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LONDON AFTER DARK

SATAN-WORSHIP

AND BLACK MASS

By FABIAN of The Yard

The practice of Black Magic—of diabolical religious rites in the heart of London—is spreading steadily. There is more active Satan-worship to-day than ever since the Dark Ages, when witches were publicly burned upon Tower Hill.

When Scotland Yard was asked to help the police of Finland to investigate an outbreak of black magic at Helsingfors, which had resulted in more than forty corpses being stolen from the mortuary and mutilated, the books of black magic found upon the culprits [*sic*] were discovered to have been printed in London. When Aleister Crowley (The Beast 666) died near Brighton, members of black-magic circles of London, Lewes and Shoreham attended his pagan funeral.

When a Sunday in December falls on the thirteenth day of the month (as it did in 1953) and is, therefore, the thirteenth day before Christmas, the moon may shine upon London's rooftops, but, in any case, men and women will congregate at midnight in secret temples of South Kensington, Paddington, and—I believe, Bloomsbury, too — to strip off their clothes and worship Satan with ritual and sacrifice that would shame an African savage!

Some firmly believe the world is a battle-ground between God and Satan, and if they declare themselves with the Devil, he will aid their success in life, and even a certain amount of comfort in Hell, with the chance of being reborn periodically as leaders of earthly wickedness.

Others—probably the majority—attend Black Mass to see a cheap thrill. They have heard of obscene ceremonies—naked girl “priestesses”—blood sacrifice of rats and goats—lewd flagellations and evil drums.

They do not realise—until it is too late—that these temples

of Satan, brain-stealing herbal incenses and hypnotic devices are mercilessly used—until the man or girl who came just to stare and giggle may find themselves trapped.

On the files of Scotland Yard is one case of a girl, aged twenty-one, who went with her mother to a lecture on Satanism. She was invited to a garden party at the house of a woman calling herself a "High Priestess," who persuaded the girl to sing a "magical invocation," in the process of which the girl was successfully hypnotised.

She did not return home for months. When, with the help of the Yard, her parents finally recovered her, the girl had been hypnotised and exposed to occult obscenities so persistently that she was almost insane. Her own pet dog ran howling in fear from her. It took two years to restore her mind. There was no prosecution, because there was no evidence. The girl had been "willed" to forget how it had happened.

The door to black magic is through the back offices of two or three dusty little London bookshops that specialise in volumes on the occult, diabolism, alchemy . . . Satan worshippers also get their new victims among likely-looking students at lectures on spiritualism, necromancy, tribal rites . . .

There is house in Lancaster Gate that consists of one-room flatlets. The landlord and his wife occupy the ground floor and basement. Each room has a covered wash-bowl, a rather dispirited bed, a slot-meter gasfire, rickety table and two wooden chairs.

The landlord's wife dabbles in spiritualism, sometimes holds private séances. Her husband is an amateur herbalist. Their flatlets are seldom taken for more than a few days. They are too dingy and untended to be comfortable. Guests come and go.

Among them come and go the Satanists. Down in the cellar is a small doorway—probably, one time, it was a fireplace. It leads through to the house whose walls adjoin it. The front door of this house faces upon an entirely different street. It is privately owned, and, from its cellar, stairs go to an old-fashioned service lift-shaft, up which a spiral metal staircase ascends and stops at a sliding door, padded with black felt. Beyond this door is a private Temple of Satanism!

Note how subtly the approach has been designed to be eerie and furtive.

You go in at one house, down into the cellar, through the narrow hole in the wall, up twisting stairs through almost utter blackness, open a sliding black sound-proof door — and you are

suddenly in a large room, sickly with odours from two tall brass braziers. The room is lit dimly by wick lamps, that burn a dark green fat which smells abominable, and seems to have some stupefying power. I think the acrid smell conceals the fact that the "temple" is probably densely sprayed with ether or chloroform.

At one end of the long room is an altar, exactly as in a small church—except that the altar candles are black wax, and the crucifix is head downwards. There are no seats. Around the walls are low divans. Alongside each burns a saucer of dried herbs. Symbols of wizardry are daubed on cloths that completely cover the walls. Pentagrams and sigils (supposed to be the magic signs of devils) are on the low ceiling. On the left of this altar, is a black African idol—the ju-ju, obviously, of some heathen fertility rite.

The horrible cleverness of all this is that—at a cost of probably less than £300—the black magic disciples have set their stage to capture not merely the adolescent instinct that is in most of us for "secret societies," but also the adult hunger for some strong religious impulse, and the immemorial superstitious fear of "devils."

The Black Mass—they call it the "Mass of Saint Secaire"—is a close parody of the Holy Eucharist, with chants and responses fervently intoned in Latin. It is performed at midnight. The priest is visibly naked beneath his canonical robes.

This ceremony of Black Mass is compared with some—almost decorous. There is a witchcraft ritual, in which young girls or susceptible boys are dedicated to Pan, that is indescribable. It is followed by a "fertility ceremony," involving the African idol.

There is also a "Rite of Abramelin"—supposedly to raise devils, that requires a naked girl to be bound to the replica of the church altar.

Chelsea has an "Order of St Bridget" that meets weekly for the purpose of mutual flagellation. Initiates are stripped, their arms tied in a cross behind their backs, and flogged by "Inquisitors" dressed in monks cowls, until they "confess."

And there are a growing number of "psychic circles" that begin with harmless spiritualism and gradually seduce the more hysterical and neurotic members towards Satanism.

The difficulty of the police is that, in Britain, it has never been the duty of the police to suppress religious sects. Nor can they easily get "spies" into the black magic orgies. For the initiates are cleverly taken, step by step, through various stages

of ritual. Only by co-operating whole-heartedly in the early, trivial obscenities, can they win their way into the more vile ceremonies.

Evidence from such witnesses could be made to seem dangerously like that of "agent provocateur." There is also very real danger of police witnesses being hypnotised. Not even the London policeman or policewoman can guarantee to be immune, in an atmosphere thick with perfumed ether, throbbing with jungle drums and chants.

So, if you have a friend who dabbles in the occult, and who offers, laughingly, to take you to see a ceremony of Black Mass performed—don't go! The laugh may be on you. And it will be a very Satanic chuckle . . .