

**THE TATLER
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Book Reviews

No Orgies

It would be difficult to find a more misleading title than that which Arthur Calder-Marshall has given to the autobiography of his early years. He calls it *The Magic of My Youth* (Rupert Hart-Davis, 12s. 6d.), and owing to the cabalistic symbols on the wrapper, and the frequent references to Aleister Crowley, who seems to have had some not very clearly defined influence on several of the characters introduced, we are led to expect an orgy of black magic which entirely fails to materialize, if that is what black magic ever does.

It is true that Aleister Crowley is encountered by the author towards the end of the book, a paunchy, rheumy old man, who tries to intoxicate him with brandy and use his powers of fascination; but in vain. It is true, also, that a chapter is devoted to the supposed ritual murder of Raoul Loveday by Aleister Crowley I the Abbey of Thelema at Cefalu, though the conclusion reached by Mr. Calder-Marshall about this affair seems to be that despite all the pother and paraphernalia of wickedness, Raoul Loveday probably died a natural death.

But for the most part, the appearances of the Beast (one of Crowley's favourite pseudonyms) are rather like the appearances of the Beast Glatisant in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, having only the vaguest connection, if any, with the plot; which, in brief, is the description of one or two of the writer's acquaintances or friends. They are certainly queer people, but they don't indulge in orgies to any notable degree. There is Vick-ybird, a scrubby, talented and extremely garrulous poet, who has ceased to write poetry, and was said at one time to have been turned into a zebra in the Sahara by the Beast, but not unnaturally denies the accusation. Very few people are turned into zebras in the Sahara by occult power, which is possibly one of the reasons why so few of our friends practise the Black Arts.

There is the writer's Auntie Helen, a tall queer and raddled elderly lady at Oxford, who keeps a pair of mongooses and a

pine marten in her peculiar lodgings, and never pays her bills. "She had the magnificence of one of the larger cats, a panther, or a leopardess." She also practiced astrology, and the senior proctor told Mr. Calder-Marshall that he must cease to visit her.

There is also Hugh. This young man seems to have been a confirmed snob, and a butter-in at parties where nobody wanted him to be, and maliciously laid information against the writer, who was intending to hold a magical *soirée* of a minor kind in his college rooms. It was not to be a Coven of witches and warlocks, not in fact a full Sabbath, but an Esbath (whatever that may be), but since it was never held, it doesn't seem to matter very much. In fact this is a book of what might be called naïve and callow reminiscences, loosely strung together, and having a certain charm, but only touching the fringes of diabolism, which appears to be introduced for the purpose of making the story seem rather more exciting than it is.