The Harlequin, Mrs. E—— Z—— joined them and was introduced to Raoul. The conversation sped on to magic, then to *magick*, and Mrs. E—— Z—— disclosed that she had Crowley indoors—he had given up his room at 31 Wellington Square and gone to stay with her—and she offered to take Raoul to him.

Of all the modern poets and thinkers, Raoul loved Aleister Crowley best; for the last two years he had been making a particular study of his works. He wanted to meet The Beast immediately. Betty refused to go with him; she had seen Crowley once at the Café Royal in 1914 and had not been favourably impressed. She tried to dissuade Raoul, but he wouldn't listen, and when they had finished their drinks he went off without her in the company of Mrs. E—— Z——.

For two days and nights Betty waited for her husband to return. On the evening of the third night, as she lay asleep on the third floor of an old house in Beak Street, Soho, she was awakened by the sound of someone trying to get through the window. Raoul, like a cat-burglar, had scaled the drainpipe. He was covered in dust from the climb and his breath stank of ether.

At last he was doing all the things that for long he had dreamt about: seeking the Formeless Fire with the greatest magus of the age, the Master Therion.

'This then is the virtue of the Magick of The Beast 666: to pierce the veils of every sanctuary, pressing forward to embrace every image. . . . And the Fire shall reveal to his eyes his own image in its own true glory; and it shall speak in his ears the Mystery that is his own right Name.'

Crowley thought highly of Loveday. He was the ideal pupil with a far greater magical potential than either Victor Neuberg, George Stansfeld Jones, or Brother Fiat Lux. 'His character,' said The Beast, 'was extraordinary. He possessed every qualification for becoming a Magician of the first rank. I designed him from the first interview to be my Magical heir.'

In Raoul Loveday Crowley saw the design of the gods. Loveday

was the pupil he 'had needed for the last ten years, a man with every gift that a Magus might need, and already prepared for initiation by practically complete knowledge, not only of the elements but of the essence of Magick'.

Between them they soon had a terrific magical current going, their wands flashed stars and many powerful demons were conjured up and ordered to do their bidding.

Artists, for the most part, make poor husbands; those who seek the Big Lion¹ make worse ones. Betty May soon discovered that Raoul was married not to her, but to the Master Therion. She begged him to give up this magician and return to her, or at least to stop taking drugs, whose destructive power she well knew, for she herself had been a cocaine addict.

They moved to another house and Betty hoped they had given Crowley the slip. But soon there came a knock at the door.

'I beheld,' she wrote, 'a ponderous man attired in a Highland kilt, standing in an attitude of benediction with both hands raised and in one of them a green wand about five feet in length, round which coiled a symbolic snake. On one of his very small hands was a curious ring. . . . He had dark, glowing, hypnotic eyes, and a loose sallow skin, with very full red lips. He had a massive head, on which was placed a glossy, black curly wig.

"Do what thou wilt," he pronounced in a slightly nasal accent, "shall be the whole of the Law."

The Chinese Oracle had told Crowley that the Abbey was sinking into the mud. The MS. of *The Drug Fiend* had been handed to the publishers: for the present he had no more business in England, so he borrowed the price of his fare home from a Mr. Robinson Smith, whom he had met at Austin Harrison's house at Seaford, invited Mrs. E— Z— to a full course of *Magick* at the Abbey and departed.

His journey was broken at Rome, where he stopped for three days. There, amongst other things, he performed an act of sex-magic with an Italian prostitute whose name he carefully recorded in his little red note-book, and wrote to Raoul urging him to come over as soon as possible. He salted his letter with advice as to how Raoul should keep his wife in order.

It was this letter which dashed all Betty's hopes. The Beast had gone; now was her chance of winning back her husband.

'Then one morning among our letters I noticed one with an Italian stamp, addressed to Raoul. I hesitated whether to give it to him or not, and to this day I am sorry that I eventually

¹ Another of Crowley's titles.

decided to do so. It was an invitation, or rather a summons, from the Mystic to go out to him in Cefalù.'

She threatened that if he followed Crowley to Sicily he would have to go there alone. But Raoul's mind was made up and her bluff did not disturb him in the least. It seems that he might have preferred going without her, and that, since meeting Crowley, he even regretted having got married.

'We are going to Italy,' was his reply.

The eye of Betty May looked ill-humouredly upon the Abbey of Thelema, the archetype of the new society, the lair of The Beast. A demon had possessed her husband and dragged him across the seas. She had tried to hold him back, but was swept along too. And to make everything even more galling, Raoul had rejected a post at a thousand pounds a year to become instead Crowley's unpaid secretary. Even the fare to Cefalù had to be begged from the ardent and kind Mr. Robinson Smith, the White Magician in Betty May's autobiography, *Tiger Woman*.

In an essay entitled *Ravishment* ('Tis Magick, magick, that has ravished me') Raoul explained his attitude:

'Know shortly then that always, even through diverting work and distracting pleasure, I had kept a love for the study of what men called *magick*; at first curious merely of its forbidding mystery, and then of the shining truth that I felt blindly to lie at the back of those dark veils. I had heard that unto him that is ready the Master came; I believed it. Certainly in the most ordinary way one was introduced to me, who spoke later of an Order and of an Hermitage where arcane wisdom lived on. I hesitated and he expounded to me the inner truth of that phrase of some old grimoire of magick, "Buy a black egg without haggling." Therefore I gave up all to come here, and become a Brother of the Order that I name not.'

So the Lovedays travelled all the way to Cefalù, Betty's mind filled with Epstein's gloomy prophecy: 'One of you will never come back again.' And when finally they arrived, Crowley admitted Raoul but slammed the door in Betty's face.¹

In many ways Betty May's account of the Abbey and its Abbot is surprisingly fair. The mysterious 'Mystic' (Crowley's name is never mentioned) still remains, after she has done with him, a strange, formidable figure, that of a man of gifts, unusual and uncanny, the hero of her book.

¹ This was really her own fault for not replying to Crowley's 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law,' with 'Love is the law, love under will.' When at the Abbey of Thelema, do as Thelemites do.

What did Crowley think of her? He poured upon her head his usual mixture of vituperation. But in reading all his scattered references to this woman who opposed him, and even fought him with her fists and a revolver, the impression grows that, underneath, he admired her greatly.

In the middle of October, 1922, The Beast had arrived back at the Abbey. He asked the Oracle for a word on his return and was answered with the devastating, 'Even unto the abyss, annihilation.' In spite of his successes in London he'd returned with only twenty pounds in his pocket, all that remained from the sum given him by Robinson Smith. He settled down energetically to dictate the story of his life to his two secretaries, Leah Faesi and Elizabeth Fox, or the Ape of Thoth and Sister Estai. (Elizabeth Fox, formerly Sister Metonith, had taken a new magical name, for she had ascended a higher grade of the Order.)

On the 26th November Raoul and Betty arrived to help in the Great Work, and both signed the Oath of Affiliates:

I, willing to abide within the Abbey of Thelema, make Oath and sing: that I do utterly deny, abjure and condemn all allegiance soever to all gods and men, accepting the Law of Thelema as my sole Law:

that I affirm *The Book of the Law* to be the Word of Truth and the Rule of Life:

that I dedicate myself utterly and without stint my body and soul to the Great Work which is to proclaim and execute the Law of Thelema: that I will accept unquestionably and irrevocably the conditions of life in the Abbey of Thelema, and uphold its ordinances and customs (as declared in the Books LII, CI, CXXIV) and maintain the authority of the Scarlet Woman and of Her Lord The Beast 666.

Witness mine Hand: Betty Loveday.
Raoul Loveday.

On the same day The Beast admitted Raoul as a Probationer of the Order of the A. . . A. . . and he took the name of Aud, meaning 'magical light'. The Oxford graduate had now firmly put his feet upon the path of *magick* and the ascent towards the Stars. While his wife moped and complained of the inadequate food, the lack of sanitary arrangements, and the oppressive presence of The Beast,¹ he approved of everything and seems to have enjoyed himself.

Crowley's views on society have something in common with Plato's. Philosopher-Kings were to be the rulers of Plato's

¹ Betty would get up early to wash naked at the pump in the courtyard. One day she looked round . . . and saw the grinning face of the 'Mystic'.

Republic; those who have found their True Wills, the leaders of Crowley's Utopia. The 'multifarious group' in the Platonic state were to find their happiness in knowing their function and accepting their inferior, but nevertheless valuable, position. The bulk of humanity, observed The Beast, not having True Wills, will be powerless or, to put it in another way, they will be the slaves of those who have. The True-Willers will keep them in order and supply them with their happiness. Compared with their equals in the *Republic*, they are in an inferior and less secure position.

The children of the Abbey were observed to see what kind of citizens they would turn out to be. They were left to find their own way (i.e. their True Wills), and no effort was made to persuade them to do this or that. The sex-magic rites of the new religion were free for them to witness. The children were, in fact, a privileged audience, because Crowley was of the opinion, through his misunderstanding of psychoanalysis, that such spectacles imprinted upon the mind of the child would help to by-pass the miseries of 'repression'. But sex was always performed with hymns, prayers, and symbolic acts. 'I have been revising,' wrote Crowley, '*The Mark of the Beast* ritual, but I am not wholly satisfied. The doxology: "Glory be to the Phallus, and to the Sun, and to the Great Wild Beast; as it was, etc."'

Crowley did not consider, apparently, that a child might need authority in order to be able to dispense with it later, and that enlightened authority might be a better method of child education than absolute freedom. Also, he did not disclose what set of principles were to be employed to recognise anyone's True Will, and what would happen if True Wills clashed.

Regarding this last point, I think he must have been of the opinion that True Wills can't clash for they are essentially pacific. Here also is a parallel with Plato.

If one can believe Renata Faesi, the two little boys, Hermes and Dionysus, running about the Abbey looking for their True Wills, never found them, or if they did, they were nasty little wills. Of Leah's child she says:

'He contracted the cigarette habit at the age of five and was such a "fiend" you never saw him without one in his mouth. He was growing weak, ill, stunted, in spite of all his outdoor life and primitive ways. "You just leave me alone!" he shouted, brandishing a stick. "Don't you know I am Beast Number Two and can shatter you? I will, too! I will throw you into the ocean. I am getting ready to be the Great Beast of the Apocalypse when Crowley dies, and I'm going to split the world wide open."'

The Lovedays began to settle down to the routine of the Abbey.

There was plenty of work to be done: for Betty, the domestic chores and looking after the children; for Raoul, the study and practice of magic. The post of High Priest, formerly held by Fiat Lux, was taken over by him. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he participated with Crowley in those performances which *John Bull* and the *Sunday Express* called 'orgies' and Crowley 'opera', or the rites of sex-magic. And one statement in the little red notebook says so plainly.

When the Lovedays arrived they were each given a cut-throat razor. The head of the Abbey, said Betty May, was the only person allowed to use the word 'I'; everybody else had to say 'one' instead. As a penance for breaking this rule the Thelemites were obliged to cut themselves—one stroke for each 'I'—upon the arm. This was a device to induce vigilance. Betty May threw away her razor contemptuously, but Raoul kept his and soon both his arms were covered with cuts. According to his wife, it was loss of blood through careless egoism which helped to undermine his none too vigorous health.

The men had to shave their heads, apart from a symbolic curl left on the forehead. The women had to dye theirs red, or yellow, with henna, an 'aureole', as The Beast called it, 'in honour of our Father the Sun', and wear a loose, flowing robe of bright blue which hung from neck to ankle, the sleeves widening from shoulder to waist. This garment was lined with scarlet, provided with a hood and a golden girdle. And everyone, of course, kept a magical diary.

In the refectory The Beast broke his food with his fingers. It was part of Betty May's duties to stand by his side with a towel and a basin of water. One day, feeling fed up with him, she poured the basin of water over his shaven head.

There was a breathless silence as under a darkened sky before a storm. But with admirable restraint The Beast carried on as if nothing had happened, and the incident was never afterwards referred to.

* * *

The temple was ready for a Bloody Sacrifice. The victim was to be a cat, called Mischette, a semi-wild, sandy-coloured creature that came to the Abbey for food. Like Napoleon, James Boswell, and a good many other people, Crowley disliked cats. A few days before he'd discovered Mischette under the table. As he dragged out the struggling, spitting animal he received a deep scratch on the arm.

'That cat must be sacrificed within three days,' he had ordered.

Betty May, in an attempt to save Mischette, carried the animal away from the Abbey. But Mischette returned and sat on the window-sill of the scullery.

Suddenly Crowley appeared. Mischette jumped up to escape, but The Beast held up his wand, the black staff with the crowned lion and the snake of eleven coils, and made the sign of the Pentagram. His eyes held the creature's gaze transfixed. 'You will not move till the hour of sacrifice,' he commanded. Mischette stiffened and grew still.

Again Betty May carried the cat away from the Abbey, much farther this time, but Mischette came straight back and remained for three days on the scullery window-sill as it petrified, refusing all food put before her.

The candles on the altar were lit, the air thick with incense, the holy fire burning in the magic brazier. The Thelemites, in their gorgeous robes, were at their positions. The throne of The Beast, facing Boleskine, was occupied by Frater Aud, the Hierophant of the ceremony. In Brother Aud's place, on one of the triangular stools, sat The Beast, keenly watching his pupil. How would Aud perform the ceremony? he wondered. Loveday was a Magician after The Beast's own heart; in this young man's fervent breast the seed of a Great Adept lay hidden. The Beast was pleased mightily.

And on the altar, in a closed, cloth bag, something small moved and wriggled.

*O cat, the sparks fly from thy fur! Thou
dost crackle with splitting the worlds.*

The blood of the animal would release the magical energy needed for this, their Cephaloedium Working. The *Yi King* had, of course, been consulted. 'By Earth,' it had answered; which meant Manifestation, the bringing to birth of the forces developed in secret.

The Hierophant, clad from head to foot in a black robe lined with gold, his eyes gleaming through the slits in the hood, rose and held up the wand of Obeah, with its Janus head of man-woman and its Four Snakes for His Weapons, and led the gestures called the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram. Then he chanted in a loud voice the Preliminary Invocation:

I am He! the Headless Spirit! having sight in the Feet:
Strong, and the Immortal Fire!
I am He! the Truth!
I am He! who hate that evil should be wrought in the
World!
I am He, that lighteneth and thundereth,
I am He, from whom is the Shower of the Life of Earth:
I am He, whose mouth ever flameth:
I am He, the Begetter and Manifester unto the Light:

I am He, the Grace of the world:
'The Heart Girt with a Serpent' is My Name!
Come Thou forth, and follow Me: Iao: Sabao: Such are
the Words!

This was not a Gnostic Mass although a few Gnostic words and phrases were shouted out in the course of it. It was certainly a Thelemic or a Crowleyan Mass adapted from a Graeco-Egyptian work on magic. From a Christian point of view it was an appeal to the devil, and, as such, a Black Mass. In place of the wafer were the Cakes of Light and cat's blood instead of consecrated wine.

The Preliminary Invocation was followed by the Greater Invocation. Then dances, and more prayers. It lasted for two hours. Finally Frater Aud, with a magical dagger in his hand, approached the altar. He took Mischette from the sack, held her struggling above his head. The climax of the ceremony had arrived. All eyes were upon him. He swayed; the cat struggled violently. In case Mischette might escape, The Beast went forward and dabbed her nose with ether.

Now I begin to pray: Thou Child,
Holy Thy name and undefiled!
Thy reign is come: Thy will is done.
Here is the Bread; here is the Blood.
Bring me through midnight to the Sun!
Save me from Evil and from Good!
That Thy one crown of all the Ten
Even now and here be mine. AMEN.

Frater Aud was already overwrought by the intensity of the ceremony, by the drugs he had taken, the incense, the dancing. The light of the candles swam before his eyes . . . but he slashed at Mischette's throat.

The Ape of Thoth, clad in a scarlet abbai, a long sword hanging from the sash round her waist, left her stool and held up her Golden Cup of Abominations to catch the blood, not a drop of which must be lost.

His blow was too light. The cat, its throat only half cut, squirmed with a scream from his trembling hands, sprang off the altar and darted out of the magic circle, breaking the spell and letting in the massed demons that the Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram had cast out.¹

The vital energy, the Prana, was being lost. They were all being splashed with blood as the cat in agony ran round and round. In

¹ It was this failure to maintain the purity of the magic circle which was, *au fond*, the cause of Loveday's death. Or so Crowley said.

fury The Beast seized Mischette and rendered her unconscious with ether.

They began again. Brother Aud, almost fainting with nausea and exhaustion, had just energy enough to slay the animal with a second blow and sink back on to the throne. Leah gathered as much of the blood that remained. Then she and The Beast approached the spent Hierophant, pulled back the black hood of his robe and traced in the blood the pentagram upon his white glistening forehead. Finally a smaller, silver cup, filled with blood, was given to him. He raised it to his lips and drank it to the dregs.

The story of the last days and death of Raoul Loveday is told by Betty May in her book. The Beast gives his version of it in the typescript of *The Confessions*. In his little red notebook, and among the bits and pieces of his papers, are other fragments pertinent to the theme.

Neither Loveday nor Crowley had been well for some time. Mysterious attacks had assailed them both, increasing in severity and frequency. They had been, in fact, continuously ill. The Beast diagnosed the complaint as Mediterranean fever. The local physician, Dr. Maggio, described it as an infection of the liver and spleen. Their condition grew steadily worse.

Betty May thought that her husband's illness was due to drugs and cat's blood, that he had, in fact, been poisoned. She was worried and discussed the matter with Crowley. The Knight Guardian of the Sacred Lance was stirred out of his inscrutable calm. He stretched out his hand for Frater Aud's horoscope and made some profound calculations. His expression deepened and grew dim. Raoul crept out of his room and looked over his Master's shoulder.

'It looks as if you might die on the sixteenth of February at four o'clock,' Crowley announced at last.

On Saturday morning, the 10th February, the Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal returned from shopping in the town and found Crowley, Betty May, Ninette Shumway, Elizabeth Fox, and Raoul Loveday assembled in the courtyard. A first-class row was going on between Betty and Ninette. Crowley took Betty's side; Elizabeth Fox listened in silence, and Loveday was too ill to say anything. Finally the rumpus, which had arisen out of Betty calling Ninette a slut, simmered down, and everyone fell in with The Beast's call for greater discipline in the Abbey. As Leah put it, peace reigned—but not for long.

On Sunday, the 11th February, a row surpassing in fury anything yet witnessed in the Abbey broke out between The Beast and Betty. It appears that Betty was sitting beside her sick husband, quietly reading a London paper, when Crowley flounced

into the room and snatched it from her hands. Newspapers were forbidden in the Abbey: they distracted from the Great Work.

'Suddenly I heard the smashing of glass and a knocking about of chairs, etc.,' wrote Leah in a report of the events preceding Loveday's death. 'Betty had suddenly started to scream and swear and to throw jugs, etc., at the Knight Guardian of the Sacred Lance who was asking her to discuss the situation quietly with him and the rest outside the sick-room. There was a lighted oil lamp in the room, also an oil stove. I then went into the room and found Betty kicking the K.G.S.L. who was holding her, she being in violent hysterics. Frater Aud got out of bed, scarcely able to stand. There were bottles and a glass on the bed—they were smashed. I tried to keep him away from these; she rushed to him and after about ten minutes we got him out of the room into a warm quiet one.'

Betty began to pack up: she'd had enough. Elizabeth Fox tried in vain to dissuade her from leaving. 'Good-bye, Raoul. Send down my passport tomorrow,' was her last cry as she fled down the mountain path to Cefalù.

After she had gone Crowley consulted the Chinese Oracle. What attitude should the Abbey take in regard to Betty Loveday? Hexagram XXVII. Be charming and forgiving: but make it clear that we will stand no nonsense.

In the morning Elizabeth called on Betty at her Cefalù hotel with the intention of trying to patch things up and bring her back to the Abbey. They were still arguing about it when Leah arrived with a letter from Raoul.

'My most dear Betty.

'Let us try to get all this silly business finished. We managed to get on well enough till a few days ago. If you will come back to the Abbey and get yourself under control, and do as I tell you, you will find that things will be all right. Certainly no one wants you to stay away. I won't go to the hospital because the nuns there are mere ornaments and in any case I am not in a fit state to be moved. Moreover, I don't want to go—and I won't. Write me a note saying if you will come back. If you won't you had better send for your bag. There is no one here to take it. But be a good girl and come.

'Always yours,

'Raoul.'

Betty decided to return to the Abbey. She had, however, already posted a letter of complaint to the British Consul at Palermo. Later on during the day, after an all-round reconciliation, she

sent off a letter of retraction: no, she had not been turned out of the Abbey. She had been ill and hysterical, but now that she was calm again she could clearly see that Mr. Crowley was 'in full possession of his mental faculties'.

The Beast jotted down in his diary: 'She returned, very penitent and nice. And better.'

The next day the ominous entry was made in the little red notebook: 'I feel a current of Magical force—heavy, black and silent—threatening the Abbey.' This was Tuesday, the 13th February. On the Wednesday Raoul was worse. Dr. Maggio was hurriedly summoned. He diagnosed acute enteritis. Crowley sent off a telegram to Loveday's parents, informing them of the dangerous state of their son.

Two days later, on the 16th February, 1923, Raoul Loveday died. The Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal had consulted the *Yi King* a few hours before and the reply had come back. Hexagram XLIX. Dispersion. 'Points clearly to death,' commented Crowley. And then: 'About 4 p.m. Frater Aud died of paralysis of the heart.'

Betty May's account of the last days of her husband differs in detail from the version in *The Confessions*. Both she and The Beast were down in the town at the time of Raoul's death, either bringing the doctor or sending off a telegram to his parents in England. The tension was so great that Betty fainted. The Beast gently revived her; together they returned along the mountain path.

The sun was sinking behind the mountain. Suddenly The Beast stopped and said, 'We will take Adoration.'

He raised his arm, the palm of his hand open towards the sun, made the sign of the pentagram, and cried:

'Hail unto Thee, who art Tum in Thy setting, even unto Thee who art Tum in Thy joy, who travellest over the Heavens in Thy bark at the Down-going of the Sun.

'Hail unto Thee from the Abodes of Day!'

This was also a prayer for the dying youth.

Betty May observed that tears were streaming down The Beast's cheeks.

They continued on their way, but before they reached the Abbey they were met by Leah.

'Is he worse?' asked Betty fearfully.

'He's dead,' replied the Virgin Guardian of the Sangraal.

He lay in bed, Betty noted, his head drooping, his arms raised behind on the pillow, the exact position revealed months earlier in the photograph taken in the gardens of St. John's College, Oxford.

It was the revenge of Amon-Ra.

'He died without fear or pain,' wrote Crowley. 'It was as if a man, tired of staying indoors, had gone out for a walk.'

In this incarnation Frater Aud had done his share of the Great Work. The gods had sent him to earth to guide The Beast at a critical moment of the latter's career—or so Crowley thought. He put the point succinctly: 'The moment his Work was done, he went out like a match having lighted my cigar.'

The body was placed in a coffin and removed to an outhouse, and all night long Crowley kept vigil, tapping with his wand on the side of the open coffin and muttering prayers and mantras.

The next morning the coffin upon a bier was borne from the Abbey. The Beast, clad in a hooded garment of white silk embroidered with gold which stretched to his sandalled feet, led it down the mountain path, followed by the weeping women of the Abbey.¹ On his fingers were the star sapphire ring he had worn in the desert with Victor Neuberg, and his Great Beast ring of an entwined golden snake set with rubies and diamonds. Round his neck hung his topaz Rosy Cross and on his forehead the Abra-Melin gold fillet bearing within a square the name of an angel **URIEL**, meaning magical force.

He had arranged with the authorities to bury the body in unconsecrated ground outside the gates of the Catholic cemetery. According to Betty May, the news of Loveday's death had quickly spread. The Abbey was known throughout Sicily and hundreds of peasants had come from the town and the surrounding countryside to witness the High Priest, as they called Crowley, bury his magical son. All around, perched upon the rocks, they watched and waited. Perhaps the worship of Priapus, which had continued in southern Italy into the 19th century, was still being secretly performed.

'The sun made the white domes of the sepulchres sparkle,' wrote Betty May. 'Away below the cliff the sea dashed itself on the stones. The Mystic stood with his magic wand raised.'

The last rites were as Loveday himself would have wished, being those to which he conformed. Of his own free will he had chosen this creed and adapted himself to the mode of life which corresponded to it. He lived as a Thelemite; he died and was buried as one. 'Tis magick, magick, that has ravished me.'

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. I proclaim the Law of Light, Life, Love, and Liberty in the name of IAO. Love is the law, love under will.

Lord visible and sensible of whom this earth is but a frozen spark turning about thee with annual and diurnal motion,

¹ Ninette's little boy, Hermes, dressed in a blue silk robe and self-crowned with a wreath of flowers, had hurried on ahead to the cemetery gates, where he was found whirling himself about in joyful circles, crying: 'We're going to bury Raoul! We're going to bury Raoul!'

source of light, source of life, let thy perpetual radiance
hearten us to continual labour and enjoyment.

