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OLD-WORLD CHITCHAT



Miss Leila Waddell, Priestess of a New Sect.

Despite the fact that we live in a materialistic age, that the pursuit of the mighty dollar conquers our nobler ambitions, there never was a time when so many new religious sects were born.

The latest of these has sprung up in London and has been dubbed "Crowleyanity," after Aleister Crowley, the chief apostle. Crowley is known in the British literary world as an eccentric poet, a little on the order of Oscar Wilde. A few regard him as a magician, but a small and select circle of the cultured Britons revere him as hierophant of a new faith.

The new creed is not entirely Buddhistic, as was reported, but savors greatly of the Buddha cult. The main idea seems to be to plant Oriental transcendental worship on Occidental soil under the guise of ceremonial magic.

Crowley depends on the human weakness for ritual and ceremony, and he lands his adherents into a region of ecstasy through weird ceremonial magic.

His séances are reported to be the strangest and most awe-inspiring of any ever held in the British capital. They are conducted in a somber, though vast and luxuriously equipped attic, lit only where the dramatis personae may be made conspicuous. There the visitor is received by a gentleman robed in white and carrying a drawn sword.

Only a dull red light shines upon the altar. Various young men, picturesquely clad in robes of white, red or black, stand at different points around the room. Some hold swords. The incense makes the haze that adds Arabian Nights hue to the scene.

A brother recites a rather "sexualistic" poem which, it would seem, could not very well spiritualize the carnal mind. Another brother "purifies the temple with water." Then follows a mystic circumambulation by the elect, a sort of lengthy religious procession with chants, around the altar.

Everybody is rather subdued until the "Cup of Libation" is passed around. It is a golden bowl full of some pleasant smelling drink. The frequency with which the libations are conducted and the hilarious behavior of the imbibers create the suspicion that the liquid contains cheering qualities that would not stand a legal test in a "dry" district.

More libations, more poems, wild dances of gods and goddesses, intoxicating music are followed by an incantation from Crowley, at the close of which come the piece de resistance, the advent of the high priestess, who is Miss Leila Waddell, an actress of mediocre talent, hailing from Australia.

A dead silence ensues. After a long pause the enthroned figure takes a violin and plays, plays with passion and feeling like a master. The spiritually benumbed audience is thrilled to the bones, and seems to have found that ecstasy which it sought. Then another prolonged silence, and suddenly the sonorous voice of Crowley is heard to say:

"By the power in me vested I declare the temple closed."