

TRUE
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Tsar of Sin

Amazing Saga of the
Flaming Love Cult of "Beast 666"

A dying sun bled through the mullioned windows of the *Abbaye Theleme*, as the young English couple, Raoul and Betty May Loveday, advanced uncertainly along a spiraling, cypress-haunted path. Far ahead in the twilight loomed the vine-clad villa walls, still and brooding, commanding the topmost tier of thickly forested hills.

The Lovedays walked that long, lonely walk from the little Sicilian village of Cefalu, not because they were penniless or craved exercise, but because no wagon driver would transport them. At mention of the remote *Abbaye Theleme*, the villagers averted their eyes and crossed themselves, babbling fearfully of evil and the devil.

Recalling this and other strange rumours she had gleaned in London where she had been married a few months earlier, the girl grasped her husband's arm. "Raoul, it's not too late. Let's turn back."

He tossed his head impatiently. In the deepening, purplish dusk his usually pallid face flushed strangely. His poet's fingers quivered under her anxious touch. "Please dear, not again. This is our big chance. Can't you understand that? Not everyone can be private secretary to Aleister Crowley—and at that salary. I tell you, he's the most brilliant personality alive."

"The ghastly things one hears," she murmured.

"What rot! Orgies, love cults, Satanism—really, Betty! This is 1912, not the dark ages. Now, if you want to stay behind. . ."

"No," she protested. "I'd follow you anywhere."

They walked on in silence.

A distant steeple clock chimed seven times and the hills echoed the mournful sound. It had grown quite dark. The night was moonless. Only pale yellow rectangles in the villa's face guided their steps.

Presently, Raoul Loveday was lifting the ponderous wrought iron knocker set in the low arched door. Before the dull echo

had stilled, the villa door swung open noiselessly. The Lovedays shrank back, startled by the apparition that greeted them. Under the yellow lamplight a slender, willowy woman of ethereal beauty eyed them coolly. She wore a scarlet robe that hung loosely open, revealing her sleek alabaster body. She stared at them, yet scarcely seemed to see them. Her eyes had the fixity of the drugged or hypnotized.

Betty Loveday instinctively sought her husband's hand. He shot her a swift glance intended to be reassuring. Then he addressed the silent woman: "I'm Raoul Loveday and this is my wife. I believe Mr. Crowley is expecting us."

Without moving, the woman spoke—but not to him. She intoned in a throaty melodic voice: "Beast, they are here."

She beckoned and they moved deeper into the low-ceilinged, murky vestibule. An arras parted at the far end and a towering, powerful man, clad in flowing robes, stepped forth. His features were heavy and squarish. Blood-red lips, thick and pendulous, moved nervously; eyes flashed like angry agates. From crown to sole, he was hairless as a rock.

He scrutinized the young couple in a moment or two, then raised his right arm and chanted: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." Instantly a score of voices, male and female, chanted in the obscurity behind him: "Love is the law; love under will."

Aleister Crowley! So this was the master of mystery—the strange, half-mad genius of whom all Europe spoke in awe and revulsion.

Betty May looked at her husband and sensed with mounting horror that he had subtly changed in Crowley's presence. He seemed possessed, spellbound. Crowley approached him and laid his hands lightly upon the young man's shoulders. He repeated his incantation and, at Crowley's signal, Loveday added, "Love is the law."

Crowley turned to the girl. "Will you say it?"

He ingrained commonsense rebelled. "I will not!"

Loveday shuddered. "Betty, don't be an ass."

Crowley smiled coldly. "You cannot enter the Abbaye unless you obey the rules, you know. This is the beginning, the first rule."

"Say it:" Loveday repeated desperately. "Or go back without me."

Betty May, for all her terrors, shrewdly analysed the position. Her husband, her young lover, was totally absorbed by the older man. She had sensed that at London. She could not

leave him alone in this eerie perfumed place. She nodded dully. "Alright. I'll say it. Love—love is the law."

Crowley smiled approvingly. "Then I welcome you. You may become one of us."

Thus, Raoul and Betty May Loveday entered the temple of the "O.T.O. Cult," that bizarre secret sect whose practices had already stirred shocked suspicions throughout Europe and was soon to erupt into flaming scandal.