After readings from *The Book of the Law*, much striking of the magic bell and waving the magic wand, The Beast finally recited one of the speeches of 'the young John' from his mystery play *The Ship*, published in number ten of *The Equinox*.¹

The ceremony over, The Beast staggered up the mountain to his lair, entered *La Chambre des Cauchemars* and sank on to his bed. He felt so ill he thought he was dying. Brother Aud, he remembered, had foreseen it all in a vision. Loveday had met (in his vision) an Adept who prophesied that they were to go through 'purgings', which obviously referred to his death and Crowley's illness. The purgings were to be followed by the 'fire of persecution' and finally there was to be 'a stream flowing into the sea from the West to the East of which the sands are of gold'.

Dr. Maggio was summoned. For three weeks Crowley lay prostrate with a temperature of 102°, day and night, Dover's powder, quinine, and all his secret remedies from the poppy and the coca leaf not helping a bit. Then his condition became more rational, the temperature rising to 104° and sinking, after sweats, to normal. Exactly a month after the funeral he got up for the first day and ventured outside into the spring sunshine.

The Abbey had shrunk to its three original members: The Beast, the Ape of Thoth, and Sister Cypris. Betty May had left as soon as the British Consul at Palermo had paid her fare home; and Elizabeth Fox had quickly followed as the Beast's emissary to London to raise funds and find new pupils.

Betty May was immediately interviewed by the *Sunday Express*, and on the 25th February NEW SINISTER REVELATIONS OF ALEISTER CROWLEY appeared on its front page. Crowley was too ill to care about these, or any other, revelations. 'I have been very ill since early January, and am far from well in many ways, though apparently convalescent,' he wrote in *The Magical Record* on the 25th March.

The previous attacks of the *Sunday Express* on Crowley now seemed to find their culmination and justification in the death of 'the brilliant young university man'. And behind the *Sunday Express* came *John Bull*, calling Crowley a Wizard of Wickedness, a title which would have been a little more applicable to their former editor, the impudent Horatio Bottomley, M.P., who, the previous May, was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for swindling the public.

Thus was the second part of Loveday's vision fulfilled.

Philosophers tell us that what is known as 'reality' is an experience made up of a mysterious external fact called a 'datum',

¹ By Saint Edward Aleister Crowley, 33,° 90,° X°.

and a lot of thinking and feeling about it which, together, make up the totality, *reality*. The objective fact, or datum, was that Crowley had an Abbey and that his secretary or pupil died of dysentery, which he caught through drinking impure water while on a walking tour over the island with his wife. What Crowley and Loveday and the other Thelemites did in this Abbey would, I think, rather bore people today than shock them. If Crowley had strangled Loveday, as he was said to have done to Victor Neuberg's wife, then there would have been grounds for being shocked. But, as the *Sunday Express* had to admit, Crowley's 'victim' died from natural causes. One, therefore, might have asked what all the fuss was about. In detail anyhow, the reports in the *Sunday Express* were inaccurate. As Crowley said: 'There was a description of the Abbey without a single failure to misstate the facts. If a thing was white they called it red, if square, circular, if stone, brick.' The *Sunday Express* was also wrong in its statements that Loveday hadn't the foggiest idea of what Crowley was really like, and once in the Abbey he found himself trapped. On the contrary, Loveday had sampled Crowley's *magick* in London, found it to his liking, and had gone to Cefalù for a full helping.

On the other hand, Crowley's querulousness with the *Sunday Express* and *John Bull* was both naive and contradictory. In his turbulent psyche there were a number of conflicting personalities; they can be divided into two groups, the one headed *Antichrist*, the other *English Gentleman*. In theory they could all live merrily together; in practice a state of civil war sooner or later broke out. The one side of Crowley's schizophrenic mind prompted him to bacchic fury; the other side clung to decorum and convention. Thus, Aleister Crowley, a gentleman of Cambridge and an English poet, was always surprised and a little hurt when he was attacked for his performances in the service of Aiwass. In a letter written on his first day out of bed to Norman Mudd, Raoul's successor, he said:

'The death of Loveday started them [the *Sunday Express* and *John Bull*] all over again. They even suggested that he was murdered, and want an investigation. I wish to goodness we could get one; but even if they do, it will be hard to get the results published. Soror Estai [Elizabeth Fox] found that she could not get the newspapers to print our side of the story for the simple reason that there is nothing sensational about it!'

'We hope,' wrote *John Bull*, whose investigations into the affairs of Aleister Crowley were as thorough as those of a good detective agency, 'that the eminent University professor who we know is contemplating proceeding to Cefalù, to "study the

Cabbala" with Crowley this spring, will take heed of the true character of the man whose guest he proposes to be.'

The eminent University professor was Norman Mudd, M.A., lecturer in applied mathematics at Grey University College, Bloemfontein, South Africa. He certainly did not take *John Bull's* advice—probably to his remorse, if he had the capacity for remorse, and if he'd felt he might have done otherwise. While the furore about Crowley was in full blast he gave up his job, proceeded straight to Cefalù, and saluted The Beast, his 'Lord and Master', with the enthusiasm of a man who thinks he is, at last, really getting somewhere. He arrived on the 22nd April, 1923, and handed Crowley his savings as a mark of respect and affection. And hard on his heels came two Oxford undergraduates, John Pinney and Claud Bosanquet, of Christ Church and New College respectively, who had come out to investigate the circumstances of the death of their friend and fellow student, or as Crowley put it, to spy on him and report back to anyone who wanted to know. 'Mudd arrived yesterday,' wrote Crowley, 'also two Oxford boys. Jolly party.' Although still ill, he dragged himself about the hills to point out to Raoul's friends the way to climb 'Cavern Pitch' and 'Deep Gill pillar'. 'They succeeded in climbing both, to my great joy.'

The black magical current was still sweeping on The Beast and through the Abbey. The next day the greatest blow of all fell. Crowley was summoned to the Cefalù police station and told that they must all leave Italian territory. An order from the Minister of the Interior lay on the desk. No explanation was given and, as Crowley observed, no accusation was made.

The Beast remained calm. 'All of us?' he queried.

'Yes,' replied the police official.

'May I see the order?'

It was handed to him.

'But this only mentions me,' Crowley pointed out. 'It says nothing about the others.'

The Italian hurriedly reread the order. He had to agree that Crowley was right.

The Beast then asked for a week's grace to arrange his affairs and pack up, which was granted.

They saluted each other and Crowley departed with a heavy heart. This was a stab in the back indeed. Was his life's work ruined? He must consult the *Yi King*. What course should he adopt? Where would the Secret Chiefs send him now? He was in their hands entirely.

The régime of Mussolini had arrived; secret societies, centres of dissension, had been outlawed in Italy during the previous year. The Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, Domizio

Torregiani, was condemned to five years' banishment to the Lipari Isles. And the Grand Master of the Knights of the Holy Ghost, of the O.T.O. and the A. . . A. . ., about whom the Italian authorities had recently read so much in the London papers, could go home, or to some other place, out of Italy.

The Chinese sticks were laid out on the table. What was the general symbol for the present situation? Hexagram XLVII. Constraint. And what was the best course of action to adopt? Prepare to move. Be steady. Prepare to reconstruct. Seek relief from friends. Accept substantial assistance. Turn the situation to advantage by increasing sympathizers. 'There should be an unexpectedly large number of such ready to help us.'

Should they make a direct protest to the Minister of the Interior? If so, what should they say? The Chinese Oracle was unflinching. Thwan. Yes. They should state their case systematically. Press the matter. Beware of divided counsels. Retire in order to advance. Refute all falsehoods about themselves. Make it clear that they represent a widespread and important movement.

Should they make an appeal to their national Ambassadors in Rome? Yes, but don't expect much result.

Meanwhile where should The Beast go? The Oracle told him to cross the water. Africa would be very favourable. What part of Africa? The coast or some well-watered spot, but isolated, difficult of access, and where there is indifference to public affairs.

On the 1st May, 1923, The Beast and his Scarlet Women left Cefalù and arrived at Palermo, where he had a mild breakdown. The next day he crossed over the Mediterranean to Tunis, a detective shadowing him to the very boat and even mingling with the passengers on board—or so Leah thought—to see that he did, in fact, leave Italian territory. Professor Norman Mudd, M.A., or, to give him his magical title in the Great White Brotherhood of the A. . . A. . ., *Frater Omnia Pro Veritate*, Brother All for Truth, was left in charge of the Abbey and to carry on the Great Work.

It is said that the inhabitants of Cefalù were very sorry to hear of the expulsion of The Beast. He had livened up their little town considerably.

Norman Mudd
a Probationer of the A. . . A. . .

THE people who played a part in Crowley's life, who helped him prepare those declarations of his own tremendous significance, and who followed in his tracks about the fitful earth, are all, with one or two exceptions, obscure. Who, for example, was

Norman Mudd? His only claim to remembrance is that he knew Aleister Crowley. His shade appears from oblivion and shouts out the names of The Beast and the Scarlet Woman, Alostrael, who seems to trouble him greatly. Then he is gone.

He was the talented son of a poor schoolmaster and went up to Cambridge from Manchester on a mathematics scholarship. In July, 1907, he entered Trinity, the College which had instructed Crowley nine years previously.

He made friends with an older undergraduate called Victor Neuberg, the spiritual guide of a little group of students who wrote poetry and discussed magic and called themselves the Pan Society. Neuberg was also a member of the Cambridge University Freethought Association.

Now Neuberg boasted of his friendship with a Great Magician whose name was Aleister Crowley; and one day during December, 1907, this Great Magician, back from tramping the North African desert with the Earl of Tankerville, turned up at Cambridge. On his fingers were strange rings¹ and in his eyes a far-away gaze: he had gathered wisdom in the distant East, and was an outstanding poet and a distinguished mountaineer to boot.

The 18-year-old scholar, Norman Mudd, who was a short, ugly youth, much depressed by feelings of worthlessness, was fascinated. To his great joy this Magician seemed to like him and didn't mind talking to him for hours and walking about Cambridge with him. 'From then,' he wrote in a memoir compiled in later years and addressed to The Beast, 'until the middle of 1910 I enjoyed quite unclouded the delights of your knowledge and conversation.' Elsewhere he wrote of his meeting and friendship with Crowley:

'I then understood for the first time what life was or might be; and the spark of that understanding has been in me ever since, apparently unquenchable, working always (consciously or unconsciously), in spite of all my failures, betrayals, base-nesses, and desperate absorption in worldly matters, always reviving again when I least expected it, always potent by the challenge of its mere presence to convert instantly all other aims and ambitions into dust and ashes.'

Every ointment has its fly, and every friendship with Crowley its rumours. Those who are different are dangerous, and Crowley was very different. Although the College authorities did not like Crowley's being put up in Trinity, and his reading of papers on magic to the students in their rooms, they would have done

¹ 'Before laying his head on the block, Charles I took off this ring and gave it to Bishop Juxon,' said Crowley pointing to a ring with a large red stone that adorned his hand. Charles, however, gave all his personal jewels to his family at his leave-taking.

nothing about it—Crowley, after all, was a member of this College—had they not received one day a letter from somebody accusing him of pederasty and of being ‘watched by the police of Europe’¹ on this account.

In January, 1909, Mudd received a summons to wait on the Rev. Reginald St. John Parry, D.D., the Dean of Trinity, and the following demands were made to him.

One, that he cease distributing copies of a book called *The Star in the West* by Captain Fuller, or any of Crowley’s own works.

Two, that the invitation sent to Crowley by the Cambridge University Freethought Association (of which Mudd was secretary) be cancelled as the Dean ‘could not permit an Association in which Trinity men were concerned to extend an official welcome to men of evil repute.’

But Mudd was not prepared to drop his hero so easily, and the Freethought Association (most of whose members were not, anyhow, of Trinity) were indignant at the Dean’s demands. The Rev. Dr. Parry had raised a matter of principle. A meeting of the Association was called. The members had supporters among the dons and they decided to fight for their rights. The following resolution, unanimously carried, was their reply:

‘The Association having taken into consideration the request made to it by the Dean of Trinity regrets that it finds itself unable to comply with that request. It regards the right to invite down any person it thinks fit as essential to its principles and wishes to point out that its attitude towards any opinions advocated before it is purely critical.’

The Rev. Parry replied by stating his objection to Crowley in more specific terms. He did not object to Crowley’s talks on magic, but to his ‘sexual ethics’.

Crowley, who was kept informed by the devoted Mudd of every step, replied by writing to Mudd’s father and raising the same suspicions about the Rev. Parry’s sexual ethics as the latter had raised about his.

‘I find myself compelled to write to you about a very painful and delicate matter. Your son is a friend of mine, and I am unspeakably shocked to find that his tutor has the reputation of indulging in things so abominable that among decent people they have not even a name. I do not suggest for one moment that there is a grain of truth in the rumours which circulate about him; but I put it to you: is it wise to leave your son in

¹ ‘Good, I shan’t be burgled,’ was Crowley’s comment when he was told the police were watching him.

the charge of a man whose name is the focus for suspicion, however ill-founded?’

The struggle between the Dean of Trinity and the Freethought Association lasted throughout 1909 and into 1910, the year that saw the publication of Crowley's masterpiece on the pederastic pastime, *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz*. And all this while Crowley continued to appear at Cambridge and be entertained by his undergraduate friends of Trinity and other colleges.

The Rev. Parry admitted that he was afraid of libelling Crowley, who he knew was only waiting for one false step on his part to move into the attack. It is also possible that Parry was nervous of Crowley as a magician. His appearance was uncanny and his powers were said to be supernormal—one of the dons had seen him put out a candle at ten yards' distance by willing it to go out.

One day in 1910 The Beast, in order to break the deadlock, went to see the Dean and bluntly asked him what accusations he had to make against him. Parry at least suggested his objection. The meeting was stormy and Crowley was unable to announce a victory. His account of what followed is terse and clear enough:

‘On the following morning I waited in the Great Court for him to come out of Chapel and called him a liar to his face in front of everybody.’

By this act Crowley did indeed break the deadlock, but the result was not favourable to him: he was, in due course, banned from Trinity, and orders were given to the porters to remove him if ever again he should set foot within the precincts. And explosions were threatened all round for those Trinity men who continued to have anything more to do with him.

Poor Norman Mudd. He was poor in both senses of the word. Scholarships had brought him to Cambridge, not fees paid by his parents. He had set his heart on an academic career, and ‘was utterly dependent for this upon, at least, the tolerance of the College authorities’. Further, his parents were in debt to the extent of several hundred pounds for the expenses of his education.

It was all very well for Crowley to point out that Mudd was ‘the hope of the College for the forthcoming Tripos’ and that the Dean would think twice and thrice about sending him down. The matter had now gone far beyond that stage and everyone, except Crowley, knew it.

Filled with grief and shame, Norman Mudd did what he was told: he resigned from the Freethought Association, wrote a letter of apology to the Dean and promised on ‘his honour as a gentle-

man' never to hold any further communication of any kind whatever with Mr. Aleister Crowley. But so strong was Crowley's fascination for him that he continued to correspond with Crowley in secret, and on one occasion in 1911, when he heard that Crowley was being entertained in Caius College by an undergraduate called Arthur Kirk, and that his distinguished friend was enquiring after him, he screwed up his desperate courage and went off to Kirk's rooms 'just to shake hands'.

'I must confess,' he wrote some years afterwards, 'that I went in ludicrous fear and trembling of discovery.'

Although Crowley would not admit it, he had been defeated, as he was bound to be. The whole affair was a stupid tilting at authority and embroiling of others in his battles. The ban against his entering Trinity remained, and his name, hitherto on the College register as a Member of the University, dropped out for the succeeding years.

The rest of Mudd's autobiographical sketch is like the diary of a girl languishing under an unrequited passion. Cut off from the man who had won his admiration and his love, he felt his existence to be merely a living ache. He described his attachment to The Beast as a conflict of fascination and disgust, hope and fear. His heart had gone out of him and he spent his last, most important year at Cambridge browsing over works on magic and Buddhism. As a result he failed to get either of the two prizes which would have given him the academic career he desired, and for which, he said, he had long been preparing—that of stargazing at Greenwich Observatory. Instead, he was offered a job at the National Physical Laboratory, or one in South Africa. He seized the opportunity of going abroad; he hoped it would help him to forget Aleister Crowley. He arrived in South Africa in July 1911 and was put in sole charge of the Department of Applied Mathematics at Grey University College, Bloemfontein.

During the years that followed Mudd reproached Crowley for his failures.

'I have been connected with you by a barrier of separation. The whole relation is paradoxical and in nothing more than this: that I have been unable to draw any strength of peace from the thought of you. You have been right at the centre of a complex resting on fear and the knowledge of failure. Any encouragement you have since tried to give me has simply discouraged and demoralized me. . . . In short, I have only been able to work at all by forgetting you.'

He went to South Africa to start life afresh. But, alas, he failed. New skies solved none of his emotional problems; he grew

no roots, found no happiness. And, to crown all, in 1915 'an accident cost him an eye'.¹

The account of his years in South Africa makes dismal reading. According to his own confession, his very centre was poisoned and this poison he rightly or wrongly associated with Crowley. He was a Crowley-intoxicated man and there was nothing that could purge him. 'The thought of Crowley,' he wrote to Charles Stansfeld Jones (Frater Achad), 'was really a demoralizing obsession.'

Unable to go forward to a new life, he slid back to the old. While Crowley was in America he wrote to all his former London and Paris addresses in an unsuccessful attempt to find him. Finally, in the latter half of 1920, during a sabbatical year's vacation, he came to England with the intention of looking for him among the habitués of the Café Royal and the denizens of Soho and Chelsea. But the soil of England, his mother country, had a steadying effect upon Professor Norman Mudd. In London he almost forgot about Crowley. 'I simply loafed about doing my pleasure among the living.' Then, one day in a bookshop, he caught sight of Perdurabo's *Book Four*, and this, he said, woke him up.

Captain Fuller, now much promoted, was the one person, Mudd reasoned, who would know where Crowley was. He was on the point of getting in touch with The Beast's old companion when he discovered a copy of the 'blue' *Equinox* and learnt that Crowley had been in America. Without waiting to discover whether he had since returned and gone elsewhere, Mudd set sail for the United States to hunt for Crowley among the scandals he had left behind in Detroit.

His longing for Crowley had returned vehemently, and he now looked upon The Beast as his last hope. 'I did not know what was the matter with me except that I suffered from a morbid impotence to get going, and that I needed to see you again to be cured,' he wrote to Crowley when he had at last discovered where he was. 'Not finding you [in America] was a great blow to my hopes.'

'I hope you will drop in at our Abbey,' replied The Beast, 'where we can fry you in your own fat much quicker than elsewhere. Be on your guard!'

In Exile

CROWLEY'S expulsion from Italy closed a chapter in his life. The event was entirely unexpected and, at the time, he did not realize what it meant. It was all very well for him to move over to the

¹ The 'accident' must have been with a woman, because the eye was lost through a gonorrhoeal infection.

next spot with the intention of carrying on as before, and of moving back as soon as possible, but what has once been lost all eternity will not return. The wave that had rolled him over the Atlantic sped him on to Cefalù. It was the rhythm of the one event, and its fullness was reached with the death of Loveday. Now the tide was going out and on it, in his frail barque, floated Alastor de Kerval, the Wanderer of the Waste. He looked not outwards but backwards to the receding shore, his gaze fixed upon his *Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum*, which grew smaller and smaller until it finally disappeared altogether.

The Beast and the Scarlet Woman were staying at a little hotel called *Au Souffle de Zéphir* in Marsa, a suburb of Tunis—'one could not find anything cheaper'. Norman Mudd and Ninette Shumway guarded the Abbey over the waters. The former professor, who, in order to join Crowley, had given up organizing a school of astronomy for the University of South Africa, was sitting in *La Chambre des Cauchemars* and staring at his Master's peculiar paintings which covered the walls. But, judging from his letters, he was quite happy among these nightmarish surroundings. He was with his Beloved Father again, and the void in his heart was filled. The Beast's letters to his Beloved Son, as he addressed Mudd, are full of kindness and hope: together they will pull through everything, but meanwhile the Great Work must go on.

Mudd fully realized the responsibilities of his position. He had, unfortunately, only one eye to see out of, but with it he saw more as probationer of the A . . . A . . . than ever he had seen with two as Professor of Applied Mathematics at Bloemfontein. His old and good friend, Mr. Harry Doughty, did not think so, but neither he nor the Rev. Reginald St. John Parry, D.D., nor Mudd's saddened parents (who hadn't caught a glimpse of their son for the last seven years and who had been deeply disappointed and hurt that he should have gone on to Cefalù instead of coming to see them), could look into the heart of Norman Mudd. The soul knows its own sorrow.

To Doughty, Mudd's whole relationship with Crowley was a mystery, and his reasons for suddenly darting off to Cefalù instead of coming on to England as arranged were obscure and hopelessly inadequate.

Doughty was a sincere friend of Mudd and he gave him some sound, practical advice. 'Why don't you get to business—and love and the law be damned?' he asked, just as a quarter of a century later Norman Douglas had replied to Crowley's chant of 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law', with 'To hell with all laws!'

'I was called,' replied Mudd to Doughty, '(or so I did, and do,

believe) to devote everything that I am, and have, or can do or learn to do, to the performance of a task on which the fortunes of humanity for the next few thousand years largely depend.'

Crowley's hopes were set upon a rescindment of the order of expulsion from Italian territory, but Mussolini gave him no interview to discuss the matter, and as the summer advanced he was embroiled in other problems. There was, for example, the Comment on *The Book of the Law* to be written, and his autobiography to be continued and concluded. Mudd, who had published a paper on *The Gravitational Potential and Energy of Harmonic Deformations of any Order*, could help with the mathematical part of the Comment, and find the meaning of the line:

'Every number is infinite; there is no difference.'

The problem of finding money had grown more acute, because there were now two establishments to be maintained. Any unexpected letter was promptly and sympathetically answered in the hope that the writer could be speedily turned into a supporter. A Mr. Robert Trod wrote to say that it was his Will to meet Crowley, having read all about him in the *Sunday Express*: 'Do as thou wilt is the whole of the Law.' Unfortunately Mr. Trod is unknown in wealthy or artistic circles, etc. 'P.S. Is Magick real? What of the Child?'

Crowley replied:

'Dear Sir,

'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. (You wrote "as" for "what", and "is" for "shall be".) Damn wealthy and artistic circles! "Every man and every woman is a star." I am pledged to do my utmost for any one who comes to me, without thought of return of any kind.' &c.

Mr. Trod was advised to get in touch immediately with Elizabeth Fox, who was still in London. He was assured that 'Magick' was very real and, in conclusion, that the question of the Child was too recondite for discussion in a letter. 'Yours fraternally, The Beast 666.'

On the 19th May, at 7.26 a.m., Ninette had another baby. Isabella Isis Selen Hecate Artemis Diana Hera Jane were the names Crowley selected for her. The Beast congratulated her and cast the baby's horoscope. '. . . Mars, rising above Luna, is rather threatening, but there are no close bad aspects either to the Sun or Moon, so probably there is not much to worry about. There is no big complex to make the child distinguished. She is likely to develop into a fairly ordinary little whore.'

Crowley was ill, cut off from his Abbey, short of money, and uncertain about the future. The visions that floated before his eyes when the stem of the opium pipe was to his lips, or when he was drunk with heroin or cocaine, were closely examined and analysed. As Lenin studied the writings of Karl Marx for solutions of some of the pressing problems of the Revolution, so Crowley in his boarding-house bed in Marsa studied *The Book of the Law* for a way out of his difficulties. 'Here is the point,' Crowley wrote to Mudd, who was holding on in the Abbey over the water, 'where your "love" is wanted. I can trust you because you once wrote that it didn't matter a fart whether I lived or died.'

Two solutions finally offered themselves to him. He, the Logos of the Aeon, should fade for a short time into the background, while Alostrael, his Scarlet Woman, succeeded in getting her magical ability into working order. Then, in the role of Semiramis, she should assume despotic, political power—but derived, of course, from him and dependent upon him. 'The world is obviously ripe for the appearance of a female ruler of this kind,' he commented.

The other solution was, perhaps, less mystical if no less likely. In *The Book of the Law* it is written, 'There cometh a rich man from the West who shall pour his gold upon thee.' One could do nothing about this but wait till it happened. 'Well, I don't mind,' wrote The Beast. 'I'm perfectly happy waiting. I merely wish to remind the Gods that—for many considerations—this attitude shows my complete dependence upon them.'

The means by which Crowley hoped to bring himself back to health will probably sound absurd to profane minds. His first disciple, J. F. C. Fuller, should walk with him to Egypt via 'the City', Tunis, where he was now writing a comment on *Liber Legis*, and 'abstract' from the Cairo Museum the original stele of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu, and help carry it back to Boleskine. Since Crowley no longer owned that manor house it would have to be repurchased. 'Fuller's main task is to bring me back to health by means of this journey.'

But meanwhile both he and Leah grew worse and were obliged to put themselves under the care of a local doctor called Thomas Doméla.

