

AN OCCULT WHO'S WHO FOR THE 1920'S

By Richard Kaczynski

ALLAN BENNETT
a.k.a. Frater Iehi Aour
ca. 1871-1920's

Allan Bennett was one of the most spectacular members of the Golden Dawn, yet is one of the least remembered. He was as respected as Mathers (head of the order), and feared even more. While once at a party, Bennett got into a discussion on magic with a man who repeatedly belittled the art; to this, Bennett removed his little pocket wand and pointed it at the gentleman. It took doctors, the story goes, fifteen hours to revive the man.

Bennett was a highly observant man with remarkable insight. When Crowley, at a time when he was toying with black magic grimoires, first met him, Bennett approached him and remarked, "Little Brother, you have been meddling with the Goetia." When Crowley timidly denied this allegation, Bennett replied, "In that case, the Goetia has been meddling with you."

Despite his skill in magic, Bennett lived in a tenement in London's southern district. However, Crowley soon offered to share his luxurious flat with him on the condition that Bennett be his guru, or tutor. Bennett agreed and soon began instructing the young Crowley. It was Bennett, who took opium (which was legal then) for his asthma, who introduced Crowley to

the use of drugs in magic, claiming, "There exists a drug whose use will open the gates of the World behind the Veil of Matter." And it was Bennett who, in his Qaballistic studies, started what became the first numerical dictionary of ancient Hebrew.

Although adept at magic, Bennett's true interests were Buddhism and oriental philosophy. One day, Bennett and Mathers had gotten into an argument about the god Shiva, the destroyer. Mathers refused to believe Bennett's contention that chanting Shiva's name long enough would cause the destruction of the universe, so Bennett decided to prove it. Sitting in the lotus position, he proceeded to chant the name "Shiva" *ad nauseum*. After about half an hour, Mathers became furious. When Bennett refused to shut up, Mathers pulled out a revolver, prepared to blow Bennett's brains out. Fortunately, Mathers's wife intervened and prevented a tragedy.

Bennett suffered from spasmodic asthma and the British climate eventually became unlivable. This, combined with his love of Buddhism, led Bennett to Ceylon around 1900, where he became the greatly revered Buddhist monk Bhikku Ananda Metteya. In 1920, when Crowley came to study yoga under Bennett, he discovered that Bennett had been meditating in his bungalow for three days without food or water; rushing to investigate,

Crowley discovered him hovering in the air at eye level until the draught from the door blew the monk about the room like a dry leaf. Bennett was responsible for introducing the Buddhist Sangha (brotherhood) to the west.

ANNIE BESANT
1847-1933

Annie Besant spent the first half of her life in England indulging various passions. She was strenuously Anglo-Catholic and, in 1867, married Rev. Frank Besant, an Anglican clergyman. She eventually drifted toward atheism and, receiving no sympathy from her spouse, left him in 1873.

In the same year, she joined the National Secular Society, a radical free thought organization, and rocketed to the top, becoming its vice-president in two years. She and other members were prosecuted in 1877 for selling "obscene literature" (*The Fruits of Philosophy*, which advocated birth control), but was acquitted. In 1878 she was less fortunate, and lost custody of her daughter Mabel to Frank Besant, who accused his ex-spouse of advocating atheism, associating with Charles Bradlaugh (leader of the NSS), selling obscene literature, and, therefore, being an unfit mother. In 1884, she met George Bernard Shaw and, in 1885, joined the Fabian Society, of

which executive committee she soon became a member. Besant led the match-girls' strike of 1888, and was one of the first women to enroll in London University. In 1889, she split with Bradlaugh and announced she had become a Theosophist.

Besant first met H.P. Blavatsky in March, 1889, and this may have influenced her conversion. Blavatsky saw Besant's potential and admitted her to the Theosophical Society's inner council almost immediately. Besant learned occultism rapidly and, after Blavatsky's death in 1891, she eventually succeeded as leader of the Theosophical Society.

In 1908, Besant and C.W. Leadbeater (another member of the society) adopted a Brahmin youth named Jeddu Krishnamurti and, believing him to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu and the new messiah, raised him to be a good and proper savior. He became the society's authority figure but, by 1929, grew tired of this manipulation and resigned his messiahship.

In 1913, Besant became involved in India's politics, and founded, in 1916, the Home Rule for India League. She was interned by the authorities in 1917 but, upon her release, became the president of the Indian National Congress. Her influence in India did not last long, however, as Mohandas K. Gandhi quickly became India's national hero.

