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BOOKS OF THE DAY.

MAGICAL PROPERTIES.

When I first knew Mr. Arthur Calder-Marshall, the author of "The Magic of My Youth" (Hart-Davis; 12s. 6.), he was an undergraduate at Hertford, wore polo jumpers, was reputed to be highly intellectual and in some way "wicked." If I remember rightly he earned the last-named reputation because of a story that he had celebrated the Black Mass in his college. As Mr. Calder-Marshall points out in this delightful fragment of autobiography, his reputation was in no way deserved, a piece of mild undergraduate fun being transformed into an abomination of wickedness by the ingenious malice of a mutual friend, the late Hugh Speaight. Mr. Calder-Marshall's book covers a period from the end of the 'twenties to the early 'thirties, when he came under the indirect influence of that extraordinary creature, the late Aleister Crowley. Aleister Crowley liked the world to think him a notable black magician. It may well have been the case that he was a considerable adept. Mr. Calder-Marshall, however found him to be a shambling, rather silly, obscene old man. He tells the story of the odd Abbey of Thelma on Cefalu and of the death of Raoul Loveday. It was a strange world for an undergraduate in which Calder-Marshall found himself. It is clear that he took at least part of the black magical atmosphere seriously. I do not find this surprising. It is much easier to believe in the devil than it is to believe in God, and there can be no doubt in my mind that there are evil and occult forces at work in the world in which we live. Mr. Calder-Marshall is interesting enough when he writes about Aleister Crowley. For many of us who were his contemporaries, however, the real interest of the book must lie in the remarkable evocation of the Oxford and London of those days, when all the world and Mr. Tom Driberg were young. Not least amusing is the part of the book in which he recalls the foundation of, and only ascent by, the "Balloon Union"—one of the more amusing incidents of our youth and one which I had almost forgotten.