After three months in Tunis and no apology arriving from the Italian Government, The Beast began to think about refounding the Abbey in another place. An island would be an ideal spot. Zembra, for instance, off Tunis. The new *Collegium ad Spiritum Sanctum* should not repeat the mistake of the old. To begin with it would have to be of severe monastic type. Access to the island by motor launch or seaplane. Funds would be raised by 'persuading capitalists of the coming smash'. Only Thelemites

would be accepted as members, and they must possess one of the following classes of attributes: (a) beauty, intelligence, love; (b) business capacity, all-round adaptability; (c) wealth or physical strength; (d) rare magical gifts. The government of the community would be autocratic. Crowley, naturally, was to be the Outer Head of the Order. 'But he will be as inaccessible as possible; and, if practicable, the fact of his headship will be unknown to all but his intimate officers.'

Nothing came of this scheme. Instead, Crowley decided to go on a Magical Retirement. He wrote an elaborate document authorizing Norman Mudd to act on his behalf, left the Scarlet Woman in the cheap lodgings, *Au Souffle du Zéphir*, and went and stayed at the Tunisia Palace, the best hotel in the town, taking with him a Negro boy whom he had trained as his personal and magical servant. As a test of Mudd's faith in him, The Beast proposed to run up a big bill at the jeweller's and spring it on *Omnia Pro Veritate*. The jewel he particularly wanted was a black diamond, or a pearl, set in a gold plate encircled with platinum, the gold symbolizing the sun and the platinum the moon of his changing nature. Greek, Hebrew, and Egyptian letters for the word of the Law, *Thelema*, were to be engraved on it.

'The utter uselessness of the extravagance completely exonerates me from any selfish luxury; also that the bill would include a number of decorations for other people. And the test would have all the quality of surprise, as I have calculated coppers continually since O.P.V. came to me, and he knows my conscientious reluctance to spend money, even small change, on luxuries, even those which the Working Man calls necessary comforts. I cannot decide upon the size of the bill; I should want it big enough to stagger, but not too big, to unseat.'

This method of testing Mudd's faith was conceived while meditating during the Magical Retirement. There were other schemes of a similar nature.

His health improved slightly; and his mental instability, the feeling that he was going insane, disappeared altogether. He thought this was due to his separation from Alostrael. To the outward eye, he reasoned, he was quite normal in himself and in what he was doing: he might have been any English tourist relaxing. In the Restaurant de Tunis he came across his faithful lieutenant, *Omnia Pro Veritate*, who had, apparently, come in search of him. But The Beast passed him by, after giving him the sign of silence: thumb to lip, fingers closed. Shortly afterwards he decided to continue the Retirement. It had lasted a fortnight, which was why he called it a Little, as opposed to a Great, Magical Retirement.

All the time Crowley was, of course, taking drugs. Now he openly admitted his failure to resist them. Gone was all pretence of curing himself by the strength of his will, or of submitting to them for the sake of discovering the power of corruption. Without drugs he could no longer exist; he compared drug-eating to living on borrowed capital.

Since he could not sleep—one of the symptoms of drug poisoning—it didn't matter when he went to bed or when he got up. A great deal of his time, anyhow, was spent in bed, whether asleep or awake. And most of the rest of the time was spent loafing about. Slowly some kind of routine came into the twenty-four hours. At about 2 p.m., while still in bed, he took up the threads of the Hag, as he called his *Autohagiography*, and began dictating to Alostrael. He rose at 5 p.m., washed, shaved, dressed, and went out with but little appetite for dinner at the *Maison Doré*. Afterwards he came back home to dictate, read, play chess, or chat about the Cabbala with Mudd and Mr. E. H. Hatman, one of Mudd's former pupils who had drifted into the camp of the Thelemites while on vacation from Oxford. Occasionally he sat in yoga position and meditated 'in a rather half-hearted and informal way', or put Mudd through the rigours of a Crowleian psychoanalysis.¹ During the night he calmed his nerves with ether. If he was lucky, he fell into a light sleep by 4 a.m., but more often 'I merely fade away about 7.'

At about 9 a.m., in a condition of half-sleep, he took his breakfast. Then he dozed brokenly till midday or 1 p.m., by which time he more or less considered himself awake, so he finally pulled himself together with heroin or cocaine, 'the choice depending on some self-instinctive impulse'. He had given up the habit of counting the doses. He no longer cared about the quantity of drugs he took, and relied, if at all, upon some unspecified magical means of averting collapse. 'My chief worry is the knowledge that sleep fails to refresh me as it should. I wake (too often) depressed, anxious, and with some premonitory systems of dissociation of thoughts.' The greatest mainstay was his work on the Hag, and he dreaded the time when it would be finished.

He again weighed the pros and cons of drug-eating, the fears, real and imaginary, and wondered whether a man yields himself to drugs because of an unconscious wish to destroy himself. He never ran any danger, he concluded, until the great event of May, 1921. He was referring to his attainment of the grade of Ipsissimus. It is a curious piece of self-analysis. The grade of Ipsissimus is the highest possible grade in the magical heirarchy, above that of Magus. It is the Absolute, inhabited by the one God and many lunatics. Was Crowley saying that he feared nothing from

¹ 'Beast indicated that when the time came to psychoanalyse me I should have a hell of a painful time.' (From the diary of Notman Mudd.)

drugs until that fatal evening in the temple of the Abbey when he was merged with the Godhead?

9.34 p.m. *As God goes, I go.*

Brother Omnia Pro Veritate was soon staying permanently in Tunis with The Beast and the Ape of Thoth: it was intolerably dull in the Abbey of Do What Thou Wilt without its Abbot. While The Beast was on his Magical Retirement, O.P.V. and the Ape were left to their own devices. They shared the same hotel, if not the same room; for the first time they grew to know each other. Leah had aged rapidly and her face had become haggard. The hair was disappearing from Mudd's forehead and he had grown fat. With two eyes he would have been exceedingly ugly; with one his appearance was repulsive.

Towards the end of September, Brother O.P.V. swore a solemn oath to the Lords of Initiation in the presence of The Beast, the Ape, and Eddy Hatman, who had taken the title of Adonai Iao. A strange thing had happened: O.P.V. had fallen in love with the Scarlet Woman of The Beast. Love is akin to madness, Plato reasoned; Crowley, too, and a mad lieutenant was not good enough.

'I hereby acknowledge that most if not all men when in the condition known as "being in love" become temporarily unable to use their moral judgment.

'The Beast and Alostrael have told me that I, being by my own admission "in love" with Alostrael, have become, and now am, unable to reason correctly, and to devote my energies to the Great Work.'

This wouldn't do at all, so Brother All For Truth, or everything for the Sake of Truth, called upon and conjured up the Lords of Initiation to help him extirpate for once and for all 'the consciousness of the tendency to perceive the sensation' of being in love with Alostrael.

'I call upon Them by the Power of the Act of Truth done by me shortly after the Winter Solstice of the Eighteen Year of the Aeon, when I renounced my career and my material possessions without reservation that I might devote my energies wholly to the Great Work, that is, to the Establishment of the Law of Thelema as given by Aiwass through The Beast 666 (the man Aleister Crowley) in *The Book of the Law (Liber AL sub figura XXXI)* as in the MS. which I have seen, and which I here declare to command my allegiance, in loyal cooperation with The Beast its Prophet.

'Wherein if I fail, may the light of my body be darkened, and the virtue of manhood abide no more with me. Love is the law, love under will.

'Norman Mudd.'

The prayer of Brother O.P.V. and the command of The Great Wild Beast went forth. Men and women are but weak creatures, needing the gods to sustain them. After signing the oath, O.P.V. departed for the nearby village of Hammam Lif with the manuscript of The Beast's autobiography under his arm. He was off on a Magical Retirement for eight days, during which he was to think over everything well and truly.

'Alostrael wished me farewell. I said to her: "Well, good-bye. Look after yourself and The Beast, won't you?"

'She said, "Love is the law," and I replied, "Love under will." She then kissed and embraced me, saying three times, "I love you." I was wretchedly frozen, as usual, and very sad. I wanted to say, "You're a damned good comrade, and that is all that matters." But after a long silence I could only say, "Love under will." She said, "You will come back to us, won't you, and work together again?" I wanted to say both "Yes" and "I don't know." What I did say was, "Well, anyhow, we will work."'

Mudd's eight days' meditation and study of *The Confessions* of his Thrice Blessed and Thrice Illuminated Master (during the course of which he shed tears freely) only led him to an unexpected and tiresome conclusion about the woman he loved. Part of the Scarlet Woman's oath was that she should be 'loud and adulterous'. She could be loud, reasoned Mudd, but not being married, hardly adulterous. In order to rub out this imperfection someone should marry her. But who? Not The Beast, of course, for she could not be adulterous with her own husband. Modestly Mudd suggested that he should be Alostrael's bridegroom. This technical difficulty put Crowley in a quandary. 'We do not want a vulgar adulteress,' he replied. He had, however, to admit that there was some truth in what O.P.V. was saying. What should be done? The gods, of course, must be consulted. A ceremony, in which heroin was consumed, was therefore performed.

The gods were not favourably disposed to the marriage of Mudd and Leah. Their reply reached the ears of the supplicants in one hoarse shout, 'Restriction!' Crowley commented, 'Adultery does not imply marriage, no more than whoredom implies commerce.'

Shortly afterwards The Beast himself, tired of waiting for the Rich Man from the West, entered upon a Magical Retirement,

placing his fate wholly in the hands of the Secret Chiefs of the A. . . A. . .

He went by car to Nefta, taking Alostrael with him and his Negro boy, Mohammed ben Brahim. At Nefta they hired a camel and set off for the desert, walking by night and sleeping by day. On the first night after his departure from Nefta The Beast dreamt he was arrested by 'some English fool 'tec', whom he defied to extradite him. The crime? Fraud. He stood his trial at Buckingham Palace and awoke before the verdict was announced.

At midnight on the 24th October, 1923, Adoration was observed 'by some phallic crumbling mass' on the west side of a narrow inlet of the Chott; and on the 25th The Beast performed beneath the stars an act of sex-magic for 'Physical Energy in Perfect Freedom' with Mohammed ben Brahim; afterwards he smoked four pipes of hashish.

This Magical Retirement was intended to last at least a month, but on account of Alostrael's ill health they returned to Nefta after three days.

Crowley found that, looking at the sunset after dinner from the balcony of the hotel at Nefta, while the fumes of ether were intoxicating his brain, was an ecstatic visual experience. 'God! You ought to see Aldebroan from here!' he wrote to Mudd. 'Scarlet, azure, emerald, violet—all by ether!'

On the 1st November in the oasis of Nefta, after the Adoration of the Midnight Sun, he performed another act of sex-magic with Mohammed. Immediately afterwards, as Crowley rose from the bed and was attempting to find in the pitch darkness the sleeves of his scarlet abbai, or gown, his attention was attracted by what he took to be a lighted end of a cigarette. He thought at first it was Alostrael smoking. The light disappeared, then re-appeared. Neither Alostrael nor Mohammed could see it. The light continued to grow larger and smaller, come and go, and move within a small area. He compared it with the crimson sunset at the approach of a thunderstorm he had witnessed at Kairouan, or fresh blood on a bull's shoulder in bright sunlight.

'If this is not there in the ordinary physical sense, I am, for the first time in my life, subject to a genuine hallucination,' he said, and struck a match in order to point out where the light was, but the match burnt down and went out before he could find it. This time he compared it to the Milky Way. Now Alostrael said that she could see it. Soon it faded away altogether.

This phenomenon tantalized The Beast. Was it, he asked, an Elemental created by the opus (with Mohammed), 'or a deliberate token of the presence of one of the Secret Chiefs?'

The sojourn at Nefta came to a rather dismal end with Crowley's falling sick and being unable to perform the rites of

sex-magic; but Mohammed carried on with Alostrael for partner. Then he, too, fell sick.

'November 15. 1 a.m. Mohammed ben Brahim is quite seriously ill: in particular, he has lost the hearing of one ear. He was warned not to touch my Magick Bell; did so (of course) and gets it in the neck accordingly.'

The Beast and the Scarlet Woman began quarrelling furiously. Alostrael, whose health had steadily declined through the rigours of the Thelemic discipline, and who had been more or less ill since leaving Sicily, took to her bed. However, Crowley had by now recovered, which was fortunate, because Mohammed ben Brahim was still in a bad way. Crowley and Leah returned dejected to Tunis.

At the end of 1923, feeling that all magical currents were exhausted and that it was a sheer waste of time for him to remain in Tunis, Crowley left for Marseilles. He had secured his room in Paris by a deprecatory letter to Monsieur Bourcier, the proprietor of the Hotel de Blois, 50 rue Vavin. Here he had stayed before the war and referred to this address as his Paris headquarters.

'I have not forgotten that I owe you 2,000 francs or whatever it is. My novel [*The Diary of a Drug Fiend*] has been a tremendous success and I shall be able to pay you as soon as my royalties begin to come in. I meant to do so in the spring, but the tyrannical outrage which I suffered at the hands of Mussolini stripped me of every sou so that I have been in desperate need of money ever since. I am sure you will understand and sympathize. My troubles are principally due to my loyal and passionate love of France and the principles, political and ethical, of your great Republic.'

Crowley apparently changed his sentiments about the fair land of France, for, upon hearing in 1938 that the French President and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Lebrun, had been invited to pay a state visit to England, he exclaimed: 'Two maggots escaping from the rotting body of their vile country!'

Everyone now falls out of the picture except The Beast, the Ape, and their faithful shadow, Brother Omnia Pro Veritate.

'Beast left Tunis by the Gouv. Gen. Grèvy at 5 p.m. on Saturday,' wrote Mudd in his diary, 'with just about enough cash to visit Frank Harris at Nice and then go on to Paris. Alostrael and I are left stranded here with not enough money to pay even one week's board and lodging.'

On the 2nd January, 1924, Crowley had lunch in Nice with Frank Harris and his wife. The sixty-nine-year-old writer and adventurer was almost as hard up as Crowley, in spite of the success with the first volume of his infamous *My Life and Loves*. However, he managed to borrow 500 francs for the poet Aleister Crowley, who hadn't even his fare to Paris. The Beast observed in *The Magical Record* that Harris was insane, and called his memoirs the autobiography of a flea.¹ The one-time distinguished editor of the *Saturday Review* was looking for a job.

'My dear Crowley,' he wrote, 'Love is the law, for yourself first & then for all who deserve it! . . . For the first time I seem to have lost my way in life: I grope in the dark & stumble & hurt myself. I'd like to be made correspondent for some English paper: I know France and the Riviera better than most. If you can think of any way to get me such a post I'd be infinitely obliged.'

He told Crowley about the *Paris Evening Telegram*, which was for sale—he had been assured by 'an independent business man' that it was producing a profit of 120,000 francs a year. What a splendid solution this paper would be for both of them!

Persecution of the Thelemites

MAGICAL currents, like human energy, when once exhausted, take some time before they recharge themselves. Crowley, physically and mentally, was spent, at least for a while. He lay in bed in the Hotel de Blois, thought out impractical schemes and analysed his feelings. This was a distressing period in Crowley's harassed life. He had overstrained his finances, his health, and his imagination. After the shock of his expulsion from Sicily he had refused to believe that failure was possible for him. He was in the hands of the Secret Chiefs and even his errors were part of their plan for his welfare and ultimate success. Now, if anything, he was more convinced that he was in their hands, for he certainly wasn't in anyone else's hands, least of all in his own.

For the first time in his life he had reached a sense of hopelessness. He did not suffer that continual anguish which torments a more sensitive and weaker man; but he was calmly aware of the futility and worthlessness of his existence. And he called upon his Holy Guardian Angel to carry him away to the company of magi, saints and world teachers of the past. He dressed up in his

¹ *Autobiography of a Flea* is the title of an 18th-century English pornographic work.

magical robes and jewellery, clasped *The Book of the Law* in his hands, and lay back in bed, ready for the entrance of Aiwass to lead him through the abodes of the blessed and the damned. And in one memorable passage in his *Record* he accepted the picture of himself that those who contemned him drew so often and with so much spite:

‘Have I ever done anything of value, or am I a mere trifler, existing by a series of shifts of one kind or another? A wastrel, coward, man of straw? I can find no answer whatever, the obvious verdict being every time “Guilty”.’

He longed for death to relieve him of the burden of his existence, but at the arrival of a friend who ‘lends’ him a few hundred francs he took hope and called upon Aiwass to buck him up instead.

‘Aiwass! Thee I invoke. Restore my strength, my health, my energy, my courage! Let my genius—which is Thou!—flow upon the world to Thine eternal praise and glory! Aiwass! Thee, thee I invoke!’

His hopes were also raised by his belief in Frank Harris’s ability to purchase the *Paris Evening Telegram* and his willingness to share the editorship with him. He was not so hopeful about his own futile struggles for the same end.

‘My dear Crowley,’ wrote Harris, ‘I had a short note today from your Norman Mudd saying that you were still awaiting a reply from your German friend and asking me for information as to the *Paris Evening Telegram*. I am keeping things simmering as I told you, and have the money promised me from one source or another on or before the first of March. Get what you can on your side and we’ll all stand together. If you can get say 300,000 francs and I get the similar sum we’ll make the capital of the paper a couple of million francs, and then see how much we shall want to carry on year by year.’

Meanwhile O.P.V. and Alostrael, having spent their last sou and raised their final credit, were literally starving in Tunis and being driven into fits of alternate melancholy and rage by receiving no answer to their frantic appeals to their leader. They had pawned everything pawnable, except the sacred writings of The Beast and his magic ring. Then Crowley sent a big promise by wire, to which Mudd was only able to reply by fortunately finding a postcard already stamped. He addressed Crowley as his Beloved Father, informed him that he hadn’t eaten for thirty-six

hours and was completely indifferent whether he ever ate again. Alostrael, in desperation, had managed to leave for Cefalù, and it was touch and go whether she could send O.P.V. a few francs before he expired from starvation.

Crowley's next communication from Paris was in the form of a postcard informing Mudd that he was 'in bed with a bitch', which Mudd, under the circumstances, failed to find funny; instead, he began to have grave doubts as to Crowley's integrity. Shivering with cold, he carried the magic ring to the pawnbroker's and raised eighty-four francs on it.

Frank Harris had followed The Beast to Paris; he had a pathetic faith in Crowley's abilities to borrow 300,000 francs. Meanwhile could he return the 500 francs he had lent him in Nice? Crowley replied with an exegesis on Crowleyanity which he proposed as an alternative programme to editing the *Paris Evening Telegram*.

All day he went about dazed from drugs, which were his sole support. Since there was no energy or opportunity for starting new ventures he brooded over the old ones. A magical explanation was offered for the failure at Cefalù: owing to the small number of members of the Abbey 'the percentage of poison was too large to be turned into food; so we had to vomit it'.

He had tried everything and now, at the age of fifty, when he could only proclaim the Law of Thelema, he realized that what he really wanted was a job, some congenial work; a conclusion which a no less extravagant and rebellious poet, Arthur Rimbaud, had discovered at the age of nineteen.

But, firstly, he must cure himself of the drug habit. If only someone would look after him, transport him to Fontainebleau, supply him with adequate funds—then he could cure himself in forty-eight hours.

He fell asleep and dreamt that he was being beheaded. He pulled himself together with ether and, while under the influence of this drug, examined himself critically. He pawned his magic jewels, magic bell, and magic sword, his fur coat and cigarette-case. He lay in bed and stared at his two followers, who had managed at last to rejoin him, and warned them that he was 'a quite helpless infant, who must be fed and tended, and on no account frightened and hurt'. Magically interpreted, he was the Babe in the Abyss, waiting to be born as the Crowned and Conquering Child of Horus.

One prediction of the Chinese Oracle at this time came true with startling accuracy—'A great change is coming'. And on the morning of the 1st May, after dreaming that he (the Grand Master) had successfully convened the Witches' Sabbath, he and his Scarlet Woman were unceremoniously thrown out of their lodgings at 50 rue Vavin. In *The Confessions* Crowley mentions

the proprietor and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Boucier, with much affection and gratitude (they had treated him 'like a son'), and points a moral in their lives and conduct for all Englishmen who can't get on with the French. But the hotel had changed hands and the new proprietor insisted on treating Crowley like a lodger.

Well, anyhow, he'd been warned by the *Yi King*; and he interpreted his eviction as a New Birth.

Sixteen days later, after he had pronounced a curse on 50 rue Vavin and seen the hotel go smash, his old friend George Cecil Jones, who had introduced him to the Golden Dawn, J. W. N. Sullivan, and an Argentine gentleman called Alexander Montaner, 'who had been seeking me as a Master for some time,' unexpectedly turned up, more or less at the same time. While all four were sitting round a café table and taking turns at playing each other chess, Crowley bisected the base of an equilateral triangle with its apex to the West facing the moon and posited: 'Are not these the Three Holy Kings who have seen my Star in the West and come to worship me after my birth on May 1st?'

They had certainly brought offerings in the form of cash, food, and advice. 'Jones offered nothing but instruction in the King's Gambit. I beat him easily 3 times running. He had previously offered dinner but refused to worship me (in those actual words).'

He didn't know what was happening in Cefalù until Mudd told him that the Abbey would be sold-up unless he could pay immediately the long-overdue rent. And a letter from Ninette brought the news that Leah's sister, Sarah, had written to say that she was coming to collect her nephew Dionysus. Crowley hurriedly replied: 'Should Sarah come to Cefalù she is not to be admitted to the Abbey, or allowed to talk to the children. Don't parley with her: throw her out quick!'

Frustrated and furious, Crowley turned upon Mudd, who was ascribing their plight to the fact that The Beast had not fulfilled certain commands of *The Book of the Law*. 'You must get on with the writing of the "Comment" on *Liber Legis*,' said O.P.V. 'And sacrifice cattle little and big, as it is written.' Finally O.P.V. urged The Beast to purloin the stele of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu before it was too late. If Fuller would not help they must do it by themselves. O.P.V. quoted from *Liber Legis*: 'Get the stele of revealing itself; set it in thy secret temple. . . . It shall not fade but miraculous colour shall come back to it day after day.'

Crowley dismissed all these entreaties as nothing more or less than 'ghoul-grim threats', and poured forth his hatred upon his disciple. Everything that Mudd did for him was really a disguised attack; the heroin and cocaine that the ex-professor of mathematics brought him, after descents into the Parisian under-

world, were only part of a diabolical plan to kill him off quickly. Omnia Pro Veritate was less than a mollusc, for a mollusc has organic form at least. He was merely a liquid mass of loathsome, detestable putrescence; and if Alostrael still associated with him, that was because she loved putrefaction and fulfilled her rôle as Scarlet Woman. ('What a vast cup she must have to hold so much abomination as just that one lump of rotten meat!')

Mudd was still in love with Leah. The appeal in Tunis to the Lords of Initiation to exorcise his passion for the Scarlet Woman had failed. And he still wanted to marry her. That, he wrote to Crowley, was his magical destiny. To this Crowley replied that his proper magical gesture would be to get a first-rate job, save some money, then insure himself heavily and commit suicide 'so that the prophecies may be fulfilled'.

But in spite of all this abuse and contempt, the page was not yet blotted before Crowley added a charitable word for poor Mudd. 'The wheel comes full circle,' he wrote. 'One must love this putrefaction and so impose on it the beginning of form and so the beginning of Beauty.' And, of course, one mustn't take this criticism of Frater O.P.V. to indicate any lack of 'great affection and respect'.

Alostrael, too, came in for her round of blows. 'Talking of my love for putrefaction,' said Crowley, 'this is the root of my love for the lowest whores, Negresses, Olga of the broken nose and so on — up to the Tenth Impurity, the skeleton Leah!'

But we mustn't take these quarrels too seriously. They were no more than frequent storms in a wintry period.

* * *

Crowley reminded Mudd of his promise to vindicate his Master's good name. How could this best be done? The Chinese Oracle was consulted. The *Sunday Express* was held responsible for the decline and fall of the Abbey, and as The Beast had been unable by fair means or magic to overcome this paper or its proprietor, Lord Beaverbrook, the best thing to do was to come to some sort of terms with them. Mudd should call at the offices of the *Sunday Express* and appeal to Beaverbrook's and the editor's good faith to repair the damage they had done. As a policy it was considered good magic, for legal attack 'would only make them defiant'. Having conquered the *Sunday Express*, The Beast could then go on to become a kind of national hero 'by intervening in Labour disputes and the like'.

After much delay and inward struggle, Mudd finally produced an *Open Letter to Lord Beaverbrook* and took it along to Herbert Clarke's English printing works in rue St. Honoré, where it was produced as a fifteen-page pamphlet. It was sent to all the leading English papers, to well-known personalities who are, or were,

concerned with social justice, like Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Emma Goldman, Miguel de Unamuno (then in exile in Paris); to members of the Order, to friends, sympathizers, and to Scotland Yard. There was a pile of 3000 of them on Mudd's table, and only the lack of 3000 stamps prevented him from distributing the lot. Appropriate letters were enclosed.

'Dear Arnold Bennett, I am sure you remember me as habitually wearing the largest ring that you had ever seen on any human hand.

'As the enclosed shows I have been blackjacked and am only just beginning to pick myself up.

'I am sure that you will help me to secure a full public investigation of this abominable business. All sorts of un-English methods are being used to stifle the discussion. They seem principally to rely on bringing me to actual starvation before I can get back at them. For the honour of English letters, strike!