Besant continued as head of the Theosophical Society until her death in 1933 at 85 years of age. Further information may be obtained from her autobiography.

ALEISTER CROWLEY 1875-1947

Aleister Crowley was a controversial and contradictory man. He was a scholar and voracious writer, yet he was also a skilled mountaineer, setting records which remain unbroken to this day. He mastered the disciplines of yoga, yet often indulged in sex (taking on numerous mistresses) and drugs (which were legal at the time). He knew great secrets of antiquity and attracted many students, yet wrote in veiled language and urged his pupils to be skeptics. He was much misunderstood and often maligned by the press, even being dubbed "The Wickedest Man in the World". This notoriety earned him a place on the cover of the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* album in a collage of "people we like."

Born Edward Alexander Crowley to a father who was a local beer baron and pastor of a strict British sect, he soon changed his name to Aleister

because he believed the combination of dactylic and trochaic syllables would help guarantee his fame. He was an outspoken little troublemaker, and his mother often claimed he was the great beast prophesied in the Book of Revelations. Both his parents died young, and Crowley inherited a sizable fortune, which he squandered on publishing his own works and traveling.

His early books consisted of poetry (some of which is considered to be fine literature) and a book entitled *White Stains*, believed by collectors of erotica to be the single filthiest book in the English language. Crowley's interests soon turned to the occult and, in 1898, he was introduced to the Golden Dawn. His progress was meteoric and, after an unsuccessful attempt at gaining control of the politically volatile Golden Dawn, he left to study magic on his own.

In 1903, he unexpectedly eloped with Rose Kelly, the sister of a close friend. They spent time traveling in Europe, Egypt, and the Far East. In April, 1904, they stopped off at Cairo so Crowley could study the various indigenous religions. Rose began acting peculiarly, muttering dreamily "They are waiting for you," and "He who is waiting is Horus." To test her, Crowley took Rose to the Cairo museum to have her identify the Egyptian god Horus, and she pointed to a stele across the room, its details obscured by the distance. Upon closer inspection, he discovered she was correct; moreover, the stele bore the catalogue number 666. Most remarkable was that Rose knew nothing of magic or Egyptian mythology whatsoever, and all this apparently came about in a trance-like state.

Following Rose's instructions, he went into the hotel room and, at noon, he heard a disembodied voice dictating to him for an hour. This continued for three days, and the result was a short manuscript entitled *The Book of the Law*. It contained—in extremely veiled and elaborate language—powerful magical secrets revived from the dawn of time. This was the law for a new age of mankind, the Aquarian Age. The law was *thelema* (Greek for "will"), and was embodied in the statement from the book, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." For Crowley, any change in the world in conformity with one's will is an act of magic. He devoted his entire life to the study and promulgation of this law, honestly believing it to be from the mouth of the gods.

Crowley also spent his life studying and practicing every form of magic in

an attempt to discover a universal system. He began calling himself the Great Beast 666 because he believed the beast in the Book of Revelations was a prophet who would deliver a new law to mankind. This, coupled with his indiscretions in sex and drugs and his love of outraging people, earned him reputations of being a black magician, a Satanist, and the Wickedest Man in the World (none of which were true).

Despite the hype, Crowley—who also went by the pen names Frater Perdurabo and the Master Therion—made an enormous contribution to magic and comparative occultism, and made accessible the mysteries of the orient. He ran two major occult organizations—the A.A. (a revival of the Golden Dawn) and the O.T.O. (a survival of the Knights Templar). He had made remarkable students and associates. He penned several classic books on occultism, and is unquestionably the most influential figure of the occult in this century. Here is a list of his major works and their publication dates:

The Equinox no. 1-10 (1909-1913): an occult digest published twice annually (at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes). Very rare and valuable.

777 (1909): a comparison of all major belief systems in tabular form.

Book 4 (1911, 1913): an introductory work on magic and yoga, published in two parts.

The Book of Lies (1913)

The Equinox vol. 3, no. 1 (1919, Detroit).

