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**ALEISTER CROWLEY
A Bitter Example of a Twisted Soul**

By G Cardinal LeGros

Aleister Crowley was born on October 12, 1875, in Leamington England. He had Leo rising, his wealthy father was a minister of the Plymouth Brethren, an emotional religious group flourishing at the time. Young Aleister taught himself to read at the age of four and revealed a deep interest in religion, philosophy and metaphysics. His sharp, probing mind (Mercury in Scorpio conjunction Jupiter, square Saturn and Uranus) flashed with lightning brilliance; and everyone who talked with the precocious child agreed that he was an intellectual genius. At five years of age, he mastered chess and defeated skilled adult players. Upon entering school, he astonished his instructors by completing a two-hour mathematics test in 20 minutes without making a mistake.

But with his incredible mental development, two other less-attractive qualities manifested: sadism and masochism. His terrible drive for power that awakened so early in life is shown by the cosmic "X"-cross in fixed signs, involving Mercury, Saturn, Pluto and Uranus, Venus and the Sun square Mars, Saturn opposition Uranus.

While still a child, his father died, leaving the widowed mother and an uncle, a religious fanatic, with the ordeal of raising the inexplicable youngster. He soon took great delight in baiting and tormenting his pious uncle with ribald jokes and stories. At the same time (his genius taking a strange turn), he attracted wide attention by composing hymns so beautiful that they were sung in the neighbouring churches. At school, while being questioned about some minor disobedience, he earnestly confessed to every crime that he could think of, including robbery and murder. The horrified headmaster expelled him, with a note to his mother.

At the age of 20, Crowley enrolled at Cambridge University. A year later—with transiting Neptune trine his Sun, ruler of his

ascendant and second house of money, sextile Uranus in the second, trine Saturn in the eighth house of inheritance—he received a fortune of some 40,000 pounds (about \$200,000) from his father's estate. Independent at last, he purchased a vast library of books on occultism, poetry, literature, science, politics and history, determined to master all the wisdom of the world.

At the same time, his romances with women from all classes of society began to multiply; and a passion for mountain climbing developed. He successfully braved the perilous chalk cliffs of Beachy Head in Southern England, where few climbers ever ventured, and established records in Switzerland. Crowley was known as a "lone wolf" daredevil climber of suicidal recklessness; his greatest thrill was pretending to lose his footing and slide down some dangerous slope and then, by the deft use of alpenstock and crampons, check himself a few feet from the edge. By repeating the performance a few times, he usually turned climbers and guides into nervous wrecks.

But the overwhelming interest, or obsession, of his bizarre life was magic in every shape and form. Looking about for an opportunity to put his knowledge to work, he discovered a popular occult group in Paris, the Order of the Golden Dawn, headed by MacGregor Mathers. Upon joining the order, Crowley found that he knew more than any of them. However, among his fellow aspirants was a handsome, haggard youth, Allan Bennett, equally determined to master the secret forces of nature. Bennett was also a drug addict; he introduced Crowley to opium, morphine and cocaine.

With Neptune in his tenth house at birth, it was inevitable that religious or mystical interests would play a part in his life; but it was the discordant imbalance otherwise dominating his nativity that intensified the arcane keynote and drew him to the left hand path of necromancy.

Because of Crowley's remarkable physical constitution (Moon sextile Mars, Sun trine Saturn and sextile Uranus), he was able to engage in more and more strenuous psychic experiments with no apparent ill effects; but Bennett's health became so impaired that he had to give up, Crowley had no further need of him anyway and sent him to Ceylon, where he joined an order of Buddhist monks.

Looking about for suitable quarters, Crowley decided upon an estate known as Boleskine in Scotland, near Loch Ness. There was an old, rambling manor house that had spacious gardens running down to the lake, with an atmosphere of loneliness and mystery. The new owner moved in and continued his

research with fanatical enthusiasm, using drugs to induce various states of trance, during which he heard strange voices speaking to him and saw visions of the past and future.

Back in Paris, MacGregor Mathers was trying to suppress a revolt among Golden Dawn members who opposed his dictatorial policies. Crowley heard about it and hastened to Paris, hoping to take over the organization for use in starting his own movement. He convinced Mathers that he could stop the revolt if he were given full power as Mathers' representative. It was done; and Crowley rushed to London, assembled the English members of the order and made them swear oaths of unconditional obedience to him. In the meantime, back in Paris, Mathers was being duped out of all the order's funds by a confidence woman posing as a famous psychic. With the money gone, Mathers drank himself to death—and the Order of the Golden Dawn disintegrated.

