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WRITING OF BOOKS

The Great Beast, the Life of Aleister Crowley, by John Symonds (Rider, 21s.).

Available again in this new edition is the biography, first published in 1951, of the fantastic creature who was poet, traveller, mountaineer, adulterer, drug addict, practitioner of black magic, and would-be founder of a new religion, if that term can be used in connection with a blatant Satanist. All these things, and many more, he was in the course of an extraordinary career during which he bore various names and titles that he conferred upon himself, and others, such as "the Worst Man in Britain," "the Wickedest Man in the World" and "a King of Depravity," bestowed on him by different organs of the Press. He was expelled in turn from Italy and France, the two women he married went mad, five of his "Scarlet Women" committed suicide, and five men lost their lives in his attempt to climb Kanchenjunga. A note might have been inserted in this edition, by the way, to indicate that the statement that no one has yet climbed to the top of either Everest, K2, or Kanchenjunga is now incorrect on three counts.