

**THE SKETCH
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OUR BOOKSHELF

THE MAGIC OF MY YOUTH. By Arthur Calder-Marshall.
(*Hart-Davis*; 12s. 6d.)

Mr. Arthur Calder-Marshall is to be congratulated on the title of his new book—*The Magic of My Youth*—which has the advantage of meaning exactly what it says, for he is writing about Magic, black, white or natural, that which the *Oxford Dictionary* calls “the pretended art of influencing course of events by occult control of nature or of spirits.” He is remembering that queer little man “the Vickybird,” who once worked with the even queerer Aleister Crowley and was reputed to have been turned into a zebra by the Beast 666 of the Apocalypse, as Crowley called himself. Mr. Calder-Marshall met “the Vickybird” in the unlikely surroundings of a Sussex village, where the former sub-editor of *The Equinox* had a printing press and their acquaintance led to others—Aunt Helen with “the voice of Phêdre” and the pet mongooses, Betty May, the Epstein model in the tiger-skin coat, and finally, “the Beast” himself, who appeared as a “bald and elderly stockbroker” with “a tired, used face, sagging with satiation.” A cruelly effective portrait follows of this Crowley, reputed to be the most evil man in the world, but in decay a rheumy-eyed bore trying to out-stare his visitor across the table of a furnished house in Knockholt. The book, though, is much more than a series of character-sketches, it recalls, sometimes nostalgically but more often with a tolerant smile at a young man’s credulity and ambition, the enchanted 1920’s, the vanished Bohemianism which still dared to use that name for itself, the beery and boisterous nights at the Fitzroy Tavern, and the posing and precocity of undergraduate life at Oxford. It is a book to be read not only by us who lived through that memorable era, but by those born too late for it.