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CRITICAL COMMENTARY

**Mr. Calder-Marshall Reminisces
About The Beast**

That prolific Kensington author, Arthur Calder-Marshall, has apparently enjoyed a youth that was full not only of magic, but also of mumbo-jumbo.

Bernard Shaw said, "Youth is such a wonderful thing, what a pity to waste it on the young."

One could not say this of Mr. Calder-Marshall after reading "The Magic of My Youth" (Hart-Davis 12/6d.) which recounts with fervour, with and a wealth of minute detail the impressions made by Oxford and Bloomsbury on a perceptive young man infected from an early age with the itch to write (and an accompanying taste for the bizarre).

On his leisurely and ironic style Mr. Calder-Marshall reminisces about the Bloomsbury period in English letters and about such extraordinary characters as The Beast, Aleister Crowley, and Vickybird, the poet, and Auntie Helen, the queer, pathetic astrologer who lived, amongst a profusion of esoteric symbols, in the outskirts of Oxford.

But if the book has magic it is because of Mr. Calder-Marshall's engaging way of reconstructing scenes and etching in the light and shade of forgotten emotions—not through being pre-occupied, sporadically, with ritual sacrifices, the transformation of poets into zebras and other such forms of charming devilry.

For Mr. Calder-Marshall's acquaintanceship with The Beast was very slight, and gives him insufficient pretext to write a book about this strange character, based as it largely is on hearsay and (from Crowley's point of view) heresy.

FOOTNOTE: Arthur Calder-Marshall was educated at St. Paul's School, Hammersmith, and Hertford College, Oxford. He is married and has two daughters. Novelist, journalist, broadcaster and traveler, his books include: "Two of a Kind," "About Levy."