Crowley, undismayed, embarked on a world tour, with Mexico City his first stop. He was now 25 years old, a strikingly handsome man, brimming over with courage and ambition. Transiting Saturn was in Capricorn, trining Neptune in his mid-heaven; and transiting Neptune was in Gemini, trining his Venus. In Mexico City, he rented a large house overlooking the Alameda, the city's most beautiful park, and busied himself in organizing his new cult.

Soon a number of important people gathered around him, including Don Medina, the descendant of a Spanish Grand Duke, who became leader of the Mexican group. His new disciples were thrilled and impressed by his magical powers. So extraordinary were the strange "revelations" that students of mysticism still read them with wonder and amazement.

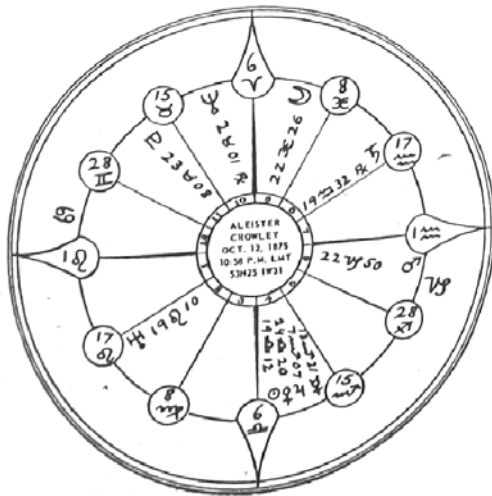
The Mexican group flourished and prospered, and all might have been well had Crowley curbed his insatiable amorous urges. But soon the big house was crowded with more sweethearts than mystics, including a world-famous prima donna who became so fascinated by the young magician that she deserted her husband. When she finally left, unable to tolerate the rivalry of his expanding harem, most of the disciples walked out, too, with Don Medina heading the procession.

Crowley moved on to San Francisco; failing to win any converts there, he took a ship for Japan. During a stopover in Hawaii, he met a lovely American lady, the wife of a lawyer who had sent her and their young son, who was ill, to Hawaii in the hope that the change of climate would help the boy. Crowley's hypnotic eye wove such a spell over the mother that she aban-

doned her son and followed the sorcerer to Japan. After a week or two, he deserted her and proceeded on to Ceylon to visit Allan Bennett, now a Buddhist monk.

After studying yoga for several months in the Ceylon monastery, Crowley learned the difficult posture called padmasana, which few Europeans have ever mastered. India was his next stop, where he hunted tigers, leopards and buffaloes, using a light gun and escaping death several times by narrow margins. The Indian mystics, while cordial, had little to do with him, having recognized his true nature.

Crowley was a weird and enigmatic character—a megalomaniac, gifted with intelligence verging upon genius, a sure grasp of occult fundamentals, together with the ability to make them serve practical and nefarious ends, plus a poetic talent of the highest order. During the brief romance with the American woman whom he deserted in Japan, he wrote a long poem entitled "Alice." Charles Cammell, editor of *The Atlantic Quarterly* considered this second only to the best of Shelley and Rossetti. Had Crowley devoted himself as earnestly to literature as he did to magic, he could have easily earned himself a place among the finest poets of his time; but nothing was allowed to eclipse his passion to make "Crowleyanity"—as he now called his cult—flourish.



If he had been a weak, vacillating character or physically less robust, his dream would have died a dream—and little actual harm would have been done. But the dark karma of his soul had fitted him into a birth with many outstanding advan-

tages, personally as well as materially. Leo rising gave him fiery courage, willpower, showmanship and a commanding presence. The Moon, strong in Pisces and elevated, added the mystical and poetic keynote; and his Sun conjunction Venus in Libra bestowed persuasive charm, ambition and aspiration. Venus and the Sun square Mars strengthened his emotional drive, lending a discordant note to his outlook on human relations; but their trines and sextiles to Saturn and Uranus brought material luck and protection. The horoscope itself was not evil—no horoscope is. It was Crowley, the inner man who identified himself with the negative aspects of his nativity and misused his marvelous potentials.

Failing to establish a center for his cult in India, Crowley traveled to Egypt, where no better luck awaited him. Still undiscouraged, he returned to Paris; there his fortunes took a sudden upward turn. Jaded Parisian society was captivated by his bizarre, theatrical appearance and his reputation as a daring mountain climber, big game hunter and magician. He was soon the sensation of the Latin Quarter and the center of an enthusiastic group, including Rodin, Arnold Bennett, Somerset Maugham, Sir Gerald Kelly (president of the British Royal Society). Maugham wrote a novel, *The Magician*, based on Crowley's life and psychic experiments, which ranks as one of the classics of occult literature.

