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"The Beast's" Last Curse

**"You'll Die Within 24 Hours of My Death,"
Screamed "the Wickedest Man in the World"
at His Doctor, and Strangely Enough the
Prophecy Came True.**

By Warren Hall

Aleister Crowley, who gloried in being called the World's Worst Man, lay on his bed recently in Hastings, England, nearing the end of his long, wicked career.

Once he had concocted an Elixir of Life - now at 72 - he was wracked with pain and pleading with his doctor for morphine.

"I can't stand it any longer," he said. "You've got to renew my prescription."

"No," Dr. William Brown Thomson shook his head. "You've deceived me. I don't know how you did it, but you've been wheedling morphine out of somebody. You've been taking it in dangerous doses and I can't let you have any more. Your prescription has been withdrawn."

"You can't do that to me," Crowley screamed. "The pain will kill me and if it does, you'll die within 24 hours after my death. I swear it by the Great Spirit Taphtatharath!"

Soon after that he was dead—not from pain but from ravages wrought by a lifetime of excess.

What happened next was pure coincidence. Everyone concerned with the case is sure of that. Just the same, it was strange.

Eighteen hours after Crowley's death, Dr. Thomson died, too, from natural causes, according to the death certificate filed by the attending physician.

In his memoirs, Crowley confided that he first discovered the lethal effectiveness of his mystic powers when he was eight. He began to wish for the death of a headmaster who had caned him, and sure enough, he wrote, the object of his wrath died a few weeks later.

He was Edward Alexander Crowley then, the repressed, rebellious son of a couple who were leaders in a strict Puritanical

sect called the Plymouth Brethren. His father was wealthy, and after attending several private schools young Crowley went to Cambridge, where he attained distinction as a classical scholar.

It was there that he developed his interest in Magick, as he insisted on spelling it. Bitter against conventional religion, he turned to evoking devils.

It was simple enough, he said, but it took time and effort. First one had to find a place which would be free from any interruption or disturbance. Sitting within a circle made with red paint, the supplicant wished with increasing fervor and concentration—sometimes for six months—for the appearance of wicked old Taphtatharath. Once he appeared, it was necessary then to call forth the Four Great Princes of Evil, then their eight sub-princes and finally their 316 Servitors.

What happened after that was strictly a matter between Crowley and his visitors because, of course, if anybody else were around they wouldn't appear.

Crowley, who preferred for reasons of his own to be known as "Beast 666," claimed to have obtained his secret knowledge from the Grand Llama of Tibet. He had planned a diplomatic career, but he gave up his studies, abandoned his literary efforts (he published dozens of volumes of poetry), neglected his mountain-climbing (he had climbed hundreds) and disappeared for long intervals, turning up suddenly in Zapotlan, Tali Fu, Askole, Hambantota or Ouled Djellal.

He explored Mexico without guides, crossed China on foot, sat as a scantily-clad Yogi under the Indian sun to beg his rice, masqueraded in Cairo as a mysterious Persian prince.

He claimed to have walked around London in a red robe and a golden crown, invisible and unnoticed by anyone, but when he was challenged during a lawsuit to repeat the performance, he said it could only be done when he was in a proper mood.

Gradually his devil worship evolved into a cult which practiced offensive rites. He wrote and published a ritual for a Black Mass which was climaxed by sacrilegious revelry. He opened a temple in Paris, a city where almost anything was tolerated, but after a few months even the Parisians were revolted. He was ordered to leave the country.

London permitted him to operate for a while in a temple in Chancery Lane. Shortly before World War I he came to the United States and started a cult in Detroit with only one precept: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

He announced plans to build a headquarters patterned after the sun temples of the ancient Chaldeans, with exotic furnish-

ings, fountains spraying jets of perfumed water amid burning jars of incense, silken divans for the faithful to "worship and recline on."

He said similar temples would be erected in all large American cities, but before his mystic "O.T.O." could expand, it was exploded by a suit against Albert W. Ryerson, manager of a book firm which had published Crowley's book of ritual, "The Equinox," which Supreme Court Justice Francis Murphy has called "the most lascivious and libidinous book ever published in the United States."

Stockholders of the book company charged that Ryerson had spent \$35,000 of the firm's money in promoting Crowley's cult, which they claimed was "unspeakably vile."

Before the suit came to trial, Crowley fled to Sicily. He operated an establishment there in a little town named Cefalu, attracting devotees from all parts of the world until Mussolini finally ejected him. Witnesses told of repugnant, week-long ceremonies during which cats and goats were sacrificed. Crowley scorned denials. His comment was, "For most purposes, human sacrifice is best."

He sued a British author who described him as a practitioner of black magic, claiming he had been libeled because he practiced only white magic. The presiding justice who might have been color blind, stopped the trial with the observation: "I have been engaged in the administration of the law for more than 40 years, and I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff."

Scores of Crowley's disciples attended his cremation, obviously hoping that some of his cronies from the netherworld would appear to stop the proceedings. They didn't. Part of the weird rites were devoted to recitation of his best known poems, including "Hymn to Pan," in which he wrote:

"O man! My man!
Come careening out of the night to me, to me.
Come with Apollo in bridal dress ..."

The rest of it, like so much that came from the strange brain of "the worst man in the world," is unprintable.