'Yours sincerely,
'Aleister Crowley.'

Frank Harris, who also, of course, got the pamphlet, replied encouragingly:

'My dear Crowley, I need hardly assure you of my wish to help you, but I'm nearly powerless. If Lord Beaverbrook had brought out such a libel on me, I'd rejoice and would find, I am sure, some powerful English solicitor who'd go halves with me and make his Lordship pay and pay heavily.

'I don't know what you've done or what they'll say you've done; but there's a way of confining them rigorously to proving their allegation without your needing to go into the box. There should be £20,000 in such a libel action. Why don't you put Mudd on to find out exactly? If I were you, I'd study every view of the case dispassionately and then give Beaverbrook Hell! As it is I'm here correcting a second vol of *My Life* that no one wants and trying to find an English publisher for my *Oscar Wilde* books which made me a small fortune in U.S.A. But no English bidders alas! Yours ever, Frank Harris.'

The *Open Letter* is a quaint document. It has some of the qualities of a morality play. The villain of the piece is the editor of the *Sunday Express*; Lord Beaverbrook is supplicated as if he were some impartial Heavenly Power guarding the affairs of men, and the chief rôle is played by Crowley, who is a kind of King Lear and Christian bound in one, very much more sinned against than sinning.

Mudd's case was that the attacks on Crowley in the *Sunday Express* were one mass of lies, and that the statements (a) that when short of cash for his Abbey Crowley sent his women on the streets of Palermo, and (b) that he had once served a prison sentence in America for 'procuring young girls', were especially untrue. In point of fact, both accusations were untrue as far as I have been able to discover.

During May, 1924, Crowley and Leah went to Chelles sur Marne, stayed at the inn *Au Cadran Bleu*. Mudd carried the fight to England, where, penniless and miserable, he distributed the *Open Letter*. He had for company an elderly gentleman from South Africa, Mr. Adam Gray Murray, or Brother Virtute et Labore, a temporary civil servant who was axed at the end of the war. All I know about this Brother was that he had a long white beard, gave what little strength he had to the new religion, and died quietly from starvation in a public institution—but not before he had visited the Sacred Abbey at Cefalù. Crowley was always able to get a meal¹ and he could always find someone to put him up: his followers were not so lucky. In Mudd's magical diary for the 19th November, 1924, this ticket is pasted:

No. 10513

METROPOLITAN ASYLUMS BOARD
HOMELESS POOR

Please admit:

NORMAN MUDD

He gave his age as 35, his occupation that of a Literary Agent; the colour of his hair, *brown*; eyes, *blue*; height, *5 feet 4 inches*; his place of birth, Manchester.

The Beast wandered along by the Marne and asked the Chinese Oracle for a sign. This was not another Magical Retirement, although Alostrael called it so, but simply a marking time. Three months went by and nothing disturbed his calm but a mild rumpus with the proprietor of *Au Cadran Bleu* over a negress whom he entertained in his room. His diary fell to pieces, after beginning well with a poem which was also a prayer:

Here, by those banks where once the fullest flood
That hate could fill was met, and stemmed, and rolled
Back, in a mist of agony and blood

¹ 'Dear Sir,' wrote the anarchist Emma Goldman to Norman Mudd, 'I fear you have failed to understand what I told you when you were here. I repeat I am too poor to be a help to anybody just now. Neither can I lend my name as support to any undertaking until I myself am on my feet. . . . I cannot believe that you are so hard pressed after seeing Mr. Crowley last night at one of the cafés with a lot of his friends. . . .'

The lazy waters swirl, dull green and gold
Seeking eternally the eternal sea.
O waters that no might of man may stay
Bear on your easy breast my thoughts; set free
My equal spirit to its ordered way!
O waters, heal this wide, this unavailing
Wound, that no skill of medicine may redress
My soul, a steady ship, go idly sailing
In fancy down your leafy loveliness!
So may I turn anon with lance and sword
To lead once more the legions of the Lord!

He felt he had nothing more to say or to do: he had said and done everything. All that remained now was to have the Mark of The Beast tattooed on his forehead, on his breast, and in the palm of his right hand. He should also have his name changed by deed poll to 'The Beast 666', but these measures he rejected as 'theatrical'.

The Storm Fiend, his poetical title for an asthmatic attack, was still overwhelming him, sending him flying to his drugs. In a moment of insight he called asthma *maladie imaginaire*; and in a letter to Mudd he made the surprising statement that heroin, instead of allaying its painful symptoms, actually produces them. 'It seems that feeding on heroin gives strength, but it starts asthma, bronchitis and Co. until I have accumulated a surplus sufficient to calm the condition from above, just as physical prostration kills it from below.'

Mr. Alexander Montaner, who was nibbling at the new religion, paid him and Leah a visit at Chelles. The Beast made good company, and the spectacle of the Scarlet Woman seeing visions in the moonlight was of considerable occult value.

* * *

The magical current had grown rather weak when suddenly there appeared unto The Beast another seeker after truth, an American lady of thirty-two whose spirit was urging her along the Wizard Way. This was Dorothy Olsen, on a post-war trip to Europe. In the summer of 1924 she made the pilgrimage to Chelles, and soon became one of the merry family of Thelemites, calling Crowley 'Beast', his Scarlet Woman 'Leah', and Mudd 'Mudd'. Her handwriting is huge and wavering, without that quality of stubborn inner resistance of Alostrael's sharp penmanship. Miss Olsen was certainly seeking a Master, but with feebleness, like someone old and near death.

The Beast was immediately roused from his languor, and on one September day, after Dorothy had entered the magic circle, taken the oath of Probationer of the A. . . A. . ., and been handed

out the magical name of 'Astrid', he promptly unseated Alostrael—the 'woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast'—and fled with this new rider astride his flanks. There was a crash and a crackling of burning bridges. As a gesture to the gods whose prophet he was, he again took his Great Beast ring of gold and rubies into the pawnshop. He ironically commented that, apart from Sister Astrid's dollars, all that was left was his collar, cigarette-case, portfolio, and tobacco pouch; and added, with the efficiency of a saleroom clerk, 'possibly a few other odds and ends'.

He was in high spirits. Sister Astrid had changed the death magnetism, which had been slowly strangling him, to a new life. Even the sky at Chelles had been transformed at her approach, 'notably blue violet', the like of which he had never witnessed in France before, and rarely in the more exotic parts of the world. He asked the Secret Chiefs for their instructions, and with one voice they urged him to advance as their Warrior Lord.

The Beast and Dorothy Olsen were whirled away to Paris and to Chantilly, like Faust to the Brocken, and Alostrael was left to wring her long, thin hands, starve, and call upon Ra-Hoor-Khuit for help. But what could she expect? Even men who have not taken the Oath of Magus¹ commonly fall in love with other women and desert wife and mistress. When, some days later, they returned to Paris, Crowley called on Leah—'invaded' is the word he used to describe his visit—to tell her that the Secret Chiefs had ordered him to spend the winter on the North African coast with Sister Astrid and that they were to go alone—'no impedimenta!' He didn't know when he would be back.

Leah's diary is missing for the period of these events, so we do not know what she thought of this design of the gods. Crowley, however, briefly entered into *The Magical Record* an indication of her emotions: 'Leah collapsed.'

Alostrael, left alone in Paris, without money, in poor health, and in the grip of the drug fiend, passed into the abyss, not the Abyss that leads from this sorrowful earth to the abode of the Secret Chiefs, but the abyss of human misery and mental anguish. She was no longer the Scarlet Woman whose appearance, robed and trance-like, in the temple had startled Betty May, and whose solemn oaths were inscribed in the Abbey's *Record*:

I dedicate myself wholly without stint to the Great Work.

I will raise myself in pride:

I will follow Ra-Hoor-Khuit in His way:

I will work the work of wickedness:

I will kill my heart:

I will be loud and adulterous:

¹ *Inter alia*, to prostitute his body to the lusts of all and sundry, like the ancient Egyptian priests.

I will be covered with jewels and rich garments :
I will be shameless before all men :
I, for token thereof, will freely prostitute my body to the
lusts of each and every Living Creature that shall desire it :
I claim the title Mystery of Mysteries, BABALON the
Great and the Number 156, and the Robe of the Woman
of Whoredoms and the Cup of Abominations :

Witness mine Hand. Alostrael.

Holes were being drilled into her chest and (in a passport photograph pasted into her diary during September, 1924) her eyes shone with the brightness of the consumptive and the far-away gaze of a woman possessed. Her notebooks, 'The Magical Diary of Babalon', told the story of the Bride of Chaos, as she fancifully called herself.

A wire arrived from Ninette. Sarah had carried out her threat; she had descended upon the Abbey and taken away Dionysus. Leah seems to have been more annoyed with the American Consul at Palermo for failing to stop her than upset at the loss of her child. She vented her impotent rage in an abusive letter to him and concluded with 'Yours in full sanity, Leah Faesi'.

Dionysus was taken to America. 'It was like taming a little wild beast to bring him to the normal life that is the right of all children,' wrote his aunt, Renata Faesi. Thus poor Dionysus was dragged away from the new world of 'Do what thou wilt', back to the old, bad world of 'You'll do what you're told'.

In the company of a friend Leah dragged herself about rain-drenched Paris after an unsuccessful visit to the American Consulate (they, apparently, couldn't, or wouldn't, do anything about Dionysus) and fell down in the street outside her lodgings. Not having paid the rent, her belongings had been removed from her room, but the landlady brought out a chair for her to sit on in the hall.

Could she have her room back? Landlady disappeared to ask landlord. The answer was No.

Leah staggered up and immediately collapsed. A fragment of her diary gives an *aperçu* of this dismal scene.

'By this time the woman prop (I call her that for short) had regained her old and natural attitude. I lay on the floor shivering. Not a soul stirred anything but their tongues. They jeered at me—sick indeed! No, doped! They said I must go out. I tried to go and fell again. More jeers—a crowd and then the police.'

Was this not the punishment threatened in *The Book of the Law*?

'Let the Scarlet Woman beware! If pity and compassion and tenderness visit her heart; if she leave my work to toy with old sweetnesses; then shall my vengeance be known . . . I will cast her out from men; as a shrinking and despised harlot shall she crawl through dusk-wet streets, and die cold and an-hungred.' (*Liber Legis*, Part III v. 43.)

She passed through the abyss, the dark night of the soul, and found, at the end of it, that she had still a will to live. She looked around desperately; she must get well—that was her first task. Strangely, the only reality that swam before her, the spar to which she clung in this sea of misery, was the religion of the Crowned and Conquering Child of Horus, Crowleyanity, of those entities called Ra-Hoor-Khuit, Nuit, and Hadit, that she had been evoking and banishing these last six years since she gave up teaching singing to school-children in the Bronx.

'Praise unto Ra-Hoor-Khuit!

'Babalon is risen and the children of the New Aeon live and will thrive!'

She must live. The Great Work had still to be performed—the establishment for all mankind of the law of Do What Thou Wilt—and it was her destiny to perform it. Meanwhile she was tormented by the silence of The Beast—upon discovering his address she had wired him for some money, or for just one word of hope.

Out of Leah's confused and conflicting emotions two lines of thought regarding Aleister Crowley—the one human, the other magical—can be discerned. On the human plane she still loved him, and could not bear to give him up. If she could not live with him, then let her die with him. 'I should have liked,' she wrote, 'as a human creature, to have died in the arms of The Beast 666, who, as will be noted in my very first diary (commencing March 21, 1919), was, and is, my lover, my mate, my Father, my child, and everything else that Woman needs in Man.' And on the magical plane, in the realm of those ideas which were concerned with the establishing of the Law of Thelema, she reluctantly recognized that a new Scarlet Woman had arisen and taken over her role. Obediently Leah bowed her head and stepped aside to let Sister Astrid pass. 'A word to Dorothy. She is the Scarlet Woman and she will show her failure or her success quite differently from previous Scarlet Women for she is the mother of a race of a new dynasty.' But in the Café du Dôme, where Leah and Crowley were well known, it was simply said that Crowley had deserted Leah and gone off with another woman.

As the days grew shorter Leah went from bad to worse. She seriously considered committing suicide and prepared her last

(magical) testament. One night she awoke, thinking she had heard a voice crying out her name: 'Leah! Leah! Leah!' Thrice, distinctly, her name was despairingly called. She was drifting away, out into a sea of death. 'Leah! Leah! Leah!'

Frater Omnia Pro Veritate, Brother Everything for the Sake of Truth, returned to France from an unsuccessful campaign with his *Open Letter* in England. He was quite down and out, had been struggling along by defrauding landladies, by begging from his few friends, and extracting the last pound note from his poor and bewildered parents.

'Your letter and enclosures [i.e. the *Open Letter*] reached us last evening,' wrote his father, 'and both mother and I are deeply concerned and very despondent about the whole affair. We hope you are quite sure of your facts, for the events referred to seem to relate to the period of your absence from this country when you were thousands of miles away from your hero and therefore not fully cognizant of his doings. If you are relying mainly on his word, I am afraid you are trusting on a very broken reed. You know we never liked him and have not the slightest sympathy in his cause. We have always looked on him as your evil genius right from your Cambridge days, and are terribly afraid that he will blight your whole life. As to our future, it cannot, under the most favourable circumstances, be very extensive and therefore the limit cannot be "too distant". We hate to plead poverty and therefore refrain from harrowing your feelings, but I do not think you should ask us to assist in the slightest degree a hero and a cause which we have not the slightest sympathy with. Moreover, we feel that time, money and effort are all thrown away in bolstering up or trying to whitewash this discreditable affair. Mother is deeply grieved and cannot see a solitary glimmer in this darkness—she sends the enclosed for your very own sake. . . .'

Mudd's clothes were literally falling from him: he looked such an abject and horrible wreck that it had been a subject of speculation among the Brethren as to whether or not his appearance at the offices of the *Sunday Express* would wring the heart of James Douglas and enable the Thelemites to win a kind of moral victory over their enemies. Now he tramped the streets of Paris with the ex-Scarlet Woman, the former Whore of the Stars, between whose small, flat breasts was branded the mark of The Beast, talking to her about the relationship of modern scientific theory to the greatest work of the age, *The Book of the Law*.¹ He was 'almost constantly unhappy at the thought that The Beast might be fundamentally unfaithful to *The Book of the Law*'. They dis-

¹ From the diary of Norman Mudd.

cussed plans for the re-establishment of the Abbey. They were still members of the Order; both had, at last, received instructions from The Beast to get on with the job—Mudd to vindicate Crowley's good name and Alostrael to type out *The Confessions*—during his Magical Retirement with Sister Astrid. Although in their despair nothing seemed worth doing, and the work of establishing the Law unreal—the word in this connection is Mudd's own—the Law of Thelema was still their sole purpose of living.

There are pathetic notes of joy in Leah's diary when a friend gave her a few francs or when Miss Nina Hamnett sent her ten shillings. Professor Norman Mudd also had his triumphs: he sold four empty medicine bottles for sixty-five centimes and bought himself some cigarettes.

Alostrael's mind began to take on that attitude which regards everything as symbolic. She thought animistically like a primitive. Words were realities. Every event had its magical meaning, every simple occurrence was interpreted as a result of messages from the gods, the influence of the planets, the activities of malign or benign currents. She, too, consulted the *Yi King* daily, the tables of astrology, and worked out the cabbalistic meanings of names. Visions and dreams were recorded and scrutinized. Contradictions were easily resolved, and where there were none they mysteriously appeared. In her cold Paris room she sat in yoga meditation and offered up her magical prayers.

'O Thou God of War and Vengeance,¹ Hear me, Alostrael, who invokes Thee to help us to do Thy Work.

'Be Thou our strength, our force, and vigour of our arms, as Nuit is our refuge, and Hadit our Light, that we may go on, go on in Thy strength, and fight as brothers.

'Hear me, Thou Lord of the Double Wand of Power. Unto Thee I eat of this cake of light, that it may breed lust and power of lust in me.

'Hear Thou me, O Lord of Silence and of Strength. Show me Thy Way that I may follow Thee in it.

'Give Thou of Thy wisdom to Our Lord The Beast 666, whom Nuit has called Her scribe Ank-f-n-Khonsu, the priest of the princes; whom Hadit hails as the prophet of Nu, the prophet of Had, the prophet of Ra-Hoor-Khu; and whom Thou hast termed O blessed Beast, that he may comment on this Threefold Book of Law, with Hadit burning in his heart. . . .'

A plan came into her mind. Crowley was the Sun, but she was the Great Mother. Mudd was the son of the Sun, born of Crowley. She would perform a magical ceremony with *Omnia Pro Veritate*. At first Leah was not sure what sort of ceremony it

¹ i.e. Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

should be. It had begun by her telling him about the colours of the Thelemic banner: red, white, and brown.

'By uniting Red and White, and Black and White, we would preserve the original Red and White and destroy the Black forever by merging it with these two and forming a third colour.'

Suddenly she realized the nature of the ceremony she wanted to perform—a Magical Marriage. She would marry Brother Omnia Pro Veritate in spite of the gods ('The Lords of Initiation'), and of The Beast who had expressly forbidden it.

Firstly, there was to be a Magical Wedding Feast. She took him into a restaurant and ordered tea, bread, ham and figs, which represented respectively, the colours of gold, white, red and black. Unfortunately the waiter came back to say that they had no figs. Figs were absolutely essential, so Leah sent Mudd out into the street to find some. He returned with black grapes instead, and was promptly sent off again. He came back with only four figs after 'a very very long time'. By now the tea was cold, but no matter.

Poor Mudd, he hadn't the slightest idea what was being prepared for him.

'I then proceeded to tell him that this was a marriage feast now that the Prince had found the slipper of Cinderella and could carry her off to his castle. And that Parsifal, having found his lance, would now be able to use it.'

What Mudd felt at hearing this news I do not know, for his diary is not extant for this occasion, but I can only think that he experienced great joy, for his wish to marry Alostrael, the only woman he had ever loved, had remained with him all the time. Before meeting Alostrael 'I had always regarded marriage with any woman soever as absurd and out of the question for me,' he wrote at the time the idea first occurred to him.

Each took a grape, a sip of cold tea, a tiny piece of ham, and a morsel of white bread. As for the figs, which had held up the proceedings, they were left untouched, because they had suddenly reminded Leah of the story of Adam and Eve, and anything out of the Bible was equivalent to blasphemy.

Mudd was now Parsifal and Leah instructed him in the use of his lance. She saw herself being reborn; the myths and fairy-tales provided the clue to their new life. All her creative force would be used to teach Parsifal, her son, how to use his lance and win the good fight.

But firstly, a letter to Ankh-f-n-Khonsu, the Priest-Prince of Thebes, whom Crowley claimed as his avatar, his first incarnation during the 26th Egyptian dynasty. And Parsifal was ordered out of the restaurant again to send this letter off straight away. The nature of the message is not known.

Parsifal took a long time to raise a magical current and contact Ankh-f-n-Khonsu. Leah described it as an eternity before he returned. Then more talk on magic and mythology during which Alostrael used her powers as 'great Mother' to fascinate and inspire Parsifal. Finally they went off to her room to consummate their marriage, 'in which we did reverence unto Ra-Hoor-Khuit.'

Mudd was amazed at Leah's revelation about himself and Parsifal, and for a brief while he was comforted and happy. 'Babalon gave me the "force of Babalon"—which I enjoyed for some hours thereafter in the form of unusual mental calm and serenity and a general exaltation of energies.' They were with each other daily during the weeks that followed, searching for new ways and means to teach their new religion, carry out all The Beast's fiats from Tunis, and perform regularly those acts of sex-magic which had been part of the routine work of the Abbey.

'Opus I. For the establishment of the new civiliation. With a man who does not know who he is, but commonly called Norman Mudd.'

It was not surprising that Mudd didn't know who he was. He had been Crowley's chief assistant, but with the dethronement of Leah he, too, had come in for a fall. Adam Gray Murray, although a newcomer to the Order, had been promoted over his head. There was a certain logic about this, for Crowley's patience with Mudd was almost exhausted. 'I shall be very glad,' The Beast wrote to Leah, 'when the 42nd misfortune from that one-eyed man is over.'

The Rebirth of Alostrael

WHILE Leah and Norman Mudd starved and moped about the Paris streets, Crowley and Dorothy Olsen were proclaiming the Law and worshipping Horus in the sunshine of North Africa, an ideal place for a winter holiday. The stimulus of a (new) woman had always a miraculous effect on Crowley's health. He was delighted with Dorothy. In his *Book of Oaths* he wrote of her:

I have got the girl I wanted,
(In my heart and dagger thrusts);
Her wicked little bat's eyes slanted,
Gleaming with unfathomable lusts,
Glittering slits through which the soul
Burns in hell like a live coal.

They sailed from Marseilles to Tunis and while in the Mediterranean The Beast grew so elated that he drafted out a manifesto *To Man*. 'Given in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea.' The

manifesto was aimed at the Theosophists, who were about to announce the emergence of the Christ, or the World Teacher, in the consciousness of Jemma Krishnamurti, who had been trained for this rôle since he was adopted as a baby by Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater.

At Tunis Crowley found a jeweller who converted his Great Beast ring (retrieved from the pawnshop at the last moment before departing from Paris) into a jewel for the forehead of his new Scarlet Woman. From Tunis, which lies inland, they went to Carthage on the coast, and then to the next town, Sidi bou Said, where the manifesto *To Man* was issued.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. My term of Office upon the Earth being come in the year of the foundation of the Theosophical Society¹ I took upon myself, in my turn, the sin of the whole World, that the Prophecies might be fulfilled, so that Mankind may take the Next Step from the Magical Formula of Osiris to that of Horus.²

And mine Hour being now upon me, I proclaim my Law.

And the word of the Law is *thelema*.

[&c. &c.]

Whoso understandeth may seek through

D. OLSEN

Sidi bou Said (Tunisia).

Crowley was very impressed by the fact that he was born in the year the Theosophical Society was founded, and as he considered that he, instead of Annie Besant, should have been Madame Blavatsky's heir, he thought this no mere coincidence. His feeble attempt to jostle Mr. Krishnamurti from the Throne of Christ and sit on it himself was, however, a suitable parody of that unworthy performance which the Theosophists call The Order of the Star.

The magic of The Beast was now taking effect on Dorothy. Back in their hotel room, as they were undressing to go to bed, she suddenly felt 'a presence—calm, strong and gentle', but could not identify it. Was it Aiwass come to bless Crowley's union with another Scarlet Woman, or some other messenger from the Secret Chiefs?—I must confess that I am entirely in the dark on this point. Dorothy immediately put on her magic headpiece and Crowley nervously struck the magic bell, but the 'presence' never manifested itself.

The next day they went by train along the east coast of Tunisia to Sfax, the Chinese Oracle pronouncing for the journey:

¹ i.e. 1875, the year of Crowley's birth.

² An obscure part of Crowley's creed. He paralleled the worship of Osiris with that of Christ and of Horus with himself: Crowleyanity.

'There rest, under the canopy of night.' From Sfax they went inland to Tozeur and Nefta. Then, abandoning train and car, they hoisted themselves on to camels and set off through the desert. They were now in the Sahara, crossing the Great Eastern Desert. Fifty years before two French explorers had been murdered by savage tribes in this part of the world. But nothing untoward happened to Crowley and Dorothy Olsen as they wandered among the great dunes, apart from a 'magical attack of flies'.

They ran into an Arab, Abd el Aziz ben Mohammed, who asked them to lunch at his house six kilometres south of El Oued. He was a mighty Marabout chieftain, was this Arab, and the walls of his house were hung with rich carpets. In Crowley he had recognized a Secret Master. Accordingly The Beast and his Concubine were entertained lavishly. Eighteen dishes—*hors d'œuvre*—leading up to a whole roasted sheep which was brought in on a vast copper tray. 'We tore off the crackling with great joy,' wrote Crowley. Afterwards Abd el Aziz ben Mohammed escorted his guests into El Oued.

Bidding good-bye, The Beast saluted him and thanked him in the name of the Order which he had the honour to command—it had been a pleasant climax to their eight days' journey across the desert. They pushed on to Touggourt, which is on the other side of this stretch of the Great Eastern Desert, and then took the train north to Biskra—'as rotten as I thought it was'. The view of the heavens, however, was as good at Biskra as anywhere in that part of the world. In a letter to Brother Virtute et Labore, the venerable Adam Gray Murray, who had been rowing with Mudd and had actually kicked him in the backside, Crowley said: 'Leah wires that you are ill with inflated Ego. I hope not: it's the one thing that could send you off the rails. Ah! could you but see the Stars as one sees them from here and realize the Vastness of Things, there would be no danger. Your work is only important as is that of any other grain of dust: one error and the whole machine goes out of gear.'

The magical pilgrimage was now coming to an end; it had lasted almost three months. Lack of funds and the illness of Dorothy were making things rather dull. She was suffering from the recurrence of an old complaint which made her occasionally fall off her mule. The exhilaration of a new Scarlet Woman, and a change of surroundings, seem to have relieved Crowley of some of his dependence upon drugs, but before the Tunisia trip was over he was again being rather reckless with hashish, cocaine and heroin.

