

THE PITTSBURGH PRESS
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
15 AUGUST 1926
(page 98)

Driven to Suicide by Devil Worshippers.

Wicked Exploits of "The Ace of Spades," a Secret Organization Which Preys Upon Superstitious Women and Blackmails Them of Frightens Them to Death by Making Them Believe that Satan Owns Them.



Mrs. Katherine Hughes, the English Woman Whose Husband Died from Ceremonies Prescribed by the Notorious **Aliester Crowley**, Head of England's Devil Worshippers.

Berlin, Aug. 6.

Just before midnight of the thirteenth of last month, people on the streets of this city turned to watch Fraulein Roberta Muller, a pretty 20-year-old girl of wealthy family who was hurry-

ing along with frightened looks over her shoulder, as though pursued. As she passed under a street lamp, a German policeman glanced at her sharply and asked if she was in need of help.

"Yes," she cried. "Save me! Stop him!" and hurried on toward the Potsdamer Bridge over the Spree Canal. The policeman turned to face her pursuer, but there was none. Then he heard her scream and saw that she was running now.

"Mephistopheles!" she shrieked and ran out on the parapet of the bridge. There, after seeming to struggle with an invisible adversary, she threw herself into the black water below, still crying out, "Satan! Satan!"

Investigation showed that Miss Muller had been the victim of a secret society of devil-worshippers known as "The Ace of Spades" and that numerous other suicides had been due to the tactics of this evil organization. Its leaders, when caught, will be tried on charges of murder.

According to the police, the purpose of the society is to extort blackmail from the credulous women, not by the usual methods of kidnapping children or threatening scandal, but by making them believe that Satan himself, in the form of Mephistopheles, has taken possession of them.

When the women have been skillfully driven to the verge of insanity they are told the Mephistopheles can be appeased and induced to leave them in peace by performing certain ceremonies and sacrifices. The victim jumps at the chance and offers to do anything, but when the time comes she finds the things expected of her are so fearful and revolting that she backs out. In despair she asks if there is not some other way.

Now comes the first suggestion of money, as they tell her that there is just one ray of hope. It is barely possible that some needy woman might be induced to go through the dreadful ordeal for her. Of course, she would expect to be paid for it. Knowing what the other woman is supposed to endure, she is not surprised to learn that her proxy has demanded a staggering fee.

If this is paid, the dupe is assured that Mephistopheles is appeased and will never bother her again.

The society has a number of smart, agreeable and well-paid field-workers—women whose business it is to find and bring in wealthy prospects. They do not bother with happy, normal women whose nerves are sound, but prey upon the restless ones. Widows who really mourn the departed, wives whose husbands neglect them or who are secretly in love with another

man; any woman, young or old, who are chronically upset and unhappy, are the ones they seek.

The field-worker fastens herself on such a prospect and encourages her to pour out the tiresome story of her troubles and to grow increasingly sorry for herself.

The first step is to go to a spiritualistic seance. The rich woman, if she pays any attention to the newspapers, goes in expecting an assault of some kind on her check-book. To her surprise and dismay, the medium seems at sight of her almost to die in an apoplectic fit, and she is told never to come there again. They want neither her nor her money because she is possessed by evil spirits.

The kindly worker tells her "possessed" friend not to be alarmed; the very same thing happened to her. Everything will be all right. She will now take her to "The Ace of Spades Society."

This society, she is informed, is a body of learned men and women who have devoted their lives to the study of the principle of evil. The churches, so the worker assures her, give their attention to the principle of good, but they ignore Satan, the evil power, and this must not be overlooked any more than the doctor can afford to ignore disease microbes.

The rich neurotic may still have little confidence that she is going to be cured, but any suspicions that anyone is after her money are dispelled by her sympathetic friend, who guarantees that there will be no fees or charges of any sort, and there are not—not yet. The reason the authorities have not been able to raid the headquarters of "The Ace of Spades" is because none of its victims, alive or dead, were ever permitted to know where it is. Even the field-workers are believed to have been kept in ignorance.

To reach the place it was necessary for dupe and the worker, at night, to enter a limousine where a stranger blindfolded both of them. After a considerable ride they were transferred to another car from which they were guided into a building, through many passages until at last the blindfolds were removed in a room without windows.

There was nothing sinister about the place; in fact, it looked like a physician's outer office. Quite like a physician, too, was the quiet-spoken man with a small mask who went under the name of Dr. Z. He was a patient soul who let the prospective victim talk herself out, occasionally remarking: "Quite like your symptoms, Frau——" To which the worker always agreed.

