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**Astounding Secrets of the Devil Worship-
pers' Mystic Love Cult**

**Revealing the Intimate Details of Aleister
Crowley's Unholy Rites, His Power Over
Women Whom He Branded and Enslaved,
His Drug Orgies, His Poetry and Mysticism,
His Startling Adventures Around the Globe
as "the Beast of the Apocalypse"**

By W. B. Seabrook

Chapter I.

Beast or poet?
Monster or moralist?
Charlatan or magician?
Genius or madman?

These are the questions Europe has been asking for more than ten years about Aleister Crowley, the most complex characters in the modern world, and one of the most extraordinary in human history.

You will read of a man—

Who has won fame by sublimely beautiful religious poetry, yet has committed blasphemies and sacrileges such as the world has never known.

Who has reveled in orgies that astonished Paris, yet has sat motionless for months as a naked yogi, begging his rice under the hot sun of India.

Who has steeped himself in hasheesh and opium, yet has never become enslaved by them, and accomplished a prodigious volume of literary work.

Who has killed lions and climbed mountains, crossed the Sahara, penetrated to the interior of China where no white man ever went before, yet who has whipped and branded English and American girls who came under his power as slaves were whipped and branded by their masters in ages past.

And his is only the beginning of this "double" character. He is the supreme head of a mystical cult which includes the modern

"Devil Worshipers," a revival of the ancient Rosicrucian Order, Egyptian Masonry and Black Magick, whose ramifications reach Paris, London, New York, Detroit, Chicago and other American cities.

He believes that he is the incarnation of "The Beast of the Apocalypse."

His creed is, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law."

He has just written a new book called "The Diary of a Drug Fiend," which is the sensation of London. He is now living in Cefalu, Sicily, in an "Abbey," surrounded by his "high priestesses," teaching his doctrines, practicing his strange rites, as he formerly practiced them here in America.

The following chapters will contain the intimate revelation of this astounding character by the writer, who knew and studied Aleister Crowley most closely during the four years of his activities in America and who has kept in close touch with his doings since. They constitute an authentic and authoritative record, backed by indisputable photographs, documents and letters.



Aleister Crowley in His Regalia as High Priest of the O.T.O. Cult Founded by Him in Detroit, and Regarding Which Startling Disclosures Were Made During the Recent Ryerson Divorce Scandal.

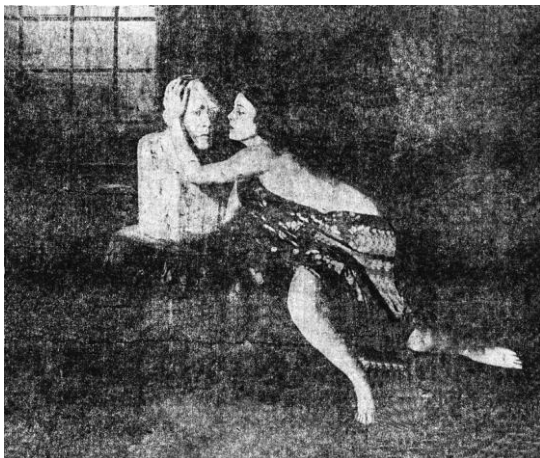
Aleister Crowley already notoriously famous in England, Europe and the Orient—called by his friends and enemies everything from "immortal genius" to "inhuman monster"—arrived in America from nobody knows where.

He may have come from a cell in some Chinese Buddhist monastery—from a scholarly library in London—or an opium dive in Montmartre.

They were all equally his "home."

I just got a wireless message from him dated Cefalu, Sicily, the beautiful spot on the Mediterranean where he founded the "Abbey of Thelema," in which he is the "high priest," directing the secret rites and orgies which still go on, and which I shall later describe. From London come daily newspapers with accounts of the latest sensation he has created in the British capital as the author of a book entitled "The Diary of a Drug Fiend."

As I am writing these lines the American daily newspapers are carrying reports from Detroit, telling of the "Ryerson scandal" which has just cropped up anew as the result of the "Love Temple" which Crowley founded in that city when he first came to America. He came well armed with impressive introductions. One of them was from Evarrard Fielding, second son of Lord Denleigh, secretary for the British Society of Physical Research.



Beautiful Mrs. A. W. Ryerson of Detroit, Trial Bride of the Man She Accuses as the Head of the Notorious O.T.O. Love Cult, in a Striking Attitude, Embracing an Anonymous Statue. Note the Uncanny Resemblance Between the Face in the Marble and the Photograph of Aleister Crowley above.

It was addressed to Dr. Hereward Carrington, America's most celebrated scientific student of psychic phenomenon. It said:

"This will introduce to you Aleister Crowley, poet, mystic, mountain climber, big game hunter and general lunatic."

From other sources Carrington had heard that Crowley was the secret ruler of a strange mystical cult, whose lodges and "temples" circled the entire globe, from Egypt and Asia to the drawing rooms of Paris, London, Berlin, New York and other American cities.