While Crowley and Dorothy were in North Africa, a series of events, which can only be described as the fulfilment of the scriptures, began to take place; for it led up to the appearance of

Rich Man from the West, one Frater Uranus, whom *The Book of the Law* had predicted. The first significant event was that a certain Herr Traenker, of Gera in Thuringia, Germany, had a great illumination in which he saw Aleister Crowley as the head of a group of Masters. As Traenker was the Grand Master of the O.T.O. for Germany, the name and fame of Brother Baphomet were not unfamiliar to him; and Traenker was thinking about another international head of the Order, for Theodor Reuss had just died. His illumination, therefore, foretold the ascent of Crowley to the supreme position in the Order. To quote from the relevant documents: 'From then onwards Traenker, who had an extraordinary gift for illumination, acknowledged Crowley implicitly.' He got in touch with The Beast, who had returned to Paris, and invited him to a conference in Germany during the summer of 1925, leaving it to Brother Uranus to pay his fare.

A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and among his own kin. In England Crowley had been denounced as a cannibal and as 'the Wickedest Man in the World', but in Germany, home of mystics, where the O.T.O. had been founded, The Great Wild Beast 666, with his pagon gods and berserk law of doing one's will, found his greatest response. The Law of Thelema seems to have been especially appreciated by the countrymen of Frederick the Great and Hitler.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1925, Crowley again set off with Dorothy for North Africa. One night in Tunis he went into a trance. It was so intense that he nearly fainted. Brother Bar-On (Mr. William George Barron), who was present on the occasion, bore witness to the numerous magical manifestations which occurred at the time. When the Beast emerged from this trance he wrote down the startling vision he had seen. It was published in 1938, entitled *The Heart of the Master*, by Khaled Khan. It is a short, apocalyptic work:

I waken from the horror. Every nerve is numb, every muscle frozen, every bone one ache, my blood throbbing with poison.

But the shambles is now dimly to be seen.

What? Can the Voice have spoken Truth after all? Is then that Star a Sun, whose light is at last piercing the foul mists of massacre, whose heat is forcing the congealed miasma to steam skyward in those murky banks of dim grey cloud?

Hark! Yes, the few that are still alive have seen what rouses them to lift their crippled arms, to stare with blear bloodshot eyes, to jabber with broken jawbones and torn tongues.

'For Christ's sake,' screams an emasculate rag of flesh, 'don't look at that damned Star!'

'We're lost,' another squeals.

'The Beast!' yells a third maniac.

A letter of Dorothy's which, on Crowley's advice, she wrote to a friend in America throws a light upon her hopes, temperament, and the general financial situation.

'I am hoping to be married very shortly and I look naturally to my future husband for assistance. Unfortunately he can do nothing until he has succeeded in putting over certain important business deals, and we are very sorely hampered in this matter for lack of ready money, we need \$1,000 to carry us over, and if you would lend us this sum you would be doing us a great favour, we could certainly repay you by the end of the summer. I understand he [Crowley] wrote to a friend of yours asking him to come over in the hope of interesting him. There are main projects which I can personally assure you are sound and straightforward.

'I have known this gentleman intimately for over 9 months, and I can assure you that you are making the greatest possible mistake in treating him with distrust and suspicion.

'I had a letter today from a friend which makes it clear that certain people whom I know to be unscrupulous have been poisoning the minds of my friends in New York against both him and me. You have known of me for quite a number of years and you ought to know that I have always behaved with absolute decency and generosity and that I would not mix myself up with anything doubtful.

'The distress we are now in is absolutely not our fault, it is due precisely to this scandalmongering. . . .'

These views and explanations were as much Crowley's as Dorothy's, for The Beast wrote the letter and Sister Astrid only retouched it. They had run out of money, and there are quite a few entries in Crowley's *Record* of acts of sex-magic 'to get money for Astrid'.

Crowley's thoughts took a backward turn and a melancholy hue; but he dismissed them with the fantasy that he was dead already and it was therefore absurd to be sorry about anything.

As for Leah, who was of greater character and of incomparably greater faith than Dorothy, she was being forced to sell herself on the Paris streets in order to keep alive. (And invoking Ra-Hoor-Khuit at the same time, for with her sex, even in an act of common or garden prostitution, had always to be combined with *magick*.) Like Mudd, she now no longer knew who she was, and commenced a new diary with 'Diary of?—Known on Earth as Leah Faesi'. But in a moment of hope and revolt she wrote on a postcard this one sentence from *The Book of the Law*, 'And in his woman called the Scarlet Woman is all power given', and sent it to The Beast.

All power had been given to her, and from the All Powerful nothing can be taken away. She still rode upon The Beast. Babalon had arisen!

But when this exultation had passed, she saw she must break away from Crowley and find her own life. She could not do so at once—she was too identified with his demoniac spirit; she could only slowly and painfully wean herself from him. She began by informing Crowley that she could best help him by relieving him of the worry of any material support of her. But by this she was only attributing her own tenderness to him, for there is nothing to suggest that Crowley was worried for a moment about leaving her to starve. For the first time in six years she separated her possessions from his and wrote and asked him what he would like her to do with his books and papers which she still had.

In January, 1925, she found a job in 'a dirty little restaurant in Montparnasse'. For thirteen hours a day she washed up, peeled potatoes, and carried coal, and all the time was terrified that the proprietor might find out who she was—the Scarlet Woman of The Beast 666—and give her the sack.

Suddenly, one spring morning, Alostrael bought a third-class ticket to Marseilles and set off, ill and drab, for Tunis. She had received a summons from The Beast: Sister Astrid was expecting a baby and she should come and help. Poor Ninette, marooned at the Abbey and enduring an existence of misery and poverty, was in the same condition. A Sicilian peasant boy, who had been initiated into the Thelemic mysteries, was the father of 'Master Bastard the III', as Ninette called this fourth child:

'I have had a tremendous resentment at my own self to allowing myself to become pregnant against my wishes and I still have; but I will accept him as doing his free will in choosing me for a mother, and he will get the best I have to give.'

Dorothy was neither in good health nor in good spirits and the presence of Leah upset her further. Only the strongest natures can stand up to the pressure of *magick*. On Friday the 24th April, at 11.11 p.m., a much ruffled magus, lying in bed in his Tunis hotel, wrote into his *Record*:

'A single drink of rum (on top of a good deal of mental worry during the day) was enough to induce in Dorothy Olsen an attack of acute mania. Lying in bed, close cuddled, I nearly asleep, she suddenly started to scratch my face without the least warning, with a spate of the filthiest incoherent abuse of me and everybody connected with me.

'There had been a good deal of irritation and snappiness

during the afternoon and evening, with one or two beginnings of the regular ravings: but no one took any notice, and they subsided.'

Leah had arrived in Tunis at the end of March, 1925. At the beginning of May Crowley and Dorothy left for France. They found they did not, after all, require Alostrael, for Dorothy had had a miscarriage. Leah did not seem to mind being left in Tunis; by now she had developed some detachment from Crowley. Something of the new Leah that had been germinating in her had at last broken through to the surface. 'This is the first time,' she wrote, 'that I have been left alone, either with or without work, with or without money, that I do not feel at my wits' end.' She was not without friends. There was Gérard Aumont, who translated *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* into French, and a certain Mr. William George Barron, a new aspirant to the Great Work whom she had met already in Paris. They took her to the pictures and gave her the odd change, and Mr. Barron participated with her in the sex-magic rites. The hysterical, suicide-seeking themes subside. There were, of course, occasional lapses, marked by fits of weeping, but on the whole Leah moved steadily out to find her own life. She dreamt that she and The Beast were together in bed, but she rose up and left him and 'I went to my own little hut'. Her attitude towards Crowley became critical. 'Dear A.C.,' she wrote, not as formerly 'My Beloved Beast' or 'My Big Lion'.

'Dear A.C., I do not know whether it's sick or dying or what—I have every reason to think, however, that it's the Formula of the Happy Man that makes you act the cad. You have not so much as acknowledged the various MSS. I have sent, nor, bar the one letter of May 15, have I had any news of you. Most especially, the money promised in the letter has not yet arrived. . . . I do not for a moment believe that the Gods are responsible for the continuation of this silly financial mess. It is all very well to howl "Material prosperity" and spend like an ass, but it doesn't bring anything but debts—and stupid at that. So just get a move on. Leah.'

She recognized at last that her love for Crowley was an illness of mind, and that she must get rid of it. She gave this illness a name: 'A.C.itis'. For her, Crowley now only stood for a magical word, the logos of the new religion: *thelema*.

'I do in the main consider him merely a Word,' she wrote rather ironically in her diary, 'but it's damn hard when one has to have "human" dealings with what appears to be the rottenest kind of creature, to think of it as an Idea.'

She left the man Crowley to Dorothy, who was trying to tidy up his affairs, and who had written to her former rival: 'Beast must get rid of old mistresses and other drags.' Judging from a stray reference, in one of Miss Olsen's letters, to a black eye which The Beast had inflicted upon her, she was succeeding none too well.

Mudd had also been forced to the conclusion that the real Crowley was rather different from his ideal portrait of him. 'A.C. is a coward and a shirker,' he wrote. 'Puts his dirty work on to others.' But such is human weakness and conflict that Mudd, nevertheless, continued his endeavours to vindicate Crowley's good name.

Suddenly the Thelemites, Crowley, Mudd, Leah, and Dorothy, were gathered together in Paris, whence they all proceeded to Thuringia to meet Herr Traenker and Brother Uranus, who had generously paid Crowley's essential debts in Paris. The Beast sent on ahead a copy of *The Book of the Law*, and when it arrived a certain Max Schneider promptly translated it into German. Herr Traenker was horrified as he read the pulsating verses of *Liber Legis*:

Curse them! Curse them! Curse them!
With my Hawk's head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he
hangs upon the cross.
I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed & blind him.
With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the
Buddhist, Mongol and Din.
Bahlasti! Ompehda! I spit on your crapulous creeds.

This was certainly not what Herr Traenker had expected, and he condemned *The Book of the Law* as a work of 'sinister, demoniac possession'. Without exactly agreeing with him, The Beast pointed out that there were parts of *Liber Legis* which he, even he, could not understand. Fortunately Traenker within a few days had another illumination, and the more obscure parts of the book became clear. He now pronounced them 'a glorious manifestation' and said that he could condense their meaning into one word—Civilization.

Another member of the German branch of the O.T.O., a certain Herr Grau, was also put off by the anti-Christian amoral spirit of *The Book of the Law*. In view of the Black Magician, Adolf Hitler, whom Germany was soon to follow, Herr Grau's sentiments on the Bible of Crowleyanity are not without interest.

'Unhappily, too late I have been made acquainted with the contents of *Liber Legis*, a book branded with the triple KEOU. I thus to my horror got a real glimpse of the future reconstruction, as planned by the A. . . A. . ., of a primitive world

order which suggests the blackest days of Atlantis. If these ideas had been clearly in my knowledge at the time, Sir Crowley may rest assured that I would not have put myself so certainly before the chariot of the A . . . A . . . and been invited the "boot" for services rendered in good faith, however poor and defective they may appear in Sir Crowley's eyes. The Germans have had this "boot" too often without unfortunately learning wisdom thereby. . . .'

There was one astral attack which The Beast defeated by an act of magic, sufficient in itself to shift the doubts of the sceptical. Herr Traenker kept chickens in the garden. One night a cock escaped from its coop and flew through the window of Crowley's bedroom. But A.C. was protected: Dorothy was surprised to see him surrounded by an inverted cone of blue light.

The story of Leah Faesi suddenly trails off. There are no more of her magical diaries, and Crowley never mentioned her again in his. Her past, before she met The Beast, is a blank, and her future, after Crowley had broken with her, a void which one's imagination can only fill with the worst and the best of things.

Of her past, before 1918, when her sister Renata took her to meet the great English magus, there is only one clue. 'You always look as though you are about to cry,' Crowley once said to her. On this Leah commented, 'I have felt that way for,—oh, all my life.

Before Leah vanished only these brief events about her are known. Another man child was born to her which gave her joy. She called it Al, the keyword of *The Book of the Law*, meaning God. The father, this time, was William George Barron. There is no happy ending to this story. Mr. Barron did not marry Leah, but disappeared eastwards instead—to Leah's indifference: she did not seem to like him.

She still had, however, the ever-faithful Norman Mudd, in whose diary is sadly recorded that she had broken her mother's heart. They lived together for some time among the Brothers and Sisters of the German branch of the O.T.O. An old lady, Martha Küntzel (Sister I.W.E.), who had met Crowley at the summer conference in 1925, and who was sustained in her last years by the Law of Thelema, put them up in her cramped Leipzig lodgings. (Martha Küntzel, an intimate friend of Madame Blavatsky, had been a mason and an occultist all her life, wandering feverishly from one cult to another, until *The Book of the Law* showed her the right path.)

During the next year or two Leah still found occasion to write to Crowley—rare, dry letters on matters relating to *The Book of the Law* and the destiny of mankind. But finally Crowley, distrustful of her intentions, issued from his Paris hotel an encyclical

condemning her as a centre of pestilence and enjoining all the members of the Order to destroy any communication from her unread.

What had she done now? It is written in the Comment on *The Book of the Law* that 'the study of this Book is forbidden . . . those who discuss the contents of this Book are to be shunned by all. . . .'

This, then, was the formal accusation: Leah Faesi had discussed and studied *The Book of the Law*! The charge was unanswerable: they had been discussing and studying it together for years. The Beast, however, offered her this means of expiation: she must supply him with 'the evidence required to convict Norman Mudd of a felony'; for, according to Crowley, O.P.V. had stolen some of his books.

The starving Mudd, hated and despised by Crowley for no cause that reason can discover, had sold some copies of *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz* and some sets of *The Equinox* to supply his Master with funds, and had kept back part of the price to carry on the Great Work.

But Leah did not give up her only companion and friend to the wrath of The Beast. Instead she sent Crowley a printed and signed circular renouncing her role as Scarlet Woman.

Mudd's faith underwent an unexpected transformation. The New Aeon was true enough, but it was not Crowleyanity, for Crowley was a False Prophet. He had been wrong in worshipping The Beast. He should have directed these attentions to himself. And he started to announce that he, even he, *Omnia Pro Veritate*, was the World Teacher that mankind awaited. This so annoyed his hostess Martha Kuntzel that she called him a saboteur and turned him out into the street.

There is one last document, the strangest of the Thelemic writings, Leah Faesi's final word to Aleister Crowley. It was sent from Spain, dated the 6th September, 1930, and is in the neat handwriting of Norman Mudd. It is addressed to 'E. A. Crowley, Esq.,' i.e. Edward Alexander—Crowley's baptismal names—and commences 'Dear Sir'. It concludes with 'Yours truly', and is signed 'Leah Faesi'. There is no Thelemic greeting of *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law* at the head of it, and no corollary of *Love is the Law, Love under Will* at its conclusion. There is no law and no love about this letter. It is Leah's final divestment of all Crowley's creed and Crowley's shadow—a document terrifying in its implications of demonic possession.

'At various times during my past intercourse with you, acting in part under your inspiration, I contracted various oaths or similar bonds.

'I now Notify you that all promises which I have ever made

to you personally—whether called or described as *oaths, vows, obligations, pledges* or what not—whether sealed by my signature or by my spoken word or in any other way—all bonds, enactments and instruments soever which, in their intendments, give you any formal claim on me—are now defunct in my sight.

‘I define the symbol \bar{X} to mean a certain Ceremony wherein you are to declare to me, in a form approved by me, that I have no obligations to you personally.

‘I define the symbol \bar{X} to mean the duration which commences on this present date—September 6, 1930—and continues until, but not after, I give you a formal Certificate stating that the Ceremony \bar{X} has been duly performed.

‘Throughout the duration \bar{X} I shall ignore, at my pleasure, (1) any intimation that any communication from you to me is confidential or restricted in any other way, and (2) any written missive purporting to be from you which is not signed with your name—Crowley—in a handwriting which I can recognize as yours.

‘I define the symbol X to mean the moment of Greenwich Mean Noon on October 6, 1930.

‘I define the term *Lyg* to be a common noun meaning a proposition which I offer to the cognizance of another—some supposed intelligence other than myself—as if I believed the proposition whereas in fact I disbelieve it.

‘Lygs need not be communicated in words. I can utter and convey Lygs in any medium of communication: in gesture and action generally, pictures, odours, dress, music—positive signs, shows, seemings, cues and clues of innumerable kinds—as also negatively, by significant silence and various other arts of refrainment.’

[&c., &c.]

Crowley’s only comment on this document, Leah’s magic against his *Magick*, is pencilled at the head of it: ‘Composed by Norman Mudd—lunatic and thief.’

Thus Leah Faesi, the Scarlet Woman, renounced Aleister Crowley, The Beast 666, and passed out of his life. Of all women Crowley had ever loved she came closest to his heart, but he cast her aside nevertheless and strode on glorifying the immortal gods. And neither he nor any of his fellow Thelemites or friends ever heard of her again. It was rumoured that she became a Roman Catholic and in that great Church found, at last, her peace.

There is no mystery about the fate of Norman Mudd. The Beast prophesied that O.P.V. would die by drowning, and to his ears came the rumour that, one day in the early ’30s, this prophecy had been fulfilled in the waters of the Island of Guernsey. I

wrote to the Town Clerk, who passed over my letter to the Island Police. The Chief Officer kindly replied:

'I beg to inform you that a man giving the name of Norman Mudd, age about 50 years and an address as No. 220 Arlington Road, N.W.1, arrived in this island on the 6th May, 1934, and took up residence at the Manor Hotel, Forest, Guernsey. On the 16th June, the proprietor of the hotel reported that Mudd had been missing from the hotel since 7 o'clock the previous evening. Police conducted a search and at 12 noon on the 16th a body later identified as that of Mudd was recovered from Portelet Bay. The body was clothed with cycle clips around the bottom of the trousers, the trouser legs and pockets were filled with stones.

'Enquiries were made by the Metropolitan Police and it was discovered that No. 220 Arlington Road was a London County Council Common Lodging House. Police were unable to trace relatives or friends. Mudd was known at the address given and the description furnished by the porter agreed with that of the drowned man.

'An inquest was held on the 18th June, 1934, and a verdict of "suicide" returned. Deceased was buried in plot No. 8, grave No. 1 in the New Cemetery, Forest, Guernsey, on the 20th June, 1934. The service was conducted by the Rector of the Parish.'

Thus died Norman Mudd, M.A., Professor of Applied Mathematics, Grey University College, Bloemfontein, author of the paper *The Gravitational Potential and Energy of Harmonic Deformations of any Order*, and of the pamphlet *Open Letter to Lord Beaverbrook*; a neophyte with the motto *Omnia Pro Veritate* of the Great White Brotherhood of Light called the A. . . A. . . ; one time 'guide', philosopher and friend¹ of The Beast 666.

A Nest of Serpents

PERHAPS some of the people who walked the streets in the East or the West with the Master Therion, and performed with him those solemn invocations to the Secret Chiefs, will be disappointed at not finding themselves mentioned in this biography.

I have no bias in this matter. My purpose is only to record for the New Aeon the main events in Crowley's life, and I am obliged to follow themes that lead somewhere and drop others which, on account of the paucity of the material, or for other reasons,

¹ Crowley's description of Mudd in *The Confessions*.

seem to lead nowhere. There were, of course, periods when the magical current was strong and the gods propitious, and periods when the magical current seems almost to be switched off entirely.¹

Having got rid of Leah and Dorothy Olsen and returned to Paris (where these Apocalyptic female types seem to have abounded), Scarlet Women came and went in quick succession. There was Ninette, 'a full Martinique Negress', Katherine E—, 'a superb natural vampire', and others, all of whom helped Crowley stir up magical currents and consoled him for the loss of Alostrael, the Scarlet Woman *par excellence*. But a mere list of Crowley's mistresses will get us nowhere. Mention, however, should be made of Miss (or was it Mrs.?) Margaret B—. He met her towards the end of 1926 and they soon became engaged to be married. But she didn't last long, *magick* not being her métier. Her name appears again among eight mistresses and one lover (Camille) in Paris alone: six white, three black.

'I am now eliminating these one by one. This task may be regarded as finished by Feb. 6th, 1927, *era vulgari*, when I eliminated No. 4 [i.e. Margaret B—] by burning the talisman of Jupiter which protected her. Her callous heartlessness and hypocritical falsity doom her to a dire end.'

He rose from all their embraces 'to answer the call of the Three Mountains to save the world from destruction', i.e. to replace dying Christianity with insurgent Crowleyanity.

The Mediterranean Manifesto was Crowley's last magical pronouncement to the world (but not, of course, his last magical announcement to his followers). Mudd had started the campaign in England by sneaking into the London headquarters of the Theosophical Society and pinning the manifesto on to the notice board. Crowley, who did not doubt that he was in fact the World Teacher, conducted the campaign with customary vigour and naivety.

'The only way of getting proper publicity,' he wrote to an American friend of his, Montgomery Evans—the Master Therion was expansive to anyone who showed an interest in his work—is to arrange for the World Teacher campaign. If this is done as it should be, there is bound to be a big scrap [i.e., with the Theosophists] with unlimited stories of excellent news value. I propose you should begin in this way: "The World Teacher informs the public that Doctor Annie Besant is in

¹ Probably for not paying the bill. This was so during 1926 and 1927 when Crowley was dodging debts in Tunis and Paris. The Chinese Oracle advised him to be 'patient, tenacious, modest, ashamed, friendly, appealing, tremulous and grateful' as a means of overcoming these difficulties.

error when she states that He will manifest through Mr. Krishnamurti in December, or at any other time." I think this will go better if you make a certain amount of mystery about the identity of the said World Teacher. You can say that you know who he is and how to approach him for the purpose of an interview, but you should keep me out of it until you have made some sort of contract for the exclusive story.'

To judge from a statement in one of Dorothy Olsen's letters, Crowley's sideshow made some impression. On the 27th January, 1926, she wrote to Montgomery Evans:

'We have a most beautiful villa at La Marsa half an hour's journey from Tunis, and A.C. is very happy here, doing great work, and at last this World Teacher business seems to have caught fire everywhere and we are being interviewed by newspapers and the newspapers seem to be taking it up as quite important news. We will send you some clippings in our next letter.'

Crowley's concubines slowly sort themselves out. By the second half of 1928 there were only two ladies competing fiercely for the vacant post of Scarlet Womanhood. One was a Pole, Miroslava Vacek, otherwise known as 'the Woman from Samaria', the other hailed from the Central American Republic of Nicaragua, Maria Teresa Ferrari de Miramar. He called her 'Old Nile', and by other titles, but she was mainly known as the High Priestess of Voodoo.

With Miroslava he had more than a brief whirl. He was genuinely fond of her and expressed considerable praise for her magical qualities. Indeed, she might have attained high status in the A. . . A. . . had not Maria Teresa, whose magical potential was enormous, suddenly crossed her path. By what means the gods had directed Maria's steps towards The Beast I do not know.

The end of Miroslava came slowly but surely. The Abra-Melin demons released by their prayers, instead of forwarding the Great Work, turned round and poisoned their relationship so that they spent the whole day quarrelling about money and other irrelevancies. When Miroslava broke away, Crowley was able to get on with the Great Work and make up for lost time.

"Relieved from the strain of Miroslava, I have been able to start serious magick with ritual precautions. The climax of the first ceremony was marked, as it should be, by the sudden arising of a violent wind; and subsequent ceremonies have been equally notable. I think the results are already beginning to appear; and, bar accidents, something important should break out during the week.'

There was one final episode. Madame Vacek met Señora de Miramar by chance on the bus somewhere in Paris. It was a case of when Scarlet Woman meets Scarlet Woman. The magnetism and counter-magnetism were terrific. The lady from Nicaragua, thinking that sulphuric acid was about to be thrown into her eyes, bolted. 'She was furious at having lost her last chance in life,' commented Crowley on Madame Vacek's attitude and he dismissed her as 'off her chump'.

Maria was greatly impressed by Crowley, both as a man and a magician. She was undoubtedly in love with him. She had been married once or twice before, and had a child. Such was her belief in The Beast's powers as a magician that she urged him to get astride a unicorn and depart in secret on the 20th January, 1929, for Jericho.

During 1927 a tall, young, Eton-educated Englishman, who had survived Cambridge with first-class honours, began to seek the clues to the hidden glories of the world in the pages of *The Equinox*. He was soon eager to meet the head of the A. . . A. . . and his letter of inquiry was forwarded to Crowley in Paris. The Beast invited him to come over, and met him at the Paris airport. The gods take away and the gods give back! No less than nine Brethren, all of great promise and some of marked achievement, had crashed on to the rocks. And here was the tenth: Brother Volo Intelligere ('I Wish to Understand'), which was the title he took when he joined the A. . . A. . .

These, then, were the main disciples of The Beast at this period of his life: his Scarlet Woman, Maria Teresa; Brother Uranus ('The Rich Man from the West'); and Brother Volo Intelligere, whom one might call the Rich Boy from London. There was also Crowley's (unpaid) secretary, the Serpent, an American who was acquiring that arcane knowledge which, during later years, he put into his excellent books on the Golden Dawn and the Cabbala.