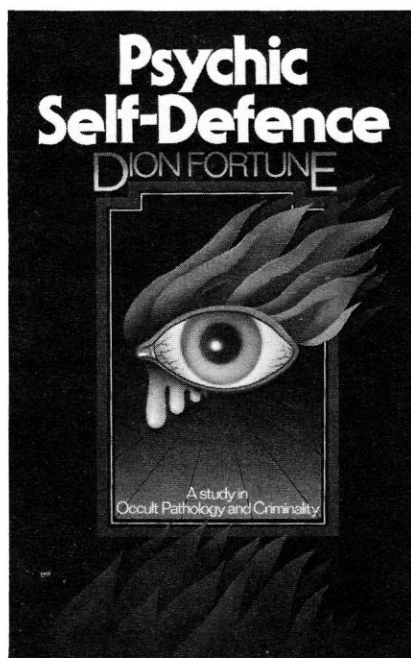
Liber Al vel Legis (1926, Paris): the definitive book on the subject, although it makes difficult reading.

The Book of Thoth (1944): acknowledged to be the best book ever written on the tarot.

For further biographical information, see *The Great Beast* by John Symonds (a critical interpretation), *The Eye in the Triangle* by Israel Regardie (a sympathetic account) or *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (the "autobiography of a saint").

DION FORTUNE 1891-1946

Dion Fortune was the pen name of Violet Mary Firth, a British psychoanalyst. She displayed psychic sensitivity at an early age, and spent much of her childhood daydreaming. At age 20, she unwittingly antagonized her employer, a malevolent woman who had studied yoga in India for many years; this woman psychically attacked young Violet, leaving her body and mind shattered. This was a major event



in her life, as it directed her to psychoanalysis and occultism, culminating in the publication of her 1930 book, *Psychic Self Defence*.

Fortune learned a great deal about the mind and astral body at this point, but not until her initiation into the Golden Dawn was she fully healed from the psychic attack. She mastered their system of magic, and went on to form the Society of Inner Light in the 1920's. She spent her last sixteen years writing books and novels to communicate her theories, and spent some time corresponding with Aleister Crowley.

Fortune's activity in the 1920's centered around her psychoanalytic work, as well as research into the diagnoses and cures for magical attacks. Her books include *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935) and *The Sea Priestess* (1938).

CHARLES STANSFIELD JONES 1886-1950

Charles Stansfield Jones was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, and became interested in the occult at the early age of 20. He set out to study the Mysteries and spiritualism with the intent of disproving them which he was unable to do, and he soon became a serious student of magic. In 1909, he was initiated by Aleister Crowley into the A.A. under the motto *Unus in Omnibus* (VIO) and eventually became head of the Canadian O.T.O.

In 1916, he discovered the key which unlocked the semantic riddles in *The Book of the Law*, a feat which Crowley himself failed after twelve years of study! Impressed by this, Crowley named Jones to be his successor.

Jones's progress was dramatic, and Crowley decided to publish his diaries in the third volume of *The Equinox* (only the first issue of which was ever published, in 1919) as an example of how a normal person could attain great initiations. Crowley eventually changed his tune when, in the late 1910's Jones claimed to have surpassed his master in the Great White Brotherhood's hierarchy. Crowley responded by ridiculing Jones's initiated insights and renouncing him as his successor. The men parted ways, exchanging occasional formal letters as a futile gesture of civility.

Jones—who went by the names Parzval, OIVVIO, and, most commonly, Frater Achad—seems to have had nothing but respect for Crowley. In his books, he often cites and speaks deferentially of his teacher; Crowley, however, was bitter and left a legacy less kind. In a letter dated April 8, 1948 (shortly after Crowley's death), Jones declared that, on April 2, the new age ushered in by Crowley's *The Book of the Law* had been surpassed by a newer age, and that this date was the true beginning of the Age of Aquarius.

Frater Achad's books and publication dates are as follows:

Liber 31 (1918): extant in manuscript form only.

The Chalice of Ecstasy (1923)

Crystal Vision through Crystal Gazing (1923)

The Egyptian Revival (1923)

QBL (1923)

The Anatomy of the Body of God (1925)

For further information, consult Kenneth Grant's *Outside the Circles of Time*.

VICTOR NEUBURG 1883-1940

Victor Neuburg was a British poet and critic with a weekly poetry column in the *Sunday Express*. He was nervous, clumsy, and sickly, and suffered from scoliosis and other maladies. He met Crowley while a student at the latter's *alma mater*, Cambridge University; a mutual acquaintance suggested Crowley look up Neuburg because they shared an interest in the occult. The result was Neuburg's initiation into the A.A., where he went by the mottoes *Omnia Vincam* and *Lampada Tradam*.