He had heard that Crowley was the head of that strange modern survival of the Middle Ages, "The Devil Worshipers;" that he was an adept in the dreadful "black magic" of the Orient, and that he possessed powers wielded by no other living man.

After years of careful personal investigation Dr. Carrington, whose opinions stand for cold, scientific precision, said to me: "Whatever else Aleister Crowley may be, I am convinced that he is one of the greatest mystics the world has ever known, and that he probably knows more than any other white man of the secrets of eastern magic."

To-day I am inclined to agree with Dr. Carrington, but it makes me smile now to think how different was the impression I got of Aleister Crowley when we first met—four years ago—in a party at the Metropolitan opera.

Crowley appeared during the first entre-act intermission. The first impression was of a punctiliously correct Britisher in conventional evening clothes—a big man, of heavily athletic build, who looked as if he had spent most of his life outdoors. But the conventionality was only on the surface. On presentation to each member of the party, instead of murmuring the usual "How do you do?" or its equivalent, he said:

"DO WHAT THOU WILT SHALL BE THE WHOLE OF THE LAW."

And thereafter, for the entire evening, he sat like an incarnation of the Buddha, staring straight before him, saying nothing at all. The women of the party, I noticed, seemed strangely fascinated by this man—a fascination mingled with a sort of repulsion and fear. Their eyes were on him more than on the stage. He paid no more heed to them than if they hadn't been present. At the end of the evening he said:

"EVERY MAN AND WOMAN IS A STAR."

He said it precisely as you would say "Goodnight," or "It has been a pleasure to meet you," and quietly took his departure.

At this moment, as I said, he is the sensation of London. The newspapers are carrying seven-column headlines about Aleister Crowley on their front pages. His "Diary of a Drug Fiend," published by a leading London house, has become the center of a raging storm. Some critics have denounced it as "unspeakable wicked" and cried, "Burn the book—and the man!" Others call it a work of sheer genius that "will rank with De Quincey's classical 'Confessions of an Opium Eater.' "

And Lea, "The Dead Soul," helped him! "The Dead Soul" when I first met her. "The Scarlet Woman" now! She is not the kind of "Scarlet Woman" you may be thinking of. She is Crowley's—body and soul—and will be faithful to him, I think, until death. And it was she who wrote, in laborious longhand, from his dictation, the novel which is the "raging furore" now in London.

How Crowley changed this girl from "The Dead Soul" into "The Scarlet Woman" recalls my first amazing experience with the real Crowley—an experience in which I participated only as a witness,

but which left a more indelible impression on my brain than the most vivid and fantastic novel I have ever read.

It began in Crowley's New York Studio, than at No. 1 University Place, just off Washington Square. Imagine an immense room hung with Oriental tapestries, enormous divans on the floor covered with dull cloth-of-gold, eastern images and idols and statues everywhere—some exquisitely beautiful, some hideous beyond belief. Chairs, tables, modern furniture, too, and bookcases running up to the high ceiling.

Imagine a cosmopolitan gathering of a dozen men and women, invited by Crowley, "for after-dinner coffee and an evening of conversation." Imagine Crowley himself, in a coat and trousers, made in pajama style of a very heavy corded silk, swathing him in black, somber as a priest, brewing coffee, "à la Turcque," in a big Persian copper contrivance something like a samovar, beneath which flickered a bluish flame.

That night Crowley was brilliant, witty, talkative. The conversation ranged from elephant hunting to the sonnets of Shakespeare, to Fifth avenue fashions and the latest experiment in free verse.

The only person who did not join in the general talk was a girl, or, rather, a woman, for she was probably between twenty-five and thirty, named Lea Hirsig, pretty, but dressed with the utmost quietness and dignity, with a face that seemed a bit sad, a bit disdainful, thoroughly uninterested and detached. I learned afterward that she was a teacher in a children's school.

I do not know whether Crowley had been watching her or not. Certainly her glances had not been markedly fixed on him. But suddenly, during a lull in the talk, he addressed her direct.

"Does nothing interest you, then?" he asked, as if at the end of an exchange of confidences rather than the beginning.

"I'm afraid not," she replied in a monotone. "I am a dead soul—"

Before she had completed whatever else she was going to say, a remarkable change came over Crowley. I was watching his face, and it became, as you have seen the faces of actors become, the face of a man I had never seen before. I do not mean anything necessarily supernatural, but a kind of power blazed from it, as you have seen power blaze from a previously expressionless face in sudden intense excitement. And the eyes, instead of focusing to a converged point, as in normal vision, seemed to stare straight ahead of them, as in separate parallel lines.

"You have spoken," he interrupted, and, curiously enough, his voice was a monotone like her own. "You have spoken, but I am Baphomet, and by my power your dead soul shall wake. You are Lea, the Dead Soul. You shall become Lea, the Scarlet Woman!"