That aspect of the Great Work which was now occupying Crowley's attention was the publication of *Magick: in Theory and Practice*, the most important of his writings. This book begins with an explanation of what magic is, but quickly goes on to present tastes and beliefs than one can recognize as plain and simple Crowleyanity. And quite rightly so. Crowley's system of magic is a symposium of parts of other systems of magic, and fragments of past faiths, in which he, Crowley, had found meaning. Magic, in a nutshell, is a technique whereby one can make nature obey one's wishes. The powers behind phenomena have to be brought to heel with the appropriate words uttered in the right frame of mind. Hence *Magick* is largely a collection of rituals taken from Buddhist, Egyptian, Tantric, and Gnostic teachings. And all this matter is synthesized by that modern Gnostic work

(if one may call it so), *The Book of the Law*. The rituals, in part rewritten by Crowley, were chosen on account of their relation to the mystique of the life force, i.e. their sexual significance.

In the middle of the book is this definition, or parable as Crowley called it, of magic: "There is the story of the American in the train who saw another American carrying a basket of unusual shape. His curiosity mastered him and he leant across and said: "Say, stranger, what you got in that bag?" The other, lantern-jawed and taciturn, replied "Mongoose." The first man was rather baffled, as he had never heard of a mongoose. After a pause he pursued, at the risk of a rebuff: "But say, what is a mongoose?" "Mongoose eats snakes," replied the other. This was another poser, but he pursued: "What in hell do you want a mongoose for?" "Well, you see," said the second man (in a confidential whisper), "my brother sees snakes." The first man was more puzzled than ever; but after a long think he continued rather pathetically: "But say, them ain't real snakes." "Sure," said the man with the basket, "but this mongoose ain't real either."

Magick has this at least in common with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (another thick book on an abstruse subject): it is as loosely written and as difficult to understand. And like that other large book, frequently seen on bookshelves but seldom read though, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, it contains a bit of everything. It begins, as all good books on magic should begin, with Chapter 0, and is one vast confession: Perdurabo, The Great Wild Beast 666, the Master Therion, Sir Aleister Crowley, and *Saint* Aleister Crowley are all quoted and praised.

Brothers Uranus and Volo Intelligere agreed to pay the cost of the publication of *Magick*; but all the printers they approached declined to accept this work. They were averse to associating with a man who had had so much scandalous publicity, and the manuscript itself contained material which, it was thought, would give offence. Under the rubric of the Bloody Sacrifice, for example, was Crowley's stupendous statement that 'A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim', with its gory footnote: 'It appears from the Magical Records of Frater Perdurabo that He made this particular sacrifice on an average about 150 times every year between 1912 e.v. and 1928 e.v.' This was outdoing the efforts of that mediaeval vampire Gilles de Rais, who murdered hundreds of children in his search for the elixir of life. In the end the Lecram Press in Paris was persuaded to take on the job.

Crowley's hopes were flying high for the success of his book. In this respect writers are incorrigible, due to the mistaken view that the world at large is as interested in their preoccupations as they themselves are. Crowley quite expected that the publication of *Magick* would, for once and for ever, put him on the map. He

wrote to Brother Volo Intelligere: 'People generally do want a book on Magic. There never has been an attempt at one since the Middle Ages, except Levi's.' Brother 'I Wish to Understand' was mildly sceptical, to his Master's irritation.

Not being a publisher, and therefore lacking a sales organization, Crowley decided to employ a publicity agent whose main task was to prepare the Press for the appearance of his magnum opus. The publicity agent took his salary and waited for something to happen. But the only thing that happened was that he got the sack two months later, and he would have no place in this history had he not been blamed for the subsequent set of troubles. Let us call the publicity agent Col. Blank. Feeling that, when it came to publicity, he could not compete with Crowley, he started up a line of his own, namely that of a marriage broker.

Now the Master Therion claimed among his acquaintances an American millionairess, and Blank knew a penniless relative of the Spanish Royal Family, one Don Luis Fernando de Bourbon. Blank thought therefore of the brilliant but simple idea that these two should be brought together so that the Spanish aristocrat could repair his fortune and the American lady acquire social position.

The scheme came to nothing. Crowley warned the American millionairess and denounced Col. Blank, who is alleged to have called on the police and told them all he knew, and suspected, about Aleister Crowley.

It is difficult to say whether there is any truth in this story. Most likely not. Crowley was decidedly suspicious of other people's actions, not to say paranoiac. He thought Miroslava had abstracted 5000 francs from the safe, went round to inform the police about her, and then discovered the missing money beneath the statue of Ho Tai, when moving Ho Tai from the sitting-room to the bedroom. However, on the afternoon of the 17th January, 1929, an inspector from the Préfecture de Police called on Crowley. The Serpent agreed that it was more than a coincidence; in fact it was the beginning of a magical attack against the appearance of the book.

The inspector sat himself comfortably in the armchair, stared fixedly at Crowley, and asked:

'Why are you called the King of Depravity?'

'People call me all sorts of things,' replied Crowley.

'Do you take drugs?'

'No.'

'What's that, then?' asked the inspector, pointing to an instrument of infernal design on the table.

'A coffee machine.'

'People come to consult you,' said the inspector, beginning again. 'What do you advise them to do?'

'It depends upon what I am asked.'

According to Crowley, the subject of their conversation moved away from drugs and depravity to that of the Holy Cabbala. The inspector was intrigued. He even expressed a wish to study the Cabbala himself, but Crowley advised against any rash plunging into so recondite a subject.

'Why, it takes seven years' uninterrupted study to begin to know anything about it.'

The inspector, by now much relaxed and rather enjoying talking with this strange Englishman with the piercing gaze, felt abashed. He quite frankly told Crowley that for the first time in his life he couldn't understand what was being said to him. To which Crowley replied that that was quite natural, for he had been trying to make himself understood for over fifty years without much success. 'It puzzled him,' said Crowley, as he summed up the inspector's visit, 'that I did not take money for consultations and that I did not tell fortunes, and so on. I think he went away in a perfectly good frame of mind. But he said he had to make a report on the subject. . . . So that is where the matter rests.'

Four weeks later the Minister of the Interior signed a *réfus de séjour* for The Beast, his High Priestess of Voodoo, and his secretary, the Serpent. And a fortnight afterwards a gendarme brought round a summons for all three to attend at the Préfecture. Crowley took to his bed and the High Priestess and the Serpent went alone to the police station to learn that their presence, and that of their Master, was no longer desired in France: they must all leave within twenty-four hours.

The Beast sent a wire to Brother Volo Intelligere, who was in England, to come over and help in the fight, but Brother V.I. declined. The line of action Crowley had in mind was to 'stay put and go to prison instead'.

Señora de Miramar appealed to the Nicaraguan Consul, and he took her to see an official in the Ministry of the Interior, who said (to quote Crowley's parody of her report of this interview): 'Of course, my dear young lady, we have nothing whatever against you. We are doing this in your own interests as you are an acquaintance of the wicked Aleister Crowley, who either kills all the women he knows or drives them mad.'

The Serpent and the High Priestess obtained visas for England, leaving Crowley at home well protected by a doctor's certificate. He would join them in England when he had corrected the proofs of *Magick*, which were now arriving from the printer.

To the discomfort and embarrassment of the Serpent and the High Priestess they were halted at Tilbury by the British emigration authorities, locked in their cabins and then returned to

France. They managed to obtain visas for Belgium and reached Brussels six days after they had set out from Paris.

On Friday the 12th April, 1929, Crowley greeted an advance copy of *Magick* with a shout of 'Victory!' On the following Wednesday, now fully recovered, he put on a black homburg hat, flung a cloak round his shoulders, posed for his photograph, and was heralded out of France as Sir Aleister Crowley, the English baronet and spy under two flags. He described his exit as being 'in a terrific blaze of publicity', which was no gross exaggeration. His expulsion from France was mentioned in the world's newspapers.

Crowley always maintained that he was thrown out of France for two reasons: One, as a result of the machinations of Col. Blank, who sought revenge for having lost his commission as a marriage broker. Two, because the inspector from the Préfecture de Police thought his coffee machine was an infernal device for distilling cocaine. But according to the *Paris Midi* Crowley was expelled for this simple and sufficient reason: he was thought to be a secret agent for Germany, and his O.T.O. organization, with its German supporters, was considered a blind.

Crowley was furious that his Scarlet Woman should have been barred from England, and he swore to get her in, even if he had to marry her to do so. He consulted the Chinese Oracle, who told him that marriage with Maria would be a rash act. But Crowley wasn't in a mood to listen to the voice of wisdom. To make Maria his wife was now his main magical line of attack.

The British Embassy at Brussels told him to go to England and get married there, a piece of advice which was the veritable closed circle of hymen. Another difficulty arose: Maria's father had first to give his permission, and he was an old gentleman of ninety living in the wilds of Nicaragua.

Meanwhile Brother Volo Intelligere had had a friendly call from Colonel Carter of Scotland Yard, who wanted to know what magical potions he had been brewing with Britain's Worst Man. Brother I Wish to Understand explained that The Beast wasn't as beastly as he was painted. Whereupon Colonel Carter said he might as well find out for himself, and gave Brother V.I. ten pounds for Crowley's fare to London.

A few days later Beast, disciple, and detective had dinner together, to the satisfaction, presumably, of the law, for Crowley was not afterwards prosecuted. 'Dined with Col. Carter 7.30—11.30. All clear,' wrote Crowley. According to Brother V.I. it was a happy party: wine, wit, and good feeling flowed, a most civilized way of settling differences.

Suddenly Crowley received a wire from his High Priestess, saying that the Belgian authorities had ordered her and the Serpent to leave the country. An appeal for help was sent off to Frater

Uranus in Germany. He immediately gathered up Maria, took her to Leipzig, and deposited her with Martha Küntzel. Crowley soon joined Maria, and in Leipzig on the 16th August, 1929, at precisely 11.20 a.m., they were married in the presence of the British Consul. Immediately after the ceremony The Beast cast the horoscope of the event. Libra was in the ascendant, Venus semi-sextile, Jupiter sextile, Mercury square, Uranus opposition Moon. And the Sun made a trine with Saturn. But whether this boded good or ill he did not say.

The same day Mr. and Mrs. Crowley left for London, and four days later they were able to smile at a camera in a South Kensington studio; then The Beast settled down and wrote an account of his expulsion from France and marriage, entitling it 'When the Devil turned Bridegroom'.

The Beast and the Monster

CROWLEY had now reached the height of his fame—or, if you will, infamy. Like Julius Caesar, he was the wife to every man and the husband to every woman. The stories about him were legion. Here is one of them:

The late Mr. Watkins, whose bookshop of occult and mystical works still flourishes off Charing Cross Road, once invited Crowley to demonstrate his magic.

'Close your eyes,' said The Beast.

Mr. Watkins did so. When he opened them a moment later all his books had vanished from the shelves.

It was said, with what truth I don't know, that when he entered the Café Royal a silence fell upon everyone, and none dared speak till the demon Crowley had sat down. His appearance, decidedly, provoked an attitude of awe: his bulk and piercing, hostile eyes set between his fat, feminine face and shaved, inhuman head; his oddness of dress, his small, woman-like hands and strange rings on his fingers; his sweet, slightly nauseous odour and, finally, that impalpable sense of a man which poets and occultists call aura—relentless, cold, mocking, the aura of the Wanderer of the Waste and the Great Wild Beast. Among the lamas of Tibet are those initiates who are said to have the power of hypnotizing and causing death from a distance.

'Arose in my might,' wrote Crowley in his diary somewhere in Germany, 'and stopped the gramophone in the Terminus by threatening all present with immediate death.'

The smell of Aleister Crowley was due to some extent to the 'sex-appeal' ointment with which he smeared himself. He called this unguent *Ruthvah: the Perfume of Immortality*. It was made

up of one part ambergris, two parts musk, and three parts civet, aphrodisiacs which contributed to his attraction for women; and horses, too, if it is true, as he said, that when he passed along the streets they whinnied after him.

'It must be rubbed into the body,' wrote the Master Therion, 'particularly at the roots of the hair where the skin is not too tightly stretched, so thoroughly that the subtle perfume of the preparation is not detected, or even suspected, by others. The user is thus armed with a most powerful weapon, the more potent for being secret, against the deepest elements in the nature of those whom it is wished to attract. They obey, and they are all the more certainly compelled to obey because they do not know that they are being commanded.'

To the public who read about him mainly in *John Bull* he was, simply, the Worst Man in Britain, or, as he was finally described at the very peak of his fame, the Wickedest Man in the World. No one knew exactly why he was so wicked, for in none of the popular accounts of him was his wickedness demonstrated: it was only asserted amid stories of rites and habits, most of which were seemingly mad and certainly indelicate. The newspaper descriptions of him never, in fact, amounted to more than that of a bogymen who frightens little children to bed. The Gnostic and Tantric origins of his philosophy were never even suspected. The heretical nature of his views were ignored in an age of unbelief and in a Protestant country. 'Put on wings and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!' is a verse from *The Book of the Law* which is incomprehensible without some knowledge of the Kundalini of Tantric yoga. But in its conclusion *John Bull* was right. Crowley was an adept of the left-hand path, using his Eastern knowledge for personal power. In the words of that popular paper, he was a black magician.

Crowley's philosophy takes a bit from here and a bit from there. From the polemical writings of the Church Fathers he caught a glimpse of the Gnostic heresies. That the Church was opposed to them was sufficient for his approval. The Orphic snake-, or phallus-, worshippers naturally found favour in his eyes, and the Manichean heresy of an independent principle of evil seemed to him a sounder view than the Christian conception of evil as a result of man's fall. But as most of the deeds and notions which were considered evil he believed good, he was more a satanist than anything else. 'I serve my great Master Satan,' he wrote in one of his franker confessions, 'and that august Council composed of Beelzebub, Lucifuge, Asmodeus, Belphegor, Baal, Adrammelech, Lilith and Nahema.'

A small, now defunct, publishing house called the Mandrake

Press, producing unusual books¹ and limited editions, signed a contract with The Beast to publish *The Confessions* and other of his works. The directors of the Mandrake Press were Crowley's friends. Brothers Uranus and Volo Intelligere had each contributed a thousand pounds towards this venture, five hundred of which Crowley, as a gesture of independence, diverted to another struggling firm of publishers, a transfusion which helped ruin the one and was insufficient to save the other. However, during its brief run the Mandrake Press managed to bring out two volumes of *The Confessions* (which covered Crowley's life in 1903); his novel upon a theme of magic, *Moonchild*; a booklet of three stories, *The Stratagem*, and an arid apologia of Crowley, *The Legend of Aleister Crowley* by one P. R. Stephensen, a director of the Mandrake Press.

Victor Neuberg reviewed this last book for *The Freethinker*. He had tried, but failed, to change his mind about the man who, in 1909, had transformed him into a camel² and who had evoked in his presence on top of a mountain the mighty spirit Choronzon. (And this mighty spirit had joined them in their dancing, but, taking a dislike to Brother Omnia Vincam, had risen up and smitten him and then sorely assaulted his person.) In Neuberg's eyes Crowley was the foulest, or the greatest, of men that the world had ever seen. His admiration for Crowley was mixed with dread. An unexpected ringing of his bell would awaken him from his reverie and make him start with fear lest The Beast had come for him; for, on three separate occasions during the early 1920s, his maid, after answering the door, had run back jabbering that a mysterious, thin-faced woman with burning eyes (Alostrael) was standing outside. She had not spoken, but offered a sign—her coat had fallen open, revealing her naked breasts, between which was branded the Mark of The Beast.

The Confessions might have paid their way, or even made some money, if the bookshops could have been persuaded to take them. But such was Crowley's reputation that the salesman employed by the Mandrake Press always, to his amazement, returned without any orders. Booksellers weren't having Crowley at any price; especially with his demoniac self-portrait on the cover and the phallus-like feature of the A for Aleister in the oversize signature beneath it.

Within a few weeks of getting married to Maria, Crowley must have been reflecting that the *Yi King* was right again. 'Don't do it,' the fates had warned. 'A rash act.'


¹ The Mandrake Press published a volume of coloured reproductions of D. H. Lawrence's paintings; they also showed the originals, but the police closed the exhibition.

² One of Neuberg's relatives, fearing for Victor's safety, ran all the way to North Africa to look for him. But he only found Crowley in Algiers. 'Where is Victor?' he asked. 'There,' said Crowley, pointing to a camel. 'I've changed him into it.'

Maria drank heavily, made what is commonly known as 'scenes', and accused Aleister and his friends of attempting to poison her.

In the new year The Beast was invited to give a lecture at the Oxford University Poetry Society. He proposed reading them a paper on Gilles de Rais, who was a kind of Master Therion of mediaeval France. According to Crowley, Gilles de Rais was a genuine black magician.

The subject was an interesting one; the lecturer made it ideal. The room would have been packed—if Father Ronald Arbuthnott Knox, the Catholic Chaplain of the University, hearing about

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink. The first part of the signature is a tall, thin letter 'A' with a loop at the bottom. To its right, the word 'Aleister' is written in a cursive script. Further right, the word 'Crowley' is written in a similar cursive script, with a large, sweeping flourish that extends downwards and to the right.

Crowley's intended visit, had not written to Mr. Hugh Speaight, the secretary of the Poetry Club. I do not know what Father, later Monsignor, Knox, said in this letter, but Mr. Speaight wrote forthwith to Mr. Aleister Crowley:

'I am writing to tell you that we have been unfortunately forced to cancel Monday's meeting of the Poetry Society. It has come to our knowledge that if your proposed paper is delivered, disciplinary action will be taken, involving not only myself but the rest of the committee of the Society.

'In these circumstances you will, I trust, understand why we have had to cancel the meeting. I feel I must apologize to you for the trouble I have caused you.'

So Crowley was banned from Oxford as he had been banned from Cambridge twenty years before. According to one newspaper report, the Vice-Chancellor of the University was said to be greatly annoyed at the impression conveyed that the banning of Crowley was an official one. In that year of grace the University was prepared to stare the Devil in the face. The Mandrake Press

speedily published the lecture as a pamphlet, the undergraduates, equipped with sandwich boards, sold it in the High Street.

The year 1930 was another full one for The Beast. It had begun well with the Oxford *débâcle*. In the spring he went off with his wife to Germany, quarrelling furiously. He was fed up with Maria and wished her in heaven. Whatever affection he may have had for her seemed now to have gone completely. He only dragged her about because she was tied to him.

His arrival in Germany produced an article about him in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. His achievements were reviewed. He had met, apparently, Dr. Paul Bauer, soon off to the Himalayas to climb Kangchenjunga, and given him the advice (which Dr. Bauer never took) that the only way to the summit was via the Yalung Glacier, the route taken by Crowley in 1905. 'If the expedition follows this advice it must,' Crowley told his interviewer, 'reach the summit—or perish. The Germans have in this undertaking every chance to succeed.'

In Germany, with the money of the Rich Man from the West and that of the wife of the Rich Man from the West, Crowley forgot about Maria. He raced around Berlin, enjoying a sort of honeymoon with a nineteen-year-old artist, Hanni F., whom he had met at someone's studio. He called her the Monster and wrote in his diary, 'I am quite in love with this Hanni.' Then: 'The idiot Maria, sneaking meanly into my private papers, thinks this means some sexual nonsense. It would serve her right if the jest turned into earnest.' Love released him a little from his dependence upon drugs; lack of love drove Maria (as it had driven Rose, his first wife) to drink.

He returned to England, leaving Maria in Leipzig. Hanni's love for him stirred him deeply and brought back much of his former confidence and hope. He wandered to Cambridge, dreaming about her, and revisited after twenty years the scenes of his rampant youth. But when that day was done he could only write of Trinity College: '*Quelle déception*. Whole thing like a Doll's house, small and almost soulless.'

Maria soon trailed him to London. For a few weeks they lived together, but his mind was with Hanni in Germany.

He wanted to exhibit his paintings, but he could find no gallery willing to hang them; the Mandrake Press had got into enough trouble when they showed D. H. Lawrence's paintings. So he decided to exhibit them himself and took some premises in Langham Place with that object in mind. *John Bull*, never far from his tracks, heard about it and used the occasion for another attack—Crowley was, apparently, their great standby. '*John Bull* rot,' The Beast wrote in his diary after reading a further account of himself entitled 'The Worst Man in Britain'. He consulted the *Yi King*: 'Shall any action be taken about it; if so, what?' The

Chinese Oracle sighed and replied, 'Leave it alone.' The owner, or the agents, of the premises in Langham Place also read about their tenant in *John Bull*. As Crowley had only temporary residence they promptly cancelled the agreement and asked him to leave. The Beast decided not to make any further attempts to show his art in England. He sorted out 160 paintings and drawings, the best of his work, and sent them to Germany. He would hold his exhibition in Berlin. His friends gave him a farewell cocktail party—at which he left Maria drunk on the floor.

In Berlin, unencumbered with Maria, he was able to record triumphantly: 'Met and won Hanni F. Dismissed wife, without notice.' It was, indeed, the end of poor Maria. She had been Crowley's wife for exactly one year. She seems an odd, inarticulate woman, speaking only poor English, distrustful, sad. Unknowingly she had sown the wind and was now reaping the whirlwind. Her letters to her husband are those of a lost soul, complaining, surprised. She had served The Beast, Her Master, and was now turned loose.

The Great Work was now just a phrase, and the Law of Thelema a subject of conversation. The religious fervour which had seized Crowley in 1923 while the forlorn Mudd¹ followed him about Tunis had largely evaporated. He was still, of course, the Logos of the Aeon of Thelema, but he had long recovered from the effects of his expulsion from his Abbey and was consequently living less in the world of the spirit.

He was preparing the third volume of *The Confessions*,² which contained the account of his greatest achievement: the Great Revelation in Cairo during the spring of 1904, when the gods chose for their purposes the man Aleister Crowley. There was nothing more for him to do now but unveil his genius and his works before the world.

At the end of August he decided that it was about time he made another Great Magical Retirement. So, taking Hanni with him, he came to London, keeping out of the way of the prowling Maria, and former High Priestess of Voodoo; now the high priestess of nothing and of nobody. All Brother Volo Intelligere's pleas for her—he had found her lodgings in Hampstead and was doing his best to help her—left Crowley quite unmoved, and on Friday the 29th August The Beast and the Monster together stole away to Southampton with tickets to Lisbon in their pockets and not much else. But Crowley wasn't worrying about money; something, or somebody, would be bound to turn up. And if not, Brother V.I. or Brother Uranus would have to come to the rescue of their Master.

¹ 'Clodd was bad enough,' wrote Crowley to O.P.V., 'but when that Clodd, by dint of being pissed upon, dissolves into Mudd, good-night!'

² 'It was never published, the Mandrake Press collapsed before it had time to appear.'

Crowley knew at least one person in Lisbon: the Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa. They had been corresponding for a year and the poet had invited the magician to call on him if ever he should be passing through the fair town of Lisbon. Senhor Pessoa also wrote poetry in the English language. In the library of the British Museum are three paper-bound collections of his English poems, some of it good plain verse, and the rest of a kind which could only be published in English in his own country, or in the Portuguese tongue in England. In other words, Pessoa, like Crowley, was fascinated by the myth of the Great God Pan.

Crowley sent him a wire, saying he was coming. Off the coast of Spain he decided to go right round the world. He wrote to kind-hearted Brother V.I., upon whose hands he had left the starving Maria: 'We shall bolt for a fishing village . . . then to the Galapagos, Tahiti, China, India and so to bed.'

And all the time, of course, he was performing with the Monster those invocatory acts of sex-magic which figure continually in *The Magical Record* and which are the central ritual of his teachings.

On the 2nd September the steamship *Alcantara* docked at Lisbon, and the Portuguese poet was at the quayside to welcome the English magus and his young, pretty 'wife'.

'Pessoa met us: a *very* nice man.'

They booked a room at the Hotel de l'Europe. After the Beast had spent a day wandering about Lisbon he commented: 'God once tried to wake up Lisbon—with an earthquake; he gave it up as a bad job.'

They went bathing in the sea, they invoked the gods with sex-magic and ascended to the astral plane with the aid of drugs. The Monster's visions were encouraging. 'She sees easily, clearly and correctly, but does not hear or know how to deal with the visions yet. But she saw her own astral as Our Lady Nuit—the Body of the Stars.'

They walked along the shore, passed the town of Cascais, to Boca do Inferno, a funnel of ragged rock, hollowed out by the waves. For foam and noise, especially when the wind is blowing hard from the south-west, Hell's Mouth is hardly surpassed. 'I wish,' said The Beast from the top of the cliffs, some sixty feet high, 'the west coast of Scotland could see it.' And in the evening, back in their hotel room, they returned to the astral plane and saw many visions thereon.

On the night of the 16th September, after an excess of brandy and a particularly powerful invocation, which had as its object success to some scheme for finding money, Hanni descended rapidly from the astral plane and began to weep. There was 'a very long fit of hysterical sobbing'. She wanted to commit suicide; she couldn't stand *magick* any longer. A quarrel broke out between

them, ending in 'a very violent midnight scene' during which the manager of the hotel burst into the room and asked them to leave.

Crowley described Hanni's state of mind with clinical thoroughness.