The events of the following days stamped themselves indelibly on the young girl's mind. She never forgot. She could never forget.

Twenty-four years later, in a London courtroom, the wife of the late Raoul Loveday, Oxford scholar and mystic poet, recalled with shuddering mind her experiences in the *Abbaye of Theleme*.

"You had to conform to the rules of the Abbaye," she told the shocked court, "and there were some very odd rules. We were shown a book and told to sign it. I refused. My husband obeyed. Crowley ordered me out of the Abbaye unless I signed the book. I had no money. Ultimately I had to sign. I was told I had always from that moment to sleep by myself in a room next to Crowley's bedroom. The rules for the day were typed by the secretary and pinned on the door. We knew they came from Crowley.

There was one major ceremony. It lasted for about 24 hours. About half-past five in the morning the household was aroused and everyone had to go out and face the sun. It was called 'adoration.' Between four o'clock and half-past four every day the children had to stand and put their hands up to the sun. The evening ceremony was the great thing of the day.

Crowley slept the whole day and lived at night. We had high tea and Crowley would ask for a pail of water to wash his hands. After tea, during the Pentagram ceremony, as it was called, the women sat on boxes in a circle. Crowley, of course, was the high priest and wore a robe of brilliant colours. Lea (the woman who had met the Lovedays at the door) was known as the 'Scarlet Woman' and wore a red cloak.

The rites began in an atmosphere of hysteria. Crowley started by calling strange gods. This was done in a room occupied by a huge painting of incredible indecency. In this room, too, were various drugs; hashish, morphia and ether.

It was at this time, the first evening, they my husband was told never to use the word 'I.' If he did he was told to cut himself in order to remember!

As a general rule, Crowley was not seen by anyone before tea-time. He remained in his own room, the 'Nightmare' room, drugging himself. He distilled his own opium, a lot of which was smoked in the Abbaye. You could have whatever you liked by asking for it.

One day at four o'clock, my husband and I were summoned to the Nightmare room. Crowley received us lying on his bed, his totally bald head covered with a black wig. He gave us various further instructions. He named me 'Sister Sibylline' and instructed me to do the cooking and keep the house clean. My husband for the present was to play chess and read with the 'Beast.'

Once a day every one in the colony must come inside the magic circle. At 7:30 we all trooped into the temple where the circle was marked on the floor.

The 'Beast's' chair stood on the north side of the circle, with a brazier in front and six coloured receptacles for his swords and magic wands. I refused to sit inside the circle and was allowed to remain outside. Incense was burned before Crowley who was again robed in scarlet, wearing magnificent rings. The Scarlet Woman, I learned was Crowley's 'spiritual wife.' She was his high priestess and constant companion.

My husband was initiated into Crowley's mystic cult of the O.T.O., but he would never tell me about the ceremony. All I know is that he wore gorgeous robes, that the ceremony lasted eight hours and that he was presented with a book.

Now I come to the sickening episode of the cat. At tea one afternoon, Crowley was in a peculiar mood, irritable and uneasy. Suddenly he rose. 'There is an evil spirit in here,' he said. He noticed a cat in the room. 'Within three days,' the 'Beast' ordained, 'that cat must be sacrificed!' Then a very remarkable thing happened. As a rule, the cat would run away if any one came near it; but Crowley approached it and made passes over it with his magic sword and the cat never moved.

The third day arrived. I wanted to get the cat away, but my husband would not let me interfere. Crowley had told my husband that he must kill the cat. The hour arrived. Above the altar hung a bell formed of an almost flat metal disc, the striker being a human bone. A bowl to catch the cat's blood stood to one side.

My husband, trembling from head to foot, stood by the altar, armed with a curved sword. He had to lift the cat in one hand and kill it with the other. The cat struggled violently. Crowley dabbed its nose with ether until it became silent.

The reading of a long invocation was concluded. 'Now,' said the 'Beast.' My husband struck at the wretched animal, but only half killed it.

