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**'THE GREAT BEAST' WAS A  
HARMLESS OLD MAN**

The newspapers called Aleister Crowley "the wickedest man in the world." He called himself "the Great Beast." A lord of black magic, his drugs and his sex life assured him a notoriety of which any publicly-minded Satanist might be proud.

After Crowley's death in 1947, John Symonds wrote a study of this curious man. Now he follows it with "The Magic of Aleister Crowley" (Frederick Muller, 21s.).

He describes how he met Crowley shortly before he died and he sums him up as "a quaint old man, caught up in a number of legends about himself, harmless, waiting for death."

When the author visited him, he insisted on lunching alone. What magical concoction could he be consuming behind locked doors, wondered Mr. Symonds. It turned out to be nothing more magical than heroin and a boiled egg.

The author's account of Crowley's childhood—he had a stern religious upbringing in a bigoted home—clearly suggests the reasons for his later behaviour.

And the comment that Crowley "had not lived out, as he thought the soul of man in ancient Greece or ancient Egypt, but only of man in late Victorian times, especially with reference to his repressed sexuality," makes sense.

Mr. Symonds goes on to describe the "high magick art" of Crowley. This mumbo-jumbo convinced me of what I had begun to suspect that the "Great Beast" must have been a great bore.