'Her fits of melancholy are usually connected with the wish to make a mystery of some nothing-in-particular. They are capricious as sea-fog, and as dense. It is almost as hard to get through to her as it is to a genuine melancholic. Note her pathological fear and lying . . . her locking her suit-case a dozen times in a couple of hours, though she doesn't leave the room, and there is nothing of value in it.'

After a night's sleep the Monster felt better. They packed their bags and went to the next town two miles away, Monte Estoril, a beautiful spot on the side of a hill overlooking the sea, dotted with palm, pine, and eucalyptus trees and numerous villas. While The Beast was booking a room in a hotel the Monster crept away and fled back to Lisbon.

'There is no news of her yet—6 p.m. Selah,' wrote Crowley on his first day alone. The following morning he set out for Lisbon in search of his love. He met poet Pessoa and told him all his troubles. 'Worrying like the devil,' he wrote in his diary before going to bed. The next day he repeated this sentence, adding: 'I am not going to get over this—unless she comes back.' He did find the Monster in Lisbon before nightfall, but only to learn from her that she was sailing back to Germany in the morning. She had met Mr. Armstrong, the American Consul, and he had advised her to go home. Crowley was furious. His remarks about Mr. Armstrong are unprintable.

He urged Hanni to change her mind and continue with him on the projected trip round the world. The Monster wavered. Crowley hurriedly retired to his room and behind the locked door performed his magic—a ritual for the Reconsecration of Love.

There does seem to have been a kind of reconsecration, or reconciliation, but Hanni's urge to get away was stronger than Crowley's prayers to the gods, and she sailed in the morning in the *Lloyd Bremen*.

'And I get on with the Job,' wrote Crowley, pulling himself together.

He took the train to Cintra, a little town of 7979 inhabitants (according to *Les Guides Bleus*), described by the poet Southey as 'the most blessed corner of the whole habitable earth', and by Byron as a 'glorious Eden . . . perhaps the most beautiful little town in the whole of Europe'.

'Cintra perfectly gorgeous,' wrote The Beast. 'Long starlight walk.'

The thought of his wife, Maria, turned his mind sour, and upon his return to his hotel he wrote her the following letter:

'20th September, 1930.

'Dear Maria,

'I did not ring you up when I passed through London because you answered my very serious letter with the most trivial everyday nonsense.

'Also you have been trying to seduce W—— H—— and I know not who else. It is galling to my pride that some say you failed!

'Anyhow, you had better get a man who will stand for your secret drinking and your scandalous behaviour. I gave you a great chance in life, and you threw it away. *Tant pis!*

'You should get a divorce. I admit what some dithering nincompoops are still imbecile enough to call "misconduct" on 47 occasions since August 3rd—the fatigues of constant travel must excuse the smallness of the figure—with Hanni F. of Berlin.

'It will be no good asking for alimony because we are all in the soup together with the Rt. Hon. Lord Beaverbrook and the British Empire. Best of all to you!

'Ever,
'A. C.'

He wandered down the coast to Hell's Mouth about ten miles away and listened to the roaring waves. Suddenly an idea occurred to him. 'Sept. 21. I decide to do a suicide stunt to annoy Hanni. Arrange details with Pessoa.'

Accordingly this note in Crowley's handwriting was left on the shore beside Hell's Mouth with a cigarette-case on it to keep it from blowing away: 'I cannot live without you. The other "Boca do Inferno" will get me—it will not be as hot as yours! Hjsos! Tu Li Yu.'¹

Crowley then went back to his hotel to celebrate the 'Equinox of Autumn'. The next day, his prayer for the Reconsecration of Love having been answered, he received a wire from Hanni. It contained this one sentence: 'Love is the Law, love under will'.

Two days later he left Portugal, bound for Germany by the overland route.

Senhor Pessoa did his part of the job well. As a publicity agent he was classes ahead of Col. Blank. The *Diario de Noticias* and the *Noticias Illustrado*, two prominent Portuguese papers, carried the

¹ 'Tu Li Yu' is not the name of a Chinese sage or one of Crowley's ancient avatars, but merely Toodle-oo, or good-bye.

news of the mysterious disappearance of Sir Aleister Crowley. A certain Senhor Ferreira Gomes, by occupation a journalist, happening to pass along the shore by Hell's Mouth, stumbled on the last despairing cry of the English baronet and magus.

The news spread with the usual rapidity. While Crowley, back in Berlin, held Hanni in his arms, the Press of Europe, anxious to fill up its columns, posed this question: Is Crowley dead? If not, what has happened to him? An article entitled *L'Enigme de la Bouche d'Enfer* was published in the French paper *Detective*, with photographs of Tu Li Yu's note and Crowley in Arab costume.

What seemed to make the case even more mysterious was the bald statement by the Portuguese authorities that Aleister Crowley had left the country by the usual route and method.

Were there then two Crowleys, one that left Portugal, and the other that was drowned by Hell's Mouth? The plot became so thick that Scotland Yard sent a detective to Portugal to investigate.

Crowley had a revengeful mind, in many ways an irresponsible, hate-dealing mind. There was no 'Love is the Law, love under will' for those who had offended him. Reunited with the Monster, his thoughts turned towards revenge upon Mr. Armstrong, the American Consul, who had put a spoke in his wheel. He wrote this letter and persuaded Hanni to send it to the man who had befriended her: 'Sir, it is my intention to forward to Washington a formal complaint of your conduct towards me on the 17th-20th instant. Yours Faithfully, Hanni F.'

And all the time the mystery of Crowley's disappearance thickened and steamed. Not unnaturally it was thought he had been murdered. The *Oxford Mail* for the 14th October, 1930, reported preparations being made in London to hold a séance in an attempt to contact his ectoplasmic spirit buffeted by ceaseless winds in the city of Dis.

Suddenly the Master reappeared in the large and splendid rooms of the PORZA Galleries at the opening of an exhibition of seventy-three of his paintings and drawings. Portraits of some old friends were shown here: Leah Faesi, Norman Mudd, and J. W. N. Sullivan; also Aldous Huxley, who had recently arrived in the German capital with Sullivan. 'I thought he had a lot of money and painted him like this to flatter him,' said The Beast of his hasty sketch of Huxley.

One picture of a female monstrosity, entitled 'Ether', deserves mention because of the unusual form of sensibility that had created it.

'At first glance one might doubt the advisability of meeting this lady—alone! But back of the gleaming teeth in twisted

mouth and in eyes diabolically shrewd one sees an inherent good humour that proves encouraging.'

Crowley explained the source and circumstances of his inspiration:—

'This portrait was done during an experiment on the effects of ether. Both artist and model had inhaled small quantities of the vapour for about an hour and, presently having got tired of what they were doing, sprang up to work. Forty minutes later there glowed complete the masterpiece which is now before you.'

These, then, and the rest, landscapes and figures, were the exhibition he had failed to put on in England: all frightfully ugly, strongly suggestive of evil, and rather badly drawn.

He continued to enjoy himself with the Monster and the money of the Rich Man from the West. 'I give myself wholly to love and I am serenely happy,' he wrote. But all happiness is only temporary and there are far more references to bad health, quarrels, and alarms in the series of spasmodic jottings which now make up Crowley's diary. 'Mysterious and sinister letter from Carter. Answered it—badly—after 3 goes.' This was just a note from Colonel Carter of the Yard, unofficial and not unfriendly. 'I suggest to you,' he wrote, 'that you had better cease knocking round the Continent and come back to your wife at once or you will be getting yourself into serious trouble perhaps.' Crowley's comment on this letter was written across the bottom of it: 'The impudence of the lunatic!'

The Rich Man had accepted *The Book of the Law*, his wife had not. Although she may at first have found Crowley fascinating, she soon came to tolerate him only for the sake of her husband. Crowley knew he was incapable of earning any money, but he felt he should have no need to bother himself with such matters. He did his work, that of expounding the mysteries and proclaiming the Law; he left it to others to pay the bill. Such was his fascination for his followers that they paid and went on paying; they deprived themselves of necessities to supply their Master with luxuries. And Crowley, who never did things by halves, was neither modest nor grateful. He was not going to renounce his rôle of Great Beast, dismiss his inmost identity for filthy lucre.

'My poor sweet baby had another melancholy fit,' he wrote of his love, little Miss Hanni F. 'Brandy makes her worse. Towards 1 a.m. she came to herself, and explained quite a lot.

I am nearly insane with loving her, and feeling powerless to help her as I want to.'

The Monster had by now been trained as the Scarlet Woman of The Beast. She helped him perform the rituals; she was his seer and stared into the shew-stone.

An eye in a blue circle looked, mysteriously, out at her. A small man blew a horn towards the sky. Two figures draped in black carried away some dead thing. Then a black-and-gold snake glided into the water. White flowers, and finally the mysterious eye again.

Midnight struck. At seven minutes past the Devil himself glared out of the crystal.

The following day: 'The poor child must not suffer any more. She was so tired tonight that she went to sleep instead of doing Magick, as we intended.'

The quarrels with the wife of the Rich Man from the West became more intense. The Beast described her as being insane with fury on one occasion; and on another that she stamped and swore and cursed him. She feared and hated the Master Therion and felt that he was willing her death.

He called her a mean hag.

'My dear Mr. Crowley,' she wrote to him. 'The \$15,000 dollars I have given to you were spent not in real constructive work, but in expensive cigars, cognac, cocktails, taxis, dinners, wives and sweethearts, or anything you desired at the moment. I never expect to see one cent of this money for I know if you ever make any you will spend it on yourself. I consider you a supremely selfish man. . . . You spend as much in a week on cigars and cognac as I do in two months on myself personally. By the time I have paid the household expenses and given the rest to you and Miss F. there is no more. . . . I am not trying to insult you, but I think you have a Me and God complex. God Almighty Himself would not be as arrogant as you have been, and that is one of the causes of all your troubles.'

And so on.

Crowley's terse comment on this letter was, 'Answered—and adequately.'

Brother Uranus was also at times driven by the strange behaviour of Aleister Crowley to write him letters of protest. The Beast was, doubtless, a man of such phenomenal genius that the ordinary rules of conduct could not apply to him. Like the god Kali he destroyed his own children.

But then he would unexpectedly smile, spread a glow of interest and optimism about him, and talk of better days in the

past and still to come, of magic and of the gods whose guiding hands never left him.

The Ambivalence of Gertrude

'I GAVE Maria dinner the other night,' wrote Brother Volo Intelligere in London to The Beast in Berlin, 'and found her in a very bad way. Rent is paid up to the end of the month, but she is very short of food, and in a bad nervous condition, talking to everyone of suicide. Her genuine attempts to find work have met with very little success. She got one regular job, but lost it through being your wife when *John Bull* attacked you and the Mandrake Press early in January. . . . I tell her that from your letters to me, you appear to want to treat her decently and to make her some allowance—you know she is not extravagant. But in practice she receives nothing, and one cannot blame her for suspecting you of prevarication. . . .'

Maria Teresa had said good-bye to the man whom she thought was her husband. She was only interested now in getting from him what she vaguely called a 'Settlement', being under the impression that Crowley had money and could be persuaded to give her some of it. Apart from windfalls from Rich Men and Rich Women and some poor men and women like his devoted friend Mr. G.B. (who put himself into the hands of moneylenders in response to a *very urgent* appeal from The Beast), Crowley had an income of a few pounds a week; for the trustees of the small discretionary trust (*see* note on Page 88) were now dividing the interest from that trust between him and his daughter, Lola Zaza.

The Beast felt he should do something: Maria was a nuisance and a drag. He must divorce her (without, of course, running any risk of having to pay her alimony). He composed this memorandum to his solicitors in London:

'June 16, 1930, to August 1, I was living at 89 Park Mansions, Knightsbridge, with my wife. I had continued causes of complaint against her.

'(1) She refused to make any efforts to learn English.

'(2) She was constantly drunk in public—often violently, to the point of vomiting or collapse.

'(3) She was always making violent scenes, among friends or at parties.

'(4) She used to make love to male guests—embracing, kissing, &c.—in public.

'August 1. I left for Berlin on important business.

'August 3. Wrote my wife full instructions how to carry on. I also voiced the above complaints, and intimated that I would not resume normal cohabitation unless these grievances were redressed.

'To this letter I received no answer, except an entirely frivolous and irrelevant communication mailed after I had left Berlin on August 13 and returned to London.

'August 24. In London. No news of my wife, except vague rumours that she asked for me in a restaurant where I occasionally eat, that she was living with some man in a flat in Hampstead, &c.

'August 29. Still no news. I am obliged to leave London on a business trip to Lisbon.'

Brother V.I. wrote to say that Maria had disappeared from her Hampstead lodgings and that her last letter to him pointed at suicide.

'Alas everything is cruel to me. When you get this letter, I am died. I leave this world without regret, because I know that now I go for ever take a dear rest. Please write after to Crowley that in my last moment I could not forgive him. Farewell.'

The Beast laid out the *Yi King* sticks. Where is Maria? Is she dead? If not, what has happened to her? Hexagram XX Kwan. *The worshipper has washed his hands, but not yet presented his offerings.*

She may have run off with a man, he decided. Or be dead. The former seemed more likely.

He was anxious to be divorced from Maria, for he wanted to marry the Monster; or, if not her, some other Scarlet Woman of whom he had always dreamed and who would solve for once and for ever all his problems. Many times recently he had asked the Chinese Oracle whether he should 'seek to establish a permanent fortune by marrying a rich woman'. On the last occasion that he had summoned up the Spirit that Knows All Things to pose this question it had, smilingly, replied, 'The bold, bad woman!'

The Monster was also anxious about The Beast's divorce, for she was now *enceinte*. She wrote to the Serpent for his advice. The Serpent was Crowley's pupil in matters magical, but Crowley might well have been his in matters practical.

'Monster's note about it being much better for the Great Work if you were plaintiff is perfectly true,' he wrote to Crowley. 'It is too bad that that wasn't thought of several months ago when Maria received your letter stating that you

had committed adultery umpteen times and that only the rigours of travelling prevented the number being greater. The letter must have caused you a great deal of pleasure when written, but, alas, it prevents you even thinking of being a plaintiff for divorce now. One can't have things both ways.'

But the question whether or not he should, or could, be divorced from Maria, with or without payment of alimony, was suddenly taken to another plane by Maria's falling out of her senses and being removed to a lunatic asylum with the delusion that she was—I quote from the Memorandum from the Medical Superintendent—'the daughter of the King and Queen and that she had married her brother, the Prince of Wales'.

'Hear Maria is in Colney Hatch,' wrote Crowley in his diary. (He was reminded of his first wife, Rose, whose departure for the 'Bug House' was the signal for the appearance of a new Scarlet Woman, Sister Virakam.) Was, therefore, another lover and companion, whom he could instruct in the higher, and lower, arts, about to come into his life? After many upsets the Monster had left him and, according to a rumour, soon afterwards committed suicide. 'Hanni left finally, stealing my *Book of Lies*. I am glad I can brand her everywhere openly as a thief.'

He filled in the questionnaire about Maria Teresa Crowley sent him by the authorities of the mental hospital, and commented: 'It is very English to regard insanity as a joke.' Then he cleared out of the way all odd mistresses and lovers for the stately emergence of a new Scarlet Woman.

This was Gertrude S. She was 36 years of age, and had been married at least once. What she had been doing for thirty-six years till the influence of the stars brought her face to face with The Beast I don't know and I have not tried to find out.

This was how they met. He was walking one day down the Unter den Linden when suddenly he caught her eye. The Beast stopped to look into the nearby window of a travel agency. She came up and spoke to him.

'The words used were not "Why do you look so sad, Bertie?" but "Where are you going for your next trip?"'

It was three o'clock on the 3rd August, 1931, before the love affair with another lady called Pola had even time to grow cold.

While he was ill with an attack of bronchitic asthma she came and comforted him and on one occasion stayed the night—the very night that the hotel was raided by the police, who suspected that behind the façade was a young brothel.

Their attraction for each other was tremendous. He wrote of her sexual powers and charms in words of excessive praise.

He loved her passionately and truly—if he can be believed on

this deceptive subject of love—but felt he must avoid her lest 'she might return my love'.

She did return his love. She had lived, as we can well believe, unhappily and unfulfilled until the day her Darling Boy, as she called Aleister Crowley, gazed upon her and asked her to be his Scarlet Woman.

Although he went to bed and dreamed he had murdered three of his children, the thought of Gertrude was enough to fill him with mysterious health. He pawned his jewellery to give her money, and consecrated her as his Whore, the Scarlet Woman of The Beast 666, before the undiminished presence of Aiwass.

Then he found her a flat and went and lived in it with her.

She was the cause of much irritation between Crowley and Brother Uranus, who refused to bow down and worship her, for he contested her right for the high position of Scarlet Woman, the companion and equal of The Beast. But Crowley was indifferent to the complaints of Brother Uranus and threw himself into a vortex of passion, the blood from his lips, held by Gertrude's teeth in an embrace of fury, flowing over her face. If Crowley loved Gertrude, his love (to use the language of the schools) was ambivalent—Bleuler's convenient term for love and hate mingling in the one stream. Hate is subdued or absorbed, or perhaps doesn't even exist in any known quantity, in the run of ordinary humanity, but in The Beast, a strong, ambivalent type, it not only existed but seems at times to have got the upper hand. In fact, between periods of love and worship, poor Gertrude was much abused by The Beast, and this destroyed all hope of a permanent union.

'November 2, 1931. Gertie suddenly got a jealous fit about three cheap whores at B——'s and I strangled her. . . .'

They even quarrelled in the street. On one occasion Crowley held her against the wall with one hand and beat her with the other; unfortunately for him some passing storm-troopers came to the rescue and trod Crowley's face into the gutter.

Of course these upsets produced fits of aggression in the Scarlet Woman. Women, whether Scarlet or of any other colour, are what men make of them. 'Gertie went to kitchen, I to study. Suddenly she walked in on me and stabbed me with the carving knife. She then became violent. I had to hold her down. So I bled until Marie got a doctor, about two hours later.'

The doctor gave Gertrude an injection of morphine to steady her nerves, and then stitched up and bandaged The Beast. Although Crowley was always indignantly complaining of Gertrude's making a nuisance of herself, his life with her was not all hate and antagonism. The other face of this Janus-headed attitude must not be forgotten. There was love, sexual and magical, enough and to spare, and they enjoyed their social life together. He was pleased

to introduce her to his friends—his Scarlet Woman who rode upon him triumphant. She met the novelist, Christopher Isherwood, and the poet, Stephen Spender, who were then in Berlin. As I have said, Crowley loved Gertrude S. in his own mysterious, ambivalent way.

That strange wanderer Gerald Hamilton, one-time companion of Sir Roger Casement and the only man to spend both world wars in Brixton Goal for political reasons, saw much of Crowley during these years, and he tells some amusing tales in his charming way of Crowley's lady love. Hamilton was born in China and had travelled the world, but he had never met anyone like Aleister Crowley.

'Tuesday, 15th December. Hamilton to dinner. Totally incredulous when told of the stabbing, and made quite ill when he pictured the blood.'

There was a spare room in Crowley's flat. Hamilton became the guest, or rather the lodger. The Beast was supported by involuntary contributions from his friends, Hamilton told me with a laugh. One night he came back late and found Gertie lying stark naked on the floor, apparently asleep. It was winter and the fire had burnt out. Feeling that she had lost her way, Hamilton shook the dozing Beast.

'Is Trudy ill?' he asked.

'What, hasn't that bitch gone to bed yet?'

Crowley tumbled off the bed (he was half dressed and still had his shoes on) and gave poor Scarlet Woman the biggest kick he, Hamilton, had ever witnessed.

The flat was strewn with broken crockery: plate-throwing being one of Gertie's means of defence. Gertie sprang up and a struggle then commenced. Crowley reached out for some rope which was kept handy.

'Help me bind her!' he roared at Mr. Hamilton. 'Don't stand there looking like a bloody gentleman!'

Hamilton tactfully retreated towards the door, ignoring cries for help from both Scarlet Woman and Master Therion. Then, judiciously, he called the doctor, who soon arrived, prepared his hypodermic syringe and in a business-like fashion administered a much-needed narcotic to poor Gertie.

On another occasion Hamilton came home in the early afternoon and found Gertie trussed up like a chicken, with a note beside her in The Beast's handwriting giving warning that she must not be untied under any circumstances.

At that time Hamilton's politics were Left: he was an Irish revolutionary and a friend of the German communists. This was rather convenient for Crowley, because it not only enabled him to meet Thaelmann and other communist leaders, but to earn £50 by

secretly reporting on Hamilton's activities to the British authorities.

About this time Crowley made another attempt to get into the news again, his previous effort at the Boca do Inferno having been so successful. He sent off a telegram in Gertrude's name to Mr. W. H., who had been a kind of secretary to The Beast during the high tide of the Mandrake Press, the Mr. W. H. whom, it was said, Maria Teresa had tried, in vain, to seduce.

'Master Therion dead. Please inform Press.'

But young, alert Mr. W. H. wired back:

'Both bounce.'

Gertie went the way of all the Scarlet Women of The Beast. Her letters to him, written in a large hand not unlike that of Dorothy Olsen, are full of tenderness, explanations, and despair. She followed him to England, where she slowly fades out of his diaries in a diminishing series of uproars.

Mr. Justice Swift is Surprised

It had always been a matter of regret to Crowley that he never sued the *Sunday Express* for libel and rehabilitated his character and, through heavy damages, his fortune, as Frank Harris had so optimistically outlined. It does not seem to have occurred to Crowley that in suing Lord Beaverbrook he might be biting off more than he could chew. It was true that *John Bull* had abused him with equal violence ('A Man We'd Like to Hang', 'A Cannibal at Large', and 'The King of Depravity' were some of their headlines about The Beast), but the *Sunday Express's* onslaught had been the direct cause of his expulsion from Italy and the ruination of all his work. Mudd's pamphlet had remedied nothing; no one seemed to have taken any notice of it. Unfortunately he had lacked the money and the health to sue Lord Beaverbrook within a reasonable time after these melancholy events.

On the 7th January, 1933, Crowley was walking down Praed Street in London. He stopped to look into the window of a bookshop and there saw a copy of his novel *Moonchild*. Attached to it was a card with these words written on it: 'Aleister Crowley's first novel *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* was withdrawn from circulation after an attack in the sensational Press.'

'Discovered libel at 23 Praed Street,' wrote The Beast in his diary, and off he went to his lawyer.

He must put a stop to this unending libelling of himself. He owed it to himself and to the world. It had gone on for far too long.

On the 10th May the case was tried and judgment given for Crowley.

'There was not the smallest ground,' said Mr. Justice Bennett, 'for suggesting that any book Mr. Crowley had written was indecent or improper. Mr. — [the bookseller] wanted the public to believe that the book to which the label was attached was an indecent book.'

Crowley was awarded £50 damages with costs.

The success of this, his first, libel suit whetted Crowley's appetite for further jousts in the law courts. He remembered that Nina Hamnett had published something about him in her reminiscences, *Laughing Torso*, which had appeared in 1932.

'I have written quite a lot about you,' wrote Nina Hamnett to The Beast in 1930, 'very nice and appreciative. No libel, no rubbish, simply showing up the "sale bourgeois" attitude to all our behaviour.'

Crowley opened *Laughing Torso* and read that he had had a temple in Cefalù. 'He was supposed to practise Black Magic there, and one day a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was also a goat there. This all pointed to Black Magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.'

Crowley reached for his hat and went off to see his lawyer.

The Beast's decision to sue his old friend Nina Hamnett (they had known each other for over twenty years) resulted in one of the most extraordinary trials of the first half of the 20th century. Opposing Crowley this time was not a small bookseller but a big publishing house, Constable & Company, who briefed Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., to defend them.

Crowley's lawyer asked The Beast to find, among his friends, two persons who would testify to his good character. But no one, except the faithful, was in a hurry to step into court and swear that 'The Wickedest Man in the World' was, in fact, only a harmless, aging gentleman, unfortunately enveloped in a cloud of evil gossip.

'Mr. Crowley,' wrote J. W. N. Sullivan to Crowley's lawyer, 'is mistaken. I have no intention whatever of appearing as a witness in the case you mention.' Sullivan evidently had by now divested himself of The Beast's influence.

Major-General Fuller's refusal was even more emphatic.

The novelist J. D. Beresford (he commissioned *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* on behalf of William Collins) wrote a kindly refusal and tried to persuade Crowley to drop this lawsuit. 'I haven't the least doubt that some very extraordinary and damaging charges will be made against you if you come into court, the kind of

charges that would spoil any chance you might have with a judge, who is a kind of professional moralist.'

Crowley's lawyer, probing the weak spots in his client's case, asked The Beast for a copy of *White Stains*. After reading it he wrote to Crowley: 'I have no hesitation in saying that if the Defendants are in possession of that book your chances of winning this action are negligible. I can see no satisfactory explanation of it.'

Other points raised by Crowley's solicitor were in connection with the Abbey. Did not the Thelemites walk about naked and shock the Sicilians? Replied Crowley:

'I have just remembered an incident which is probably the basis of the statements about exhibiting ourselves naked to the inhabitants of Sicily. I expelled a man named—[Brother Fiat Lux] for misbehaviour, and he went up to live on the top of the Rock under a vow not to touch water for a week. Very naturally he went mad, and did all sorts of stunts and absurdities of which this may have been one.'

