

The witch is no for burning

THE tiny woman, white-haired and four-foot nothing, received me in her study. It was warm, but a fire was blazing. Books lay everywhere. She had been typing.

"What do you want to know?" she asked. At 86 she was entitled to come to the point quickly.

"I want to know if witches still exist today," I said, taking off my coat.

"Of course they do," said the tiny woman. "Some of my best friends **AREN'T** witches—but, on the other hand, some of my casual acquaintances are."

Dr. MARGARET MURRAY, the witchcraft wizard of W.C.I., can say this sort of thing without smiling.

She has just written the foreword to a book called "Witchcraft Today." It comes out in a couple of months and it'll shake one or two people. If only because its author, **GERALD GARDNER**, reveals himself as a member of one of the only two surviving covens of witches in Britain.

Forbidden

HE doesn't say where they are. The witches Law forbids it, as it forbids him to tell some of the more startling rites performed by coven members.

I am a trifle less bewitched than Mr. Gardner. I'll tell you. One is at St. Albans. The other is in the Isle of Man. The leader of the St. Albans coven is a West End doctor.

Gardner tells how the two covens joined together to raise the cone of power against Hitler to stop the invasion. He describes the worship of the moon goddess. He even—don't

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laugh—talks about broomsticks.

"All true, of course," said Dr. Margaret Murray. "People today don't know. They think witches must necessarily be old, ugly and crotchety.

"Some of them are young and rather attractive. The last one I met was a farmer's wife in Guernsey. She could kill a pig just by looking at it."

Miss Gardner looked at me. I looked at her typewriter. The fire burned hot in the grate.

"I practised a little amateur witchcraft myself in the old days," admitted Miss Gardner. I asked her how she got on. She wouldn't tell me.

No laughs

"**D**ONT laugh at pin-sticking in wax images," advised Miss Murray, apropos of nothing at all. "It works because it gives the witch something to concentrate malevolence on—such as you or any writer who reports scathingly about witchcraft."

I stopped smiling. Maybe you should do the same. **JAMES LAVER**, who shortly

brings out a book on black magic, has never looked more serious. And **GRAHAME GREENE**, who recently visited a coven in Lyons, France, hasn't smiled for weeks.

MISTLETOE AND HUMAN SACRIFICE

HISTORY ON TV

Daily Telegraph Reporter

The association of the mistletoe bough with Christmas festivities and ancient sacrifices to tribal gods in Britain and other lands was traced in a television feature last night by Mr. Tom Harrison, curator of the Sarawak Museum.

Illustrations supporting this connection between the mistletoe kiss and customs involving death to men and beasts were given. Old prints and drawings illustrated what was originally a sacred rite, symbolising resurrection by bloodshed to keep the gods alive.

The collection of myths, legends and superstitions of the world formed the last study of Sir James Frazer, the anthropologist, author of "The Golden Bough." Tomorrow is the centenary of his birth.