He had to pick it up again and finally, with a hard blow, severed its head. But my husband's task was not done. *He had to drink a cup of the cat's blood!*

Shortly after that he fell ill. At the same time I had a horrible quarrel with Crowley over incidents and practices indulged in at the Abbaye which are impossible to describe. He ordered me out of the place. I went down to Cefalù, not knowing where to turn or what to do. There I received a note telling me my husband was worse.

I rushed back to the Abbaye. I saw my husband. He looked dreadfully bad. 'What is it, darling?' I asked.

'Ask Crowley to let you come back,' he said.

I looked at his pale, was face and didn't wait to ask. I stayed. 'I do love you, darling.' These were the last words my husband ever spoke to me. To my amazement I was asked to go down into the town to buy an article for the sickroom. When I returned, a woman stood in the doorway. . .

'He's gone,' she said.

'Where?' I asked.

'He's dead,' she replied. I remembered nothing until six o'clock—two hours later. It is a regulation of the civic authorities in Cefalù that no dead body may remain in a private house after 7 pm.

They tried in vain to keep me from the funeral. Then I rushed to Cefalù. I had to send a telegram, but I had no money. While I was trying, in dumbshow, to persuade the postmaster to send one, a telegram arrived from Palermo arrived for me. It was in reply to a letter I had sent the British Consul. He was sending 50 lire so I could get to him. I flew back to the Abbaye. Escape was my one thought. Crowley, who had paid little attention to me, said: 'You will make this your home; you have no money.'

But I ignored him. When he saw that nothing short of death could hold me, he laid his finger on his lips and said, in a tone half advice and half menace, 'Silence, you understand?' "

But Betty Loveday did not keep silent. She hurried back to England, half insane with what she had experienced, and shouted her terrible knowledge to the skies. She went further. She imputed her husband's sudden mysterious death directly to Crowley's 'black magic.' The English press took up their cudgels on her behalf and demanded that Crowley be forced to ac-

count for himself.

Despite the young widow's charges, it was soon learned from Italian physicians that Loveday had died of nothing more supernatural than inflammation of the intestines.

Nevertheless, public outrage continued to crackle about Crowley's head. It was not the first time he had figured in obscenely mystic rites. London had known him. So had Paris and New York.

And then, amid the frenzied denunciations heard in every capital of Europe, no less a personage than Mussolini took a hand and ejected Crowley from Sicily. His disciples scattered. The villa at Cefalù was torn down.

And Crowley? He performed one of his characteristic disappearances. He vanished completely, without leaving a trace. Where he went, what new activities engaged, none knew. Meanwhile the legend of "Beast 666" grew to monstrous size.

The earliest date yielded by records of Crowley's fantastic career is 1897. In that year he attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and the undergraduate world had never behold a more flamboyant personality since Oscar Wilde went to Oxford.

His outré clothes, his wines and food and magnificent library indicated unlimited means, but his sources of income remains unknown. Master of many languages, he was thought to have been born in the United States. The detail is not certain. Nor is it definitely known whether Aleister Crowley is his real name.

At Cambridge he was already indulging in unnatural tastes which were to make the name notorious throughout the world. He was a fluent author of erotic poetry, a mystic, a student of black magic and Satanism. He wrote two books—*The Diary of a Drug Fiend* and *White Stains*—which some critics denounced as blasphemous, others praised as the creations of genius.

Loosed upon London society, he established his "Hall of Mirrors," a fledgling love cult from which the full-grown O.T.O. or Order of the Oriental Temple was to spring.

"Take your fill of love," Crowley exhorted his many disciples, "when, where and with whom ye will, that every act of love shall be a purple sacrament. I, who am all pleasure and purple; I, who am the drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you. Put on the coiled splendour within you. There is no good. Evil itself is good. Blessed be the divine principle of evil."

Crowley reached his dizziest peak in New York's bygone Greenwich Village immediately after the war, when that phony Bohemia attended its giddiest, gaudiest abandon. On Univer-

sity Place and later at Washington Square, Crowley set up his O.T.O. temple and the city's thrill-seekers flocked to him.