After his Paris triumph, he went back to England and married Sir Gerald Kelly's younger sister, Rose, a beautiful, high-spirited girl who found him (the sorcerer) irresistible. They eloped and were married, going to Egypt for their honeymoon.

A year later, back in England, their first child was born, a daughter. At the same time, a Swiss doctor invited Crowley to join a band of mountain climbers who planned to scale the Himalayas. It was an opportunity that he could not resist. The group left, and more history was made; but those who survived the expedition to Tibet lost their interest in mountain climbing for life. Crowley dominated the adventure from the beginning and at the end had reduced his companions to nervous wrecks by his death-defying antics. He never found anyone willing to climb with him again.

Crowley was joined by his wife and daughter in Calcutta, from which point the family proceeded on through China. The journey was a nightmare. Crowley contracted malaria and began smoking opium to excess. His wife became ill and was left with the little girl in a Chinese village while he continued on to Shanghai. Later, the daughter died; and the British consul sent

the mother home to England, where she gave birth to a second daughter and then passed away herself.

Crowley returned and wrote a long poem in memory of his wife which Gilbert K. Chesterton praised and another critic called "the greatest love lyric in the language."

The weird cult, "Crowleyanity," was beginning to bloom like a noxious weed. Converts sprang up all over the world, ranging from naive souls, who saw in Crowley a great man of destiny, to serious students of the occult intrigued by hopes of obtaining forbidden knowledge.

Transiting Neptune entered Leo and crossed his ascendant, and the confident Crowley left for the United States. In New York City he made a new conquest in the person of a Miss Faesi. In the Palomar Mountains of California, his followers built a temple. After World War I, Crowley returned to Europe with Miss Faesi and another lady he had met on the ship. The great dream was now beginning to take definite form, and the magician decided to establish a colony on the island of Sicily.

An unusual group of people was soon attracted to the villa, including a Hollywood screen actress, a popular novelist, a Cambridge University professor, several men and women of wealth looking for offbeat thrills. But things were not quiet for very long. Crowley quarreled with a young Englishman who had joined the headquarters staff. The tolerant Sicilian authorities decided that they had had enough. Crowley was ordered out of the country.

Crowley was now almost penniless and beginning to show the effects of drink, drugs and debauchery. But with the help of Miss Faesi, he raised sufficient funds for their passage to Paris and there tried every trick that he knew to solve the financial problem. He was now 50 years old. Transiting Neptune was opposing Saturn in his eighth house; Uranus was over his Moon; transiting Saturn was conjunct his Mercury. Something had to happen, and it did.

Jupiter crossed his natal Mars, ruler of his fifth house of romance; into Crowley's troubled life came a rich, elderly American woman names Dorothy Olsen. The aging magician worked fast, skillfully applying his knowledge of hypnotism. Within a few days, the unsuspecting lady was his slave. They left Miss Faesi and France behind, settling down to a luxurious existence on a beautiful estate in North Africa, where they wined and dined members of the nobility and the international set.

Crowley recovered his health. He issued a proclamation stating that he had received instructions to take upon himself

all the sins of the world and save mankind from itself. His followers received the announcement with jubilation—all that is, except Dorothy Olsen, whose fortune Crowley had now squandered and whom he deserted for a new victim: Maria de Miramar, who came from Nicaragua. Maria was soon replaced by an American girl artist; and she in turn was deserted for the wife of an American lawyer. Crowley moved in a bewildering maze of intrigue, but his time was running out.

In 1933, a writer—Nina Hamnett—published a book, *Laughing Torso*, in which Crowley's activities and scandals were exposed. Penniless at the time, he decided to sue her and the publishers. The trial was reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's. Crowley lost, and the judge summed things up by saying: "I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as that which has been produced by the man who describes himself as the greatest living poet."

The curtain was falling at last; and Crowley's final days were spent in a little boarding house in Sussex, England, where to the end, occult students, curiosity seekers, poets and writers came to see the odd being whose incredible life had already become legend. Crowley passed away on December 1, 1947, a broken, unrepentant man. His life reveals what can happen to an advanced soul that yields to pride and the lust for power. But the terrible tragedy of his existence may yet serve to awaken in the hearts of other occult aspirants the need for right knowledge and guidance which alone can direct the feet of the spirit to the sunrise path of wisdom, compassion and peace.