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**Awful Aleister**

It considerably upset Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley, self-proclaimed "worst man in the world," when someone described him as "rather a harmless old gentleman." The corpulent Englishman with the cultivated glare had spent most of his life and all of his inherited fortune, perhaps \$150,000, trying desperately to prove he wasn't.

Crowley claimed, for instance, that when he was born in 1875 four hairs grew over his heart in the shape of a swastika. "Before Hitler was, I am," he elucidated. While at Cambridge young Crowley took up the study of "magick," as he insisted upon spelling it. He also wrote poetry a judge subsequently described as "dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, and abominable stuff." Awful Aleister was probably happiest in 1934 when he lost a sensational libel suit against Nina Hamnett, author of "Laughing Torso," who described him as a black-magic artist. Crowley maintained he practiced only white magic.

Crowley said he knew how to make himself invisible, a new way to play bridge, a successful aphrodisiac, and the secret of eternal youth. He died nevertheless last week in England at the age of 72. Five well-dressed women and six youths in need of haircuts attended his cremation in Brighton. The rites included a hymn to Pan, part of the esoteric Gnostic mass, and readings from Crowley's own book, "Magick in Theory and Practice." At the end of the service one of the longhaired young men muttered to a reporter: "Beware what you write. Crowley may strike at you from wherever he is."