A lady poetess vanished for a month. She turned up in Crowley's flat wearing toe-rings and scarlet drapes. A Kansas City art student wound up in a hospital after smoking Hashish with a Crowley cultist, plunging into a phallic dance and finally slashing her naked breast with a Malay kriss.

A Manhattan housewife deserted her husband to dwell amid the lascivious murals of Crowley's lair.

Leon Kennedy, a mystic Dutch artist, who painted people's "auras," got into an insane quarrel with Crowley over a red-haired, green-eyed Village damsel, Kitty Reilly, whom he eventually married. Kennedy painted her spiritual blues and mental yellows with touches of the "purple of perfection." Crowley, who among his other talents could paint, executed Kitty's aura in sensual red.

Enraged, Kennedy protested. Whereupon Crowley suddenly leaned over and sank his teeth into Kitty's neck until blood spurted. Kennedy cried: "Her aura is turning red."

Focal point of Crowley's activities was his "Black Mass," secretly performed behind locked doors and participated by a select group of disciples. Harry Kemp, poet-member of that early Village crowd, has left an eye-witness account of the "Black Mass."

"Crowley himself invited me to witness this ceremonial. In answer to my knock, the door was opened by a girl in a straight black robe. Entering, I found myself in a large, high-ceilinged studio, the atmosphere of which was coloured a deep blue with the reek of peculiar-smelling incense. The place was divided with high-hung curtains into three separate rooms.

In the first room stood row on row of books bound in black and marked on their backs with queer, distorted crosses wrought in silver. The second room was fitted up with divans and literally carpeted with multitudes of cushions tossed hither and yon. In the third and larger room stood a tall, perpendicular canopy under which Crowley, as high priest, sat during the celebration of the "Black Mass."

Directly in front of it, on a floor tessellated in mosaics with parti-coloured patterns and marked with cabalistic signs, stood the 'altar,' a black pedestal. On its peak 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 uncanny.

One by one the worshippers entered. They were mostly women of the aristocratic type. Their delicate fingers adorned with costly rings; their rustling silks, the indefinable elegance of their carriage attested to their station in life. Every body wore a black domino with a hood which concealed the upper part of the face, making identification impossible.

Hung with black velvet curtains, the place had a sepulchral aspect. There was a fitful light, furnished by a single candlestick having several branches.

Suddenly the flame went out and the place was filled with subterranean noises like the sound of a violent wind moving innumerable leaves. Then came the slow monotonous chant of the high priest.

"There is no good; evil itself is good. Blessed be the principle of evil! All Hail, Prince of the Worlds, to whom even God himself has given domination."

A sound of beating filled the pauses of these blasphemous utterances. Gradually the darkness lightened to a grey gloom—the very ghost of light—and moving shapes became distinguishable. I could hardly believe my eyes as I observed what followed.

Amid floating clouds of nauseating incense, a great crystal sphere slowly rose from the floor. From it ascended a shape like a white puff of cloud.

It wafted off, alighting on the floor, and assumed the form of a diminutive nude black being. Another cloud rose from the globe, and yet another, to materialize in the same manner. These were supposed to be incarnations of evil spirits. They bleated and capered about in absolute nudity, they wove a grotesque dance in the gloom to the music of a hidden drum and flute.

At this juncture a woman cried to be taken out and went into hysterics. Tearing off her mask, she revealed the fair face of an Anglo-Saxon beauty. She was quickly led away, and the rites were scarcely interrupted, so intent were the worshippers on their observances.

They began to moan and sway. The candles suddenly became lit again, as if by their own volition. Aleister Crowley stepped forward to the altar., from which he took a short, curiously shaped knife. He tore open his robe at the chest. His eyes were bloodshot and stony and fixed in their sockets, as if the man had gone into a trance. He began gashing his breast with the knife, and now he grew calmer. His disciples came

forward one by one, and he made a mystic mark in blood on each of their foreheads as they knelt.

After this the affair rapidly degenerated into an indescribable orgy. Men and women danced about leaping and swaying to the whining of infernal and discordant music. They sang obscene words set to hymn tunes and gibbered unintelligible jargon. Women tore their dresses, some partially disrobed, and one fair worshipper, snatching the high priest's dagger from a small table, slashed herself across the breast. At this, all seemed to grow madder than ever, I repeat, I could scarcely believe my eyes. All modern civilization, all the moral ideas taught for centuries were thrown to the winds. All I desired was to escape unobserved."