The case was opened on the 10th April, 1934, in the King's Bench Division of the High Court, before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury. The defence was a plea of justification.

Crowley's counsel, Mr. J. P. Eddy (now K.C.), began with a brief account of Crowley's past life: he had inherited a fortune, was devoted to poetry, art, travel, and mountaineering. He had climbed the Alps and walked across the Sahara. For many years he had been interested in magic and had always fought against black magic. In 1920 he had started a little community at a villa in Cefalù for the purpose of studying white magic. Mr. Eddy then quoted the passage in Nina Hamnett's book about the baby that disappeared and the goat. And Crowley denied the suggestion that he had told these things to Nina Hamnett.

Mr. Hilbery then cross-examined Crowley for the Defence.

'Are you,' he said, 'asking for damages because your reputation has suffered?'

'Yes,' replied Crowley.

'For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?'

'Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.'

'Did any paper call you "the Monster of Wickedness"?'

'I can't remember.'

'Have you, from the time of your adolescence, openly defied all moral conventions?'

'No.'

'And proclaimed your contempt for all the doctrines of Christianity?'

'Not all the doctrines. . .'

'Did you take to yourself the designation of "The Beast 666"?'

'Yes.'

'Do you call yourself "the Master Therion"?'

'Yes.'

'What does "Therion" mean?'

'"Great Wild Beast".'

'Do these titles convey a fair expression of your practice and outlook on life?'

'"The Beast 666" only means "sunlight". You can call me "Little Sunshine".'

Laughter in court.

During the second day's hearing Mr. Hilbery read out a poem from the erotic *Clouds Without Water* and, at its conclusion, asked The Beast, 'Is that not filth?'

'As you read it, it is magnificent,' replied Crowley, inverting Wilde's reply to Carson.

White Stains, which had shaken Crowley's solicitor, was also produced in court and examined by the judge, who asked the jury if they wanted to read it. As one newspaper report put it, 'They intimated that they did not.'

As Beresford had predicted, many unfavourable aspects of Crowley's past activities were brought up; and the trial of Nina Hamnett and Constable & Company for publishing a libel soon turned into the trial of Aleister Crowley for leading an immoral life. On the third day the Defence put Betty May into the box and she described many lurid scenes she'd witnessed at the Abbey. When asked about the paintings upon the walls of Crowley's room, *La Chambre des Cauchemars*, she replied, 'They were terrible.'

'Do you mean they were indecent?'

'Most.'

On the fourth day of the case the judge (apparently unable to contain himself any longer) said to the jury:

'I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another. I thought that I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness. I thought that everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me. I have learnt in this case that we can always learn something more if we live long enough. I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, and abominable stuff as that which has been produced by the man who describes himself to you as the greatest living poet. Are you still of the same mind or do you want the case to go on?'

While the jury were consulting, Mr. Eddy, Crowley's counsel, rose, but the judge interrupted him. 'Not now, Mr. Eddy, not now.'

Could the jury retire? asked the foreman.

'No,' said the judge. 'If there is any doubt the case must go on.'

The jury consulted again and speedily returned a verdict for the defendants.

In this manner the case came to an end. Crowley made no dramatic speeches, there was no Forth-Speaking of the Word of the Lord, as he had outlined in 1924 in his letter to Frank Harris. There had only been a forth-speaking of the mind of Mr. Justice Swift.

As Crowley strode from the court a girl of nineteen, who'd been following the case, ran after him. With tears in her eyes she accosted The Beast on the broad pavement outside the law courts. 'This verdict,' she said, 'is the wickedest thing since the Crucifixion. Is there anything I can do to help?'

Crowley stared down at her, too filled with emotion to find words.

'Couldn't I,' continued the stranger, 'be the mother of your child?'

Crowley's comment on the case (in his diary) is rather cryptic. He underlined, and put an exclamation after, 'Friday, April 13' (the day of the verdict), and wrote, 'Case violated by collapse of Swift and Nina. General joy—the consternation of Constable & Co.'

The following day he went off to Brighton with his Scarlet Woman, a middle-aged lady of modest means. In 1933 she had succeeded Gertrude as the Whore of the Stars after The Beast had tried, and rejected, a number of other women who were aspiring to the vacant position. Strangely, his defeat in the law courts left him only with a feeling of elation. He had lost, but newspaper-sellers had shouted out his name through the streets of London and elsewhere. The world had stopped and stared and wondered at his words and photographs. In his failure was his success.

* * *

Crowley's lawsuit not only reminded the world that he still existed and introduced him to millions who had never before heard of him, but aroused his creditors to drag him into the Bankruptcy Court. His liabilities from thirty-eight Unsecured and ten Partly Secured creditors came to £4,695 8s. 1d. and his assets to £15,000. Unfortunately these assets were not very tangible. They were to come from Brother Volo Intelligere, upon whom Crowley had recently served a writ for the payment of £15,000 on the grounds that he would have made this sum had not Volo Intelligere been his business manager. The deficiency was therefore £4,695 8s. 1d. Of the Unsecured Liabilities £846 was for the defendants' cost in the libel action, £814 for clothing

and books, £265 for wines and tobacco, and so on. The summary of this statement concludes with 'The bankrupt states that he is not now possessed of household furniture.'

Crowley had, indeed, no household furniture—the Crowned and Conquering Child of Horus would only have been encumbered with household furniture. He refrained from mentioning that he owned £150,000 or so in the form of property at San José, California, for that, alas, was as intangible as the £15,000 due from Brother V.I.

He had arrived at the ownership of this estate in California thanks to the activities of one R. Swinburne Clymer, the head of an American Rosicrucian society called the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. Mr. Clymer had written an enormous book in an attempt to discredit a certain H. Spencer Lewis, the Emperor of a rival Rosicrucian order called the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (or AMORC for short), by linking him with Crowley. The basis of Mr. Clymer's attack on Mr. Lewis, 'the boastful, pilfering Emperor with black magic connections', was that Lewis had received a charter for his Order, which Clymer described as a commercial enterprise, from the O.T.O. Lewis and Crowley were therefore tarred with the same brush: hence Clymer's book, which, for sheer length, is in the same class as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, and for sheer abuse is equal to the *Sunday Express* on Crowley. While on the subject of Mr. Clymer's two enormous volumes, *The Rosicrucian Fraternity in America: Authentic and Spurious Organizations*, I should like to say that in my view his thesis is largely baseless, for the late Emperor of AMORC received his charter not from Crowley but from Theodor Reuss; and as far as I know Crowley's only connection with Lewis was to write and ask him to surrender his estates at San José, the headquarters of AMORC. Lewis's reply to Crowley, if he did reply, is not on record.

Magical Retirement

WHAT now was left for Aleister Crowley to do? As the Logos of the Aeon of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, or, as he otherwise expressed it, 'the sublimest mystic of all history . . . the self-crowned God whom men shall worship and blaspheme for centuries', he could hardly have achieved more.¹

If, however, Crowley considered himself not as a god but as a

¹ The delusion of grandeur is always a compensation mechanism; underneath is the sense of terrible inferiority, of worthlessness. In the same paragraph in which Crowley cried out his Godhead, he disclosed the purpose of it all: ' . . . because I want to prostitute my manhood, to abase my Godhead, before my lady. I want my crown crushed by Her feet; I want my face fouled by Her spittle. I want my heart torn by Her boot-heel, my mind to be Her skirt-hem's rustle, my soul to be Her privy.'

man, he was far from satisfied: he was growing old, and had failed to achieve most of his ambitions. Three of his poems had been published in *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse*, but he was not honoured as poet. His exploits as a mountaineer were passed over or only mentioned, as in Frank Smythe's book on Kangchenjunga, with barely concealed hostility. His magical achievements, in this age of science, materialism, and disbelief, were regarded with amusement, curiosity, and incredulosity. He was, for the public, only the Wickedest Man in the World, that is to say a kind of joke, or at best a person not quite nice to know.

But whether Crowley regarded himself in one aspect or in the other, as Baphomet, the Most Holy King of the whole earth, or as Mr. Aleister Crowley, the King of Depravity, he was always the Spirit of Solitude, Alastor the Destroyer, the Wanderer of the Waste. For him there was no respite; he was ever driven darkly onwards.

He had written his books, sacred and profane, and given out his word, *thelema*, to mankind; but, unlike other men of his age who had done the things they had wanted to do, he could not lean back and enjoy his last years. There was no sense of fulfilment, of having lived his life. And, in addition, he was almost continuously ill.

But meanwhile the business of living—of finding somewhere comfortable to live, and something exotic to eat and someone apocalyptic to love—had to go on.

During the 1930s Crowley wandered about England, still lifting his hat to embracing couples and raising a deprecating hand at all clergymen and pronouncing ἀπό παντός κακοδαίμονος ['And save us] from every evil demon—a phrase from the liturgy of the Greek Orthodox Church. New pupils and lovers came and vanished in moderately quick succession. The Scarlet Woman last mentioned went slowly, but surely mad, and was removed after many uproars to a lunatic asylum, whence she wrote pitiful letters to The Beast begging him to come and rescue her; for the Devil, who kept looking out from under her bed, was threatening to carry her off. He heard that Hanni F. had committed suicide soon after they had parted, and Dorothy Olsen, not long before, had resolutely drunk herself to death. On Sunday, the 28th February, 1937, his famous Serpent's tooth, which had drawn the blood of Madeline B. and of many other women, broke off—'Alas!' A child was born to him by the young woman who had accosted him after his unsuccessful suit before Mr. Justice Swift.

Like other men of great renown, he received letters from strangers:

'Dear Sir, I am writing to you because I am sure you can help

me; my story is as follows. When I was three weeks old I met with a shock which has tremendously affected my life. I was lying in my cradle when a hard bowler hat fell off a hat rack and hit me on the temple and rendered me unconscious. The effect of it was that it upset my whole nervous system. Since I can remember I have suffered from excessive perspiration of the hands and feet, extreme nervousness and extreme shyness, and when I reached about the age of fourteen I began to suffer from excessive seminal losses both day and night. I am now 34 years of age, but I do not look it. The ailments I suffer from are a tremendous handicap to me. I am overwhelmingly ambitious and possess tremendous will power, and it was because of this fact that I became a member of the Rosicrucian Order of N. American in 1928 when I was living in New York. Owing however to my weak nervous condition I was unable to bear the strain of the exercises and after 2 or 3 weeks I had to give them up. I have very great ideals and have a strong desire to do good in the world, for instance putting an end to the White Slave Traffic, stopping any future war, and it is for this reason I would like to develop my psychic power but I cannot do so until I am cured of my nervous condition. Now, sir, as you are a magician . . .'

Another letter was sent from Wormwood Scrubs :

'Dear Sir, Since my last letter to you of about the 20th Nov. last, I have been sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for robbery. This (my first conviction) has been due to following in the past a false will and I intend to dedicate the fruits of my misguidedness to a strong effort to find my true will. In order to do this, I urgently require a copy of *Magick in Theory and Practice* and I would consider it a great favour if you could arrange to have one sent to me here. . . . I should mention that the rules of the prison make all books sent in the property of the prison library and on my discharge *Magick* will be put into circulation (where it will remain constantly), and will, I assure you, find many readers—even unwilling ones, for the famine of reading matter is not the least of one's worries here.'

During creative moods Crowley thought out many schemes for making money and bringing himself again before the public. His Black Magick Restaurant, in spite of his ability for concocting the more exotic dishes, such as 'Mexican meat dish, so hot that it makes strong men weep', was never established; and nothing came of his design to exploit a game he'd invented called 'Thelema'.

His Elixir of Life pills (made of a certain substance from his own body) were a little more successful.

'Dear Mr. Crowley,' wrote one young lady. 'The smallest possible dose of your Elixir of Life would be appreciated by me. I can give you any references you may require and assure you that the desire has nothing whatever to do with sexual difficulties. It is to try and help me pay back about £300 which I have incurred trying to become a first-class tennis player. I have not at the moment sufficient stamina to compete as I wish. . . .'

His most successful scheme of all was his course of bodily and sexual rejuvenation called AMRITA (twenty-five guineas weekly).

Case 28. Married woman, 42, obese and idle. Bitterly aware of failure to attract. Came to me in 1932. A good patient, despite some lapses. Gave Amrita after four and half months. She responded admirably. She is still, six years later, sprightly, energetic, and devastating. Would not look more than 35 but makes up badly.

Case 73. Army officer, 54, long service, mostly in India. Had been impotent for over 15 years. Sports—polo and stalking in Kashmir. Old malarial subject—liver affected. I insisted on change of climate before taking the case. His health improved greatly. He proved a difficult patient, and needed the full six months' course. Four doses were administered in the 7th month. Potency returned after the first dose, but not satisfactorily. After the fourth he was like an exceptionally strong man of 40. Unfortunately he abused his powers, got into the clutches of a loose woman, and took to drinking heavily.

Every day, and sometimes many times during the day, Crowley consulted the Chinese Oracle. As soon as he was awake he laid out the sticks to divine what was in store for him during the next few hours. His devotion to this voice of wisdom, like his belief in the voice that had dictated *The Book of the Law*, removes him from the indignity of his sordid love affairs. This was the aspect of Crowley which drew his pupils to him: a man submissive to, and in close touch with, his unconscious; for, whatever non-believers may think of *Liber Legis*, it was not consciously composed by Crowley's thinking mind.

In 1937 the Nazis banned the A . . . A . . . , the O.T.O., and other occult German orders. Frater Uranus was cast into a concentration camp and all Martha Küntzel's papers were seized. This was a great blow to Martha, for she loved Hitler as much as Crowley. The Master Therion was the prophet of national socialism, for the Law of Thelema, to her mind, supplied its philosophical basis. Hitler was a Thelemite, leading the people to express their (demoniac) wills. It was this Fräulein Martha Küntzel who made the strange claim that Hitler was her 'magical son', or pupil. She explained herself thus: in 1925 Crowley had told her that the nation which first adopted *The Book of the Law* would become

the leading nation of the world. As she believed that the then unimportant Adolf Hitler was Germany's coming leader, she helped him on his way by sending him a copy of her translation of *Liber Legis*.

The suggestion is that Hitler adopted *The Book of the Law*. There is, however, no proof that Martha Kuntzel was ever in touch with Adolf Hitler, and Hitler did not, of course, need Crowley as a Master, or any lessons from his philosophy of doing one's (true) will. But we do know that Hitler was drawn towards the occult, especially during the early years of his political career, and, as is common knowledge, he sought guidance from the stars till he reduced Germany to ruins.

Suddenly Brother Uranus, whom Crowley had given up for lost, reappeared; slowly they began to resuscitate their mystic Order. The more serious interest in magic was now coming from the United States. As Brother Uranus was an American, he returned there and spake the word in New York, that mighty city on the Hudson, and the Thelemites gathered in Rainbow Valley (as it is called), amid the Palomar Mountains in the distant land of California, and erected their temple to The Beast—Pan.

In 1937 Crowley issued *The Equinox of the Gods*, a work containing the text of *Liber Legis* and a brief history of his magical career, or ascent to the thrones of the Secret Chiefs. Both sides of the stele of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu are reproduced in colour and facsimile sheets of the original MS. of *Liber Legis* are tucked into a folder at the back of the book. Apart from a few careless misprints, such as the description of Ankh-f-n-Khonsu's stele as the Stele of Revelling, instead of the Stele of Revealing, it is a splendid production. On the evening of Christmas Day Crowley, with Brother Volo Intelligere,¹ in the course of an extensive pub-crawl, gathered a Jew, an Indian, a Negro, and a Malayan. They all proceeded to Cleopatra's Needle on the London Embankment, where, at precisely 6.22 a.m., as the Sun entered Capricornus, The Beast pronounced: 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. I, Ankh-f-n-Khonsu, the Priest of the Princes, present you, as representatives of your race, with *The Book of the Law*. It is the charter of universal freedom for every man and woman in the world. Love is the law, love under will.' He then handed round copies of *The Equinox of the Gods* and went home to bed with a hangover.

Crowley's next creative task was the writing of *The Book of Thoth*, a work on those divinatory cards called the Tarot. He was assisted by a new aspirant to the Great Work, Sister Tzaba, whom he met in 1938. She made the many beautiful illustrations the

¹ Brother Volo Intelligere was by now no longer a member of the A . . . A . . . , but he was still Crowley's friend. He wrote to me: 'Being young it took me some five years to "understand", and so to leave, The Beast's Order.'

book required. It was published in 1944, the first complete account of the correspondences of the Tarot with the Cabbala. The origins of both the Tarot and the Cabbala are obscure; the Golden Dawn had taught that the Tarot was founded on the Cabbala, which is the clue to the meaning of the cards. These esoteric secrets Crowley now gave to the world.

The bombing of London sent him from his lodgings at 93 Jermyn Street, Piccadilly, to the Bell Inn, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire. At the age of seventy he went to stay at Netherwood, a boarding-house at the Ridge, Hastings. Here, in this large and, to me, sombre house, standing in its own grounds and hidden from the roadway by stalwart trees, he spent his last two years. He still smoked the strongest and best tobacco and ate plenty of sweets and sugar (ten or twelve spoonfuls to each cup of tea), sent him from America, and drank his fill of brandy. The Logos of the Aeon of Ra-Hoor-Khuit had retired. He had shrunk into his clothes and the fleshiness had vanished from his face.

'You should meet Aleister Crowley,' Mr. Clifford Bax said to me. He added with a smile, 'I will have him sent to London for you,' as if Aleister Crowley were some fine old vase or piece of carved ivory.

I did not bother Mr. Bax to pack up Crowley for me, but made instead the journey to Hastings, taking with me my friend Rupert Gleadow.

Word went up to his room that we had arrived.

We could hear his slow footsteps upon the stairs and in the passage. The moment had arrived at last. As he was about to enter I drew back to take the full impact of him.

He was not much more than medium height, slightly bent, and clad in an old-style plus-four suit with silver buckles at the knees. In his eyes was a puzzled, pained look. He had a thin, goatee beard and moustache, and his head, in spite of the tufts of hair at the sides, seemed hardly more than a skull. A large ring with his name engraved in hieroglyphics was on his finger and a brooch of the god Thoth on his tie.

'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law,' he said in a nasal and fussy tone of voice.

The Wickedest Man in the World did look a little wicked, but mostly rather exhausted—whether from wickedness or from old age or some other cause I did not then know.

It was an awkward meeting in rather ordinary circumstances (the drawing-room of the average boarding-house is not, after all, either the most diabolic or the most romantic of surroundings), but as soon as Crowley realized that my companion was Rupert Gleadow, the astrologer, we plunged straight away into that warm subject of the influence of the stars.

'I think,' said Crowley, 'that there is only a fraction of one per cent. of truth in astrology.'

This view, from a man who had been casting horoscopes all his life, struck me as odd.¹

'I should say there's more than that in it,' replied Gleadow.

My subsequent visits to Crowley added little to my first impression. His cryptographic jottings on many little squares of paper show exactly how ill and how vexed he was in his last years, explaining his threatening, insane letters to tradespeople and friends. He recorded the anguish of being faced with 'long, lonely, boring evenings'; and of being stifled and crushed until his eager, trembling fingers, with long, tobacco-stained fingernails, grasped the syringe and he injected in his armpit a certain white substance which brought brief relief.

'No. Try $\frac{1}{2}$ grain: will that fill the quota? Done. 5.15 p.m. Certainly I want heroin; but almost anything else would do just as well! It's boredom and A[nno] D[omini]! A girl or a game of chess would fill the gap. But I've just not enough pep to start revision or research. 7 p.m. Yes, this does set going a mournful train of thought—mostly about my lost valuables. All my careless folly. What an ass I am! Will heroin help me to forget it?'

His daily intake of heroin rose from two or three grains up to as many as eleven whole grains, which is sufficient to kill a roomful of people, one-eighth of a grain being the largest usual dose.

Strangely, his sense of humour did not desert him, and between his black rages and tears he would jest like a schoolboy. On the first occasion when, in my presence, he raised an emaciated arm to inject himself with the power that sustained him, he apologized and suggested that I might care to leave the room.

'Not at all,' I replied. 'Can I help?'

He explained that recently an army officer had shown such a distasteful face when he had prepared himself for the syringe that he had gone next door to the bathroom. He added drily: 'I left the bedroom door open, and from behind the bathroom door I bent down to the keyhole and began to squeal like a stuck pig. When I came out I found my poor friend had almost fainted.'

¹ When strangers, seeking Crowley's advice, wrote to him, he plunged into the heart of the matter by setting up their horoscope—upon receipt of the time and place of their birth. Thus he wrote to a Monsieur André Pigné: 'Your horoscope illustrates your life very well. You ought certainly to be firmly attached to a woman of great sexual experience, not a professional. Probably a woman of 40 would be much better than a younger one. It is clear that you need a thorough education in this matter.' Monsieur Pigné replied: 'I know it, but unfortunately it is not easy to find such a woman, for although I could offer her many things, I am not a millionaire. Moreover, I do not dance, and though I am far from being ugly, I am not very handsome as some men are.'

Crowley died from myocardial degeneration and chronic bronchitis on the night of the 1st December, 1947, leaving beneath his pillow a parchment talisman in Enochian consecrated 'for a great fortune'. He was seventy-two years of age. His death was expected, for throughout the summer he had grown weaker. The house-keeper of Netherwood confessed to me that she prayed for him to die, for she couldn't bear the sight of him. He was, indeed, a strange sight. The fat, jolly man with hypnotic eyes and pointed ears and eyebrows curling upwards, Pan, had gone; a strange old gentleman—the Devil is always a gentleman—had taken his place. He was the archetype of Lucifer, or the Magician.

He did not want to die, and as he passed into a coma the tears flowed down his white cheeks. Sister Tzaba was with him till he lost consciousness. She held his twitching hands and caught his last words: 'I am perplexed . . .'

On Friday the 5th December, 1947, Crowley was cremated at Brighton. Throughout his life he had imagined his death and burial as wholly fantastic events; but when, during his last year, he made his final will, he did not ask his executors, as he had done in the will he made in 1931, to see that he was buried in Westminster Abbey,¹ or embalmed in the ancient Egyptian manner like Christian Rosencreutz, or that the urn containing his ashes should be placed on the broad ledge of the cliff behind Boleskine House, or on top of the Rock of Cefalù. He simply asked Louis Wilkinson (Louis Marlow the novelist), who had remained his friend over many years, to read the *Hymn to Pan*, *The Book of the Law*, and the Collects and the Anthem from his *Gnostic Mass*.

His death had produced a rehash of his infamies in the newspapers, and his funeral brought out the reporters on the chance of a last sensational story about Britain's oddest man. It was a grey, cold afternoon; the followers and friends of The Beast (had he really died? his presence was with us strongly) took their places in the chapel. Among the Thelemites were Sisters Tzaba and Ilyarun and Brothers Volo Intelligere and Aossic; also the poet Kenneth Hopkins, drawn to this desolate scene by the ghouls and phantasms of his melancholy vocation. The coffin was solemnly borne in, covered with flowers.

Suddenly there entered the tall, dignified figure of Louis Wilkinson, carrying a copy of *Liber Legis* and *Magick*. He mounted the rostrum and immediately began to recite the *Hymn to Pan*.

'Thrill with lissome lust of the light,
O man! My man!
Come careering out of the night

¹ William Joyce, 'Lord Haw-Haw', suggested in a broadcast from Germany during World War II that as Britain's Intercession services didn't seem to be doing much good, Aleister Crowley should be asked to celebrate a Black Mass in Westminster Abbey.

Of Pan! Io Pan!
Io Pan! Io Pan! Come over the sea . . .'

The ugly walls of the chapel dissolved and the cold vanished as the powerful, sonorous voice declaimed :

'Give me the sign of the Open Eye,
And the token erect of thorny thigh,
And the word of madness and mystery . . .'

This was the Gnostic Requiem for the departed spirit of the Wickedest Man in the World, which brought forth the protests of the Brighton Council. 'We shall take all necessary steps,' said the chairman of the committee responsible for the crematorium, 'to prevent such an incident occurring again.'

'Thou who art I, beyond all I am,
Who hast no nature, and no name,
Who art, when all but Thou are gone,
Thou, centre and secret of the Sun,
Thou, hidden spring of all things known
And unknown, Thou aloof, alone,
Thou, the true fire within the reed
Brooding and breeding, source and seed
Of life, love, liberty and light,
Thou beyond speech and beyond sight,
Thee I invoke, my faint fresh fire
Kindling as mine intents aspire.
Thee I invoke, abiding one,
Thee, centre and secret of the Sun,
And that most holy mystery
Of which the vehicle am I.'

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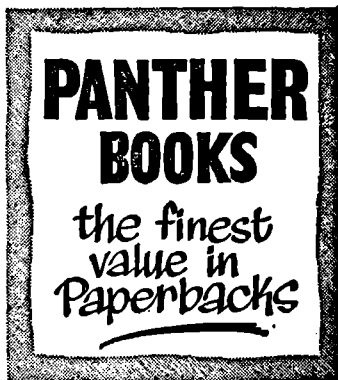
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