Her answer came like a dash of cold water in the tense silence.

"Mr. Crowley—I believe that is your name—you are absurd. You have no power over me of any kind. I am not interested in you or your absurd pretensions."

Crowley was now standing, looking down at her. As she spoke he moved a step or two further back, stretched out his arms, and began to recite a formula in some curious Hindu dialect. It lasted less than a minute. Neither she nor any of us there understood the meaning of a single syllable. It sounded like an invocation and a command.

Not another word did he speak to her the entire evening. So far as I know he did not look at her again. An hour passed. The guests, including myself, left about midnight—all except Lea.

Without a word to Crowley and without a word of explanation to anybody, like a woman sitting in the waiting room of a railway station—she simply stayed.

Would she have stayed if she had known the fate in store for her? As I read the letters she has sent me since—which she is still sending me—I am compelled to believe that she would.

Four days later I went back one afternoon to see Crowley. I was drawn by an irresistible curiosity. I did not believe in magic, particularly not in Crowley's kind, and I'm not sure that I yet do, though Dr. Carrington and Somerset Maugham (who wrote a book about Crowley's magic) and many other authorities, better qualified than I, agree that this man was and is possessed of powers for which no rational explanation has yet been found. You can interpret the events as you please, calling it hypnotism, charlatan-ism, animal magnetism, as you like.

I shall merely resound them. They are extraordinary enough in themselves.

Crowley's big studio was on the main floor, first door in the hall to the right. The street door was opened by a porter. I knocked at Crowley's own door. His voice said, "Who is it?" I told him. The voice said "Come in."

The door yielded to the simple turn of the knob. You have heard people say they "could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyes." The phrase doesn't begin to describe my amazement. You would find it difficult to believe now—this thing that I am going to tell you—except that the extraordinary thing is a matter of record, with first-hand evidence and documentary proofs which can be produced—known to at least a hundred reputable people in New York beside myself.

Lea, the "Dead Soul," was kneeling in the center of a chalked circle, in the middle of the floor. She was bare-footed, like a penitent nun, clad only in a loose robe drawn back over her shoulders, and Aleister Crowley was bending over her—burning magical symbols on her chest with the point of a heated dagger!



The Branding of Lea, "the Dead Soul," by Crowley, Who Burned His Magical Symbols on Her Chest with the Point of a Heated Dagger.

Why didn't I interfere? Why didn't I call for the police? I can explain in a few sentences. The big windows of the apartment gaze directly on the corner of Washington Square. People were passing continually. Just outside the unlocked door was the hall, with the porter on duty. Other people could be heard moving in the house. The girl was not bound, not held in any physical way. If she had wanted the scene interfered with she could have stopped it by raising her voice—once.

I looked at her face. She was not drugged. She was not in a stupor. She was obviously in pain. But it was equally obvious that she was—where she wanted to be. An amazing and unheard-of thing in such surroundings—in the New York of the twentieth century. But there it was. And it was her affair and his. And on her face, in addition to the pain, was written—a sort of spiritual ecstasy that you see in old paintings of martyred saints. I haven't seen many happy faces in this world. I did not interfere.

As for Aleister Crowley, he was calm and matter-of-fact as if I had dropped in and found him engaged in his usual occupation of writing. "I shall be finished in about ten minutes more," he said, "and then, if you wish—with the lady's permission, while she rests—we'll have a game of chess."

I sat down and watched. As carefully and gently as a surgeon, he continued the amazing operation—of branding a free woman with a heated dagger point, branding her with her own consent, free-will and co-operation.

He had almost finished tracing a double circle about three inches in diameter, and in the center of this he was now tracing a magical symbol shaped something like a cross.

The girl must have suffered intense pain, but she did not make a single murmur until it was finished. Then, with his help, she got to her feet and retired to an adjoining room.

I don't remember much about the chess game that followed, except that Crowley gave me a knight and rook and beat me with ease. He was imperturbably calm and correct—the Englishman about his own affairs in his own house—and though I wanted to ask a thousand questions I asked none.

I remember that at the end of an hour Lea emerged, calm, smiling, apparently perfectly contented with life; talked interestingly on more or less ordinary subjects, and said when I left, as if her permanent union with Crowley was a matter of course:

"I hope you'll drop in often to see us again."

I did see them "often again" over a period of more than three years. They have never been separated—they are not separated now.

Of how Aleister Crowley completely succeeded in awakening Lea, "The Dead Soul" with the aid of his magical formulas—and a dog-whip—of how he enshrined her as "The Scarlet Woman," the new high priestess of his secret cult, which they are practicing today in Sicily—and of his amazing battle with Leon Kennedy, Dutch artist and mystic, to gain control of the "spirit" of a beautiful red-haired girl named "Kitty Reilly"—I shall tell you in the next chapter.

(To Be Continued)