That was the basis of the cult, the high spot, the supreme thrill for hundreds of debased men and women. And the cult spread. In Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City and Albany similar groups sprang up, perpetrating unspeakable sexual excesses until here and there divorce proceedings caused by membership in the cult began to occur. Of these the Ryerson scandal was the most notorious and it spelled finis to Crowley's offences in this country.

Albert W. Ryerson, 50, a Detroit businessman, the highly respected manager of a bookstore chain and publishing house known as Universal Bookstores, became a convert to Crowley's doctrines. As a direct result of his membership in the sex-cult his wife, Elvira Ryerson, divorced him. In her complaint she said:

"My husband confessed his love for many and sundry women who professed to have the same ideals as himself. He received many notes from lovesick women, who said his love aroused in them a torrent of emotions."

Following this divorce, Ryerson married an art model 30 years his junior, Mazie Mitchell, known as "Queen of the Chalet d'arts," a large organization of Western artists. Slim, lovely, unsophisticated, Mazie found herself surrounded by mysterious Oriental servants and in a house saturated with the O.T.O. atmosphere.

She stood it for 29 days, then fled in revulsion. Later she revealed her relations with the elderly cultist.

"He tortured me physically and mentally until my body and mind bore the traces of his abuse. He talked of his unspeakable love-cult, saying I was the incarnation of Cleopatra and he of Solomon. Once, after a beating, I fled from him and slept under a porch.

I came home one night to find a crowd of his O.T.O. love-cult friends and followers in the house. They included Hindus and all sorts of handsomely gowned women. They were doing terrible things."

And now Ryerson himself exposed Crowley's hand behind the weird rites. "Seven prominent men," he explained, "met in an attorney's office to be introduced to Aleister Crowley, with a view to forming a chapter in Detroit. Crowley received them into membership without any particular ceremony."

Ryerson's employers fired him. Bankruptcy proceedings followed, during which it was revealed that Ryerson had persuaded his firm to publish "Equinox," the ritual book of the O.T.O. cult.

A foul stew-pot of torture, sex, blasphemy and drug-inspired nightmares, it was characterized by Frank Murphy, then Mayor of Detroit, as "the most lascivious and libidinous book ever published in the United States."

Emboldened by the Ryerson revelations other disciples who had severed their ties with the O.T.O. cult spilled forth into the ears of an incredulous and horrified American public further details of Crowley's reign among the sex-worshippers. The most shocking episode involved a ten-year-old boy, Hansie Hammond, whom Crowley had adopted as his son. He names him "Beast No. 2" and encouraged him to smoke and learn such O.T.O. formulae as:

"But love is better than all things. If under the night stars of the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with the serpent flame within thy heart, thou shalt come to my bosom."

The bewildered child was reared in the Yogi theory of the untapped resources of the human organism, together with such curious magical notions of Crowley that these resources could be released only through complete indulgence in physical thrills.

Before little Hansie's "education" was complete his relatives located him and rescued him.

Crowley himself, never the man to shrink from notoriety, gave the legend fresh impetus with his unashamed confessions. Proudly calling himself "the worst man in the world," he told how Satan had called on him while he was staying at Cairo in 1904. Some fifteen years later, when Crowley burst upon Greenwich Village in all his fulminating glory, he brought with him *The Book of the Law*, another manual of sex-worship and necromancy. Of this opus he explained that he had been living

in Cairo as a Persian prince and that Satan had suddenly appeared in his hotel room, introducing himself as *Aiwass* and claiming to be a messenger of *Hoor-pa-Kraat*, Egyptian god of silence and secrecy. *Aiwass* then proceeded to dictate to Crowley *The Book of the Law*, the exact dates of this amazing collaboration being April 8, 9 and 10, 1904.

