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Among the New Books

"THE MAGIC OF MY YOUTH" (Rupert-Davies. 12s 6d)

"The Magic of My Youth" is a well-written fragment of autobiography by Arthur Calder-Marshall, with a slightly cynical and misleading hint of sentiment in its title. The "magic" of which Mr. Calder-Marshall writes stemmed from that dangerous if discredited "magician" Aleister Crowley, with whom he had certain brief and strange contacts as a very young man.

The writer's memories of Crowley are presented, not as so many isolated fragments, but as part of a pattern to which a variety of other persons and experiences were also to contribute something significant. It is unusual to come across a writer capable and whimsical enough to use the material which his memory provides in this detached way.

Mr. Calder-Marshall has certainly given his "magic" memories a life of their own. His private feelings, his personality, do not enter into it. And Crowley—the self-styled Beast of the Revelation—seems dreadfully and dubiously unpleasant rather than dangerous, when he is portrayed with this aloof unimpassioned calm and imperturbability.

Nevertheless there was death and damnation in Aleister Crowley's magic. In his youth Mr. Calder-Marshall flirted with danger, felt a touch of chill in the air and turned aside. Now he looks back with amusement on his early experience, and it is satisfactory to know that his juvenile encounter with the Beast was not destined to spoil his Beauty sleep.