Neuburg had two natural talents in spiritualism. First, he was a practiced medium, i.e., he could successfully open himself up to possession by spirits and other entities; this was a valuable skill but, unfortunately, one that also led to his downfall (according to

Crowley). His other great talent was as a materializing medium, i.e., he could give physical form to spiritual entities by donating a portion of his protoplasm. One incident typical of Neuburg occurred during a ritual on Victoria Street in England. The participants were dancing in a darkened and thickly incensed room when they suddenly became aware of a stranger's presence. Several people counted one head too many but, when one of the frightened neophytes switched on the light, there was no sight of the stranger!

Neuburg served as Crowley's assistant in two magical workings. The first of these is described in *The Vision and the Voice*, which is a record of the visions of the notorious thirty Aethyrs of Dr. John Dee seen in 1909. Crowley gazed into a crystal, and Neuburg scribed the vision and any other peculiar phenomena. At one point, he was even tormented and attacked by the great demon Choronzon. This book contains some of the most sublime symbolism in magical literature.

In the Paris working (1914), Neuburg played a larger role. He was Crowley's partner in a series of 25 evocations of the gods Hermes and Jove via sexual magic. At the climax of the rite, Neuburg would lapse into a mediumistic trance-like state, at times describing mystic visions and at other times being possessed by the devil himself (at which point he'd be interrogated by Crowley).

For a non-objective biography, see Jean Overton Fuller's *The Magical Dilemma of Victor Neuburg*.

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE 1886-1956

Austin Osman Spare was born to a lower-middle class British family and, at age 16, earned two distinctions: he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, and received a National Gold Medal in mathematics for his treatise on solid geometry. He also befriended an elderly woman named Mrs. Paterson. She was a witch, descended from the Salem lot, and initiated Spare into the Craft, teaching him to generate familiars and contact elementals. At age 19 (1905), he published *Earth Inferno*, a book of drawings recording his occult views.

He lived in the slums outside of London, making his living by painting portraits. In 1910, he joined Crowley's A.A., but soon left due to conflicting ideologies. His was a complex and powerful magic, based on the properties of *Zos* (the whole person—body, mind, and soul) and *Kia* (the atmos-

phic "I") in ecstatic interplay. Like Crowley, sex was the fulcrum of his magic, and pleasure (or self-love) was part of a process called *atavistic resurgence*, where sex and visualization in combination led to automatic drawings and contact with spirit guides. And, like Crowley, he changed mistresses frequently.

A remarkable incident occurred to Spare in 1955. At this time, some O.T.O. members—one of whom was a witch who had just recently defected from her coven—were conducting a ritual to invoke the goddess Isis into the witch. During the ritual, she bolted up out of her trance and stared intently at a window in the chamber's north corner. She claimed that the curtains had parted, an icy wind had bore down upon her, and a shadowy bird with great webbed talons attempted to carry her off (all in the astral world). This window, which was frosted over at the time, turned out to show unmistakable claw marks, and the sill was covered with an aquatic slime which pulsed as if breathing. Spare finally admitted that he had made for the high priest of the coven in question a talisman for the return of stolen property, unaware that this property was the new O.T.O. member; bound to this talisman was an elemental he described as a "sort of amphibious owl with the wings of a bat and the talons of an eagle."

Spare died in England as he had lived . . . destitute. His books—though out-of-print and extremely difficult to obtain—are as follows:

Earth Inferno (1905)

A Book of Satyrs (1907)

The Book of Pleasure (1913, privately issued)

The Focus of Life (1921)

The Anathema of Zos (1927)

For more biographical information, see Kenneth Grant's *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*.

RUDOLPH STEINER 1861-1925

Rudolph Steiner, born to a modest Austrian family, was a remarkable child. He was a sensitive clairvoyant, and had several psychic experiences in his youth. While studying science at secondary school, he taught himself the classics and tutored in the humanities. His wide-ranging interests led him to Goethe and, at 23, Steiner edited his scientific work for publication. He worked at editing literary journals, but his interests in meditation and spiritual life eventually brought him to the Theosophical Society, which he joined in 1902. He became general secretary

of the German branch of the society, but lectured only on his own investigations, namely anthroposophy. Steiner was also a Freemason, and Francis King argues that he was even a member of the O.T.O. for a short time.

In 1909—opposed to the Theosophical Society's declaration of a new messiah and other unpalatable trends—Steiner split with the society to form his own: the Anthroposophical Society. Its tenets are rooted in ideas of perceiving the spiritual world. He wrote many books detailing the "higher worlds" and their peculiarities, some of which have led to startling scientific breakthroughs. In 1912, the first headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society was built in Switzerland of various woods and sculpted glass. It was burnt down in December 1922, but Steiner immediately designed a new headquarters of equally original architecture—this time of molded concrete. The new society was founded in 1923.