It was this work which contained the famous Crowley maxim—"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

Culminating shock to public feeling was the revelation of Crowley's influence upon a succession of women. William Seabrook, who knew Crowley perhaps better than any contemporary and has witnessed many of the O.T.O. ceremonies described this episode in connection with Lea Hirsig, the pretty, 25-year-old schoolteacher:

"Lea, the 'Dead Soul,' was kneeling in the centre of a chalked circle, in the middle of the floor. She was bare-footed, like a penitent nun, clad only in a loose robe drawn back over her shoulders. Aleister Crowley was bending over her—burning magical symbols on her chest with the point of a heated dagger. As carefully and gently as a surgeon, he continued the amazing operation of branding her with her own consent, free-will and cooperation."

This rite was a preliminary towards "awakening" Lea, whom Crowley called a dead soul.

"Another afternoon within a week," Seabrook continued, "I returned to Crowley's studio. This time the door was locked. But he let me in. In the centre of the room was an enormous easel, so heavy and massive that it was almost a scaffold. And bound to this easel, facing it, was Lea—fastened by the wrists and ankles, her arms outstretched like a woman crucified, her dress stripped from her shoulders, her white flesh criss-crossed with red stripes.

Seeing my amazement, Crowley greeted me with a diabolical grin and tossed a broken dog-whip into the corner. 'I have been awakening the Dead Soul,' he explained cheerfully. 'She doesn't object. If you are troubled with chivalrous scruples you can ask her.

She wouldn't thank you if you tried to interfere. Permit me to explain that the efficacy of pain as a spiritual stimulus is a subject misunderstood and neglected by the modern woman."

Far from objecting, Lea became "The Scarlet Woman," Crowley's adored mystical companion and his high priestess as Cefalu.

Lea was not the only high priestess initiated and trained by

Crowley. In his London days, shortly after graduating from Oxford, he enslaved, mystically speaking, Leila Waddell, a beautiful concert artist, well-known on the continent. Like Lea Hirsig, Miss Waddell was closely associated with the "Beast" for years.

Serving him in another, though equally strange capacity was the British society luminary and big game hunter, the Countess Guerini. One day, at the outset of his Greenwich Village period, Crowley took it in his head to go into "magical retirement" on Esopus Island, a tiny knob of rock and vegetation about a hundred miles up the Hudson. Clad in the black horsehair garb of a Tibetan monk, equipped with a prayer rug and a crude tent, Crowley entered a period of sun-worship and meditation.

The handful of farmers, who came to cultivate their crops on the island, and saw Crowley kneeling motionless for hours, his face lifted to the sun, concluded he was insane. Crowley ignored them. When he wasn't praying he walked about the island, carrying a five-gallon can of red paint and inscribing every available surface with the admonition, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." Those words, somewhat faded, can still be seen on the face of the island by excursion steamers plying up the Hudson.

An important phase of Crowley's retirement was fasting and poverty. He stood the fasting as long as he could then, as his hunger grew and he lacked funds to satisfy it, he sent a telegram collect to the Countess Guerini, an old friend, who was living in Westchester County, inviting her to share his interest. The Countess, believing she would find the exotic luxuries for which Crowley was famous, obeyed the master's summons.

But once on Esopus she realized that all he wanted was food for himself. Furious at first, the Countess, reared in utmost luxury, threatened to leave. Yet somehow she didn't. Even though Crowley used her only for the food she could supply, even though he ignored her completely once his hunger was satiated, she lingered on that Godforsaken rock, utterly bewitched. Such was Crowley's power over women.

Black magic, sex, sin, Crowley plumbed the depths. And there were drugs! Unique among drug-takers, Crowley experimented with nearly every known narcotic, dosed himself for weeks on end, yet never became an addict. He could refrain from drugging himself at will.

In his shatteringly obscene and daring book *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, Crowley records in the most intimate details his experiences as an eater of hashish, morphine, cocaine and her-

oin.

"Until you've got your mouth full of cocaine, you don't know what kissing is. One kiss goes on from phase to phase like a novel by Balzac or Zola. And you never get tired. You're on the fourth speed all the time, and the engine purrs like a kitten—a big, white kitten with the stars in its whiskers. And it's always different, and always the same, and it never stops, and you go insane, and you stay insane, and you probably don't know what I'm talking about, and I don't care a bit, though I'm awfully sorry for you, and you can find out any minute you like by the simple process of getting a sweetheart like mine and a lot of cocaine."