When the prospect had finally run out of words, Dr. Z repeated what the worker had said about good and evil forces. For some reason, as her case, certain evil forces which might be called spirits fastened themselves on human beings. Fortunately hers was a simple problem. He was confident they would be driven out in a week or ten days. He handed her a little charm in a tiny mystery box, the duplicates of the ones she had already seen.

The two were removed as they had arrived and still not a word had been said about money. Such few dupes as offered it found it not wanted. This was very nice, but the "other little things" were not. They were mostly connected with the number 13. She must avoid anything that had the fatal number in it or that by addition or subtraction could be made into thirteen. If she saw two sticks crossed in the street or anything that formed a cross she must go straight home or stop and count 13 times up to 13.

Besides this she must keep her thumbs hidden in her hand all day, but at night she must sleep with her fists against her ears and with thumbs up, a symbol of the horns of Mephistopheles. A few days of trying to obey these impossible orders sent the victim, now more than half mad, back to Dr. Z., who betrayed the fact that he was puzzled and almost alarmed. There was a consultation of masked men and she was told the bad news.

It seemed that their first diagnosis had been all wrong. She was possessed by one of the major fiends, perhaps even Belial, Moloch or Mammon. She need not worry though, for they could throw the fiends out—that is, all except Mephistopheles himself—and it would not be that fiend of fiends, they were sure. They were preparing the chamber for her and in a few minutes they would know.

The accounts the police have received of this chamber are strange and varied. Some thought it big as a church, others only 20 feet square. All agree upon shrieking, half musical sounds like an orchestra gone mad, of blinding lights of all colors, shot at them from unexpected places, and sickening odors that seemed half perfume and half decay. A "priest," in a long robe with the figure of a devil on it and on his peaked cap, directed the ceremonies.

When the victim's nerves had stood as much of this as seemed safe, the noise suddenly stopped and the priest summoned the particular fiend who was tormenting this poor woman to identify himself.

To learn the fiend's name it was necessary for the young woman to chose a playing card from a quite ordinary deck. The fiend himself would guide her hand and as soon as she turned it over on the table they would know who he was. As the priest shuffled the cards, he rattled off the names of 51 imps and principals of the lower regions and then added in a whisper of awe:

"There is just one other—Mephistopheles himself—who is represented by the ace of spades but that, fortunately, never turns up, never, never, never."

When a woman asked, as they all wanted to what would happen if it did turn up, the priest laid a rebuking finger on her lips. He dropped the cards, one by one, in front of her. The trembling victim chose one and turned it up. Her shriek was echoed by the priest and a dozen others, invisible. It was the dreadful ace of spades, the symbol of Mephistopheles himself. Then followed pandemonium of lights, crashes, smells and mad laughter, until the woman fainted and recovered such senses as she had left in the quiet outer office.

Dr. Z. was always more tender than ever, and said that though the worst had happened there was still a way out. While Mephistopheles was too mighty to be cast out by human means, his Satanic Majesty could be appeased by certain ceremonies and sacrifices.

The distracted women promised to do anything until they found what was expected of them. It was a series of unspeakably dreadful and revolting rites such as real devil-worshippers in past ages had gone through.

In despair, the poor creatures begged the kindly Dr. Z. to think of some other way. Then came the suggestion of a substitute.

After 24 hours of suspense, the victim received information that a woman had been persuaded, but had demanded a staggering sum. This sum represented the field worker's estimate of the last possible mark that her dupe might be expected to raise. When the money was paid to the society, they gave her solemn assurance that the arch demon was appeased and had withdrawn from her life forever. As they believed it, this statement worked just as well as if it had been true.

Recently the society seems to have grown too greedy and demanded more that the traffic would bear, and the result has been a crop of suicides of women unable to collect the amount required. The same night that Fraulien Roberta Muller, screaming "Mephistopheles!" plunged from the Potsdamer Bridge to

drown in the Spree Canal, Frau Geheimrat Hopfgarten hanged herself in her closet and the police started their investigation of "The Ace of Spades."

The first real information came from the husband of the second woman. Unable to raise the money in any other way, she had disobeyed orders and revealed to him the whole story. When he told her that she was crazy, she proved it by going into her closet and hanging herself.

Not long ago the death of Perceival Hughes, a brilliant young English poet, occurred as the result of devil-worshipping ceremonies which he had been persuaded to take part in by the notorious Aliester Crowley, head of the English "Satanists," who calls himself "The Beast." The death took place in Crowley's "Abbey" in Italy, and young Hughes' wife, Katherine, managed to escape. She gave information which led to the Italian authorities closing up Crowley's vicious colony.

One thing the Berlin police are trying to find out is whether Crowley or some of his followers are behind "The Ace of Spades."