Steiner's ideas were responsible for a threefold commonwealth to solve the problems of war-torn Europe, for the foundation of the Waldorf schools, and for other educational revolutions. In his last years, Steiner lectured heavily on a variety of subjects, as diverse as mathematics, medicine, theology, drama, economics, and education. The specialists in these fields were always astounded by the breadth and depth of his knowledge. Steiner's books—both his own writings and those made from his many lectures—constitute one of the largest—if not the largest—literary contributions in history.

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE 1857-1942

Arthur Edward Waite is one of the most famous writers on the occult, this due to his scholarly best-sellers with such colorful titles as *The Book of Black Magic and Pacts*. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Waite was raised as a devout Roman Catholic. His interests were changeable, and he eventually happened upon spiritualism and the works of H.P. Blavatsky, whose Theosophical Society he ultimately joined.

In 1881, Waite came across the writings of the French magician Eliphas Levi, and spent a good deal of time translating and codifying these works. He twice joined the Golden Dawn, the first time resigning after passing through the first order grades with suspicion of illegal practices by his superiors. Waite rejoined during the Golden Dawn's tumultuous years (1900), gaining control of the main lodge in London and rewriting the

rituals along Christian lines in 1903. Eventually, however, his interests turned away from ritual magic and toward Freemasonry and Christian mysteries.

Waite's autobiography, *Shadows of Life and Thought*, chronicles his accomplishments. Today, however, his poetry is all but forgotten, and his high-brow writing considered flat and flaccid, long on intellectual fluff but short on the insight of a true initiate.

DR. WILLIAM WYNN WESTCOTT 1848-1925

Dr. William Wynn Westcott was a man of many accomplishments. He was a London coroner, an antiquarian, a scholar, and student of the Qaballah. He had belonged to a variety of secret societies: Westcott was Supreme Magus of the Societas Rosicruciana in England, and belonged to both the Freemasons and the Theosophical Society.

In 1888, Westcott—together with MacGregor Mathers and W.R. Woodman—founded the Golden Dawn based upon a cipher manuscript and correspondence with a German Rosicrucian adept. It was Westcott who exchanged letters with Sprengel, and, hence, he claimed contact with the Secret Chiefs of the order. While in the Golden Dawn, he went by the mottoes *Sapere Aude* ("Dare to be Wise") and *Non Omnis Moriar* ("I Shall Not Wholly Die"). He remained involved in the Golden Dawn through the 1910's, but spent the last years of his life as vice-president of the two Theosophical Society lodges. In his last days, he expressed his belief that contact with the secret chiefs had been lost or suspended.

Aside from his contributions in founding the Golden Dawn, Westcott will doubtless be remembered for his book *Numbers: Their Occult Power and Mystic Virtues* (1890, with a revised and expanded 1902 edition).

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS 1865-1939

William Butler Yeats, the famous Irish poet, was exposed to mysticism while an art student in Dublin. Here, he met a theosophist who introduced him to Hindu philosophy. Yeats and his college friend (a mystic who went by the pen-name A.E.) joined the Theosophical Society, where they met H.P. Blavatsky.

While studying Blake in the British Museum Reading Room, Yeats met MacGregor Mathers, who was in the process of copying obscure magical manuscripts. When, shortly thereafter,

Mathers and two others founded the Golden Dawn, Yeats became one of the first members in 1887, taking the motto *Daemon est Deus Inversus* ("The Devil is God Inverted"). He, in fact, helped Mathers write the order's rituals. Eventually, Yeats rose to control the London branch.

Unfortunately, differences of ideology began to tear the order apart. Yeats took exception to Mathers's dictatorial style, and led the movement to expel Aleister Crowley from the Golden Dawn. Eventually, Mathers himself was ousted. When A.E. Waite assumed control of the London office and revised its rituals along more Christian lines, Yeats tried desperately to keep the order intact; however, Waite was unbending. Bitter, Yeats resigned from the Golden Dawn and burnt all his magical books.

Yeats continued to study magic, and even established an Irish order called the Hermetic Students. People in literary circles attempted to dismiss Yeats's connection to the occult as irrelevant; however, there is no doubt that Yeats was a mystic, and that magic was the backbone of his poetry.

For further biographical information, see Joseph Home's *W.B. Yeats 1865-1939* or Yeats's own autobiography.

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