Of heroin he writes: "The heroin began to take hold. We found ourselves crowned with colossal calm. We dressed to go out with, I imagine, the sort of feeling a newly made bishop would have the first time he puts on his vestments. When we went downstairs we felt like gods descending upon earth immeasurably beyond mortality.

We were dignified beyond all words to express. Our voices sounded far, far off. We were convinced that the hotel porter realized he was receiving a double order of Jupiter and Juno to get a taxi. We never doubted the chauffeur knew himself to be a charioteer of the gods."

But even Crowley admits that drug-taking exacts a fearful toll.

Crowley proved a trifle too strong for American stomachs in the end. But before any official action could be taken he skipped, with a few chosen disciples, and entered one of his periods of anonymity. Then, about a year later, fantastic reports drifted from Cefalu. Crowley had established another O.T.O. temple and men and women were thronging to it from all corners of the globe.

We have seen how Mussolini finally decided that Sicily could dispense with the "Beat's" presence and how he vanished, seemingly into thin air.

Nothing further was heard from Crowley for nearly seven years. And then, in 1929, the world learned that he had created still another sex-cult in Paris, drawing to him some of the loftiest nobles in the country. One of the names mentioned in connection with Crowley at this time was Prince Louis of Bourbon, scion of Spanish royalty. The precise details of how far the Prince had involved himself or what excesses Crowley had committed were never revealed. But the Surete General had the facts and they requested Crowley to leave the country and

never return. England, America, Italy had rejected him. And now Franco, traditionally the most broadminded country on earth.

After that Crowley's star waned. His disciples drifted away. His once substantial fortune dwindled.

There were no more cults—at least for the moment—and no more sensations. At one time Crowley was reported to be living quietly near Brussels, pottering about a flower garden, a fat, bald, middle-aged man.

But Crowley was to emerge in yet another role, his strangest yet—that of a man righteously indignant because someone had questioned his morals!

In 1929, Miss Nina Hamnett, an English authoress, published a volume of reminiscences. In it she devoted several paragraphs to Crowley. At some point she wrote: "Crowley said he had invented a beautiful cocktail called Kubla Khan No. 2. He opened the cupboard and took out a bottle of gin, a bottle of vermouth, and two other bottles. The last was a small black bottle, with an orange label on it. On which was written POISON. He poured some liquid from the large bottles, and then from the black bottles he poured he poured a few drops and shook the mixture up. The POISON, I found out afterwards was laudanum."

Again, "He gave the appearance of being quite bald. He shaved the back of his head. One day a most extraordinary spectacle appeared. It wore a magnificent and very expensive grey velour hat. Underneath, sticking out on each side was a mop of black, frizzy hair, and the face was heavily and very badly painted. This I recognized was Crowley. Sometimes he appeared in kilts."

Miss Hamnett also related the experience at Cefalu of Betty May Loveday, whom she had known at the time of her marriage.

This was absurdly mild stuff compared to some of the crimes of which Crowley had been publicly accused. But, inconceivably, the "Beast" resented it. He resented it so much that he sued Miss Hamnett and her publishers for libel.

The case was heard before Justice Swift, eminent British Jurist. Witnesses were called in Miss Hamnett's defence, who revealed Crowley's past. Soon Crowley was more in the position of defendant rather than plaintiff. Justice Swift listened to the fabulous stories, including Betty May's memories of Cefalu. After four days he tossed the case out of court, giving Crowley a sever tongue-lashing.

Only last year a London columnist referred to Crowley as a poseur. And again, that unpredictable man, publicly resented it, though he took no steps to sue.

Since then he has subsided into obscurity. Whether he will emerge in his pristine radiance, whether another wild sex-cult will spring up around him or whether one is even now secretly practicing, none can say.

Whatever future bizarreries Aleister Crowley may engage in, he has written his own epitaph.

"I am," he was fond of saying, "the worst man in the world."