

**THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR SUN
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
8 APRIL 1923**

**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 II.



A Characteristic Study of Aleister Crowley, Poet,
Mystic and High Priest of the Strange New Love Cult

Last week I told you how Aleister Crowley—either by black magic or by the force of his amazing personality, whichever you choose to believe—conquered Lea Hirsig, "The Dead Soul." and of how he began the process of transforming her into "The Scarlet Woman."

Since then I had a letter from Lea—dated London—but before telling you what it contained, I want to explain what Crowley meant by his phrase "Scarlet Woman" which keeps bobbing up again and again in his mystical writings.

In current language, it means simply "bad woman," but it was not so that Crowley used it. The phrase is borrowed from the Bible, where it first occurs as "The Scarlet Woman of Babylon"; it was used by the old prophets as the symbol of Paganism. And Crowley, whose cult was partly a revival of Pagan ceremonies and mysteries, wanted to make Lea his new high priestess.

Lea's family and friends believed that Crowley, with this girl in his clutches, would "destroy her, body and soul," and then cast her aside. But life has a curious way of providing unexpected denouements, and Crowley himself was such a baffling mixture of good and evil that it was never safe to predict his actions.

I was not greatly surprised, therefore, at the contents of Lea's letter, just received from London.

"I am happier than I ever dared to hope," she writes. "We are resting after work. It is good to work, and it is good to rest after work well done. I have written in longhand from A.C.'s dictation more than 150,000 words in a little less than a month on his new novel (this is the novel that is making a bigger sensation in England to-day than 'Jurgen' made in America and presently we are returning to Cefalu."

With this letter before me, I am thinking back to the first months of Lea's association with Crowley in New York and of the ordeals she went through to achieve her "happiness." I saw them intimately and often in those days. I was interested—tremendously—in the extraordinary drama their life presented. And I am thinking now of the beautiful things that Crowley said to her and of the appalling and dreadful things he did to her—to "awaken her dead soul."

One night I went to Crowley's studio, on the northeast corner of Washington Square. This time it was Lea who called "Come in" when I tapped on the door.

She was lying like a queen or princess of the Arabian Nights on a great low divan covered with cloth-of-gold—dressed in a robe of purple silk, ensconced amid luxurious pillows, her little white feet encased in slippers of scarlet vair.

Crowley, who paid not the slightest heed to my entrance, was squatting, cross-legged on the hard floor, with folded arms, like a Thibetan Llama or some old Asiatic god. He was intoning to Lea, with closed eyes, a part of the love canticle from one of his own mystical rituals. His voice, low and vibrant, came as from a man speaking in a dream.

"—but to love is better than all things.

"If under the night stars of the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me, invoking me with a pure heart, and the serpent flame therein, thou shalt come to my bosom.

"For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all; but whoso

gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour.

"But always in the love of me and so ye shall come to my joy.

"Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous, I who am all pleasure and purple, and drunkenness of the innermost sense, desire you.

"Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendor within you—"

More of this—in a silence unbroken save for the rise and fall of the mystic's voice—and I went away feeling as if I had intruded in a temple.

But do not get the idea that I am going to paint Aleister Crowley on these pages as a saint. I am not moralizing. I am writing these things neither as a defence nor as a denunciation. I am trying to depict the man as he is—giving you the good and bad with equal frankness—and I want to tell you that by any standard of morality you yourself may choose to apply, you will find as you read on that he was the most amazing mixture of good and bad that has ever existed in human form. I shall tell you things about him that will force your admiration—and I shall tell you things that will strike you, if you are normal, with recoiling repugnance.

As you were reading just now of Crowley's mystical adoration of Lea—of Lea lapped in luxury and worshipped as a queen—you may have thought, "Well, after all, what romantic girl might not be intrigued and pleased by such wooing?"

But wait. Another afternoon, within a week, I returned to Crowley's studio. This time the door was locked. But he let me in. In the center of the room was an enormous easel, so heavy and massive that it was almost a scaffold. And bound to this easel, facing it, was Lea—fastened by the wrists and ankles, her arms outstretched like a woman crucified, her dress stripped from her shoulders, her white flesh criss-crossed with red stripes.

Seeing my amazement, Crowley greeted me with a diabolical grin and tossed a broken dogwhip into the corner. "I have been awakening the Dead Soul," he explained cheerfully. "She doesn't object. If you are troubled with chivalrous scruples you can ask her. She wouldn't thank you if you tried to interfere. Permit me to explain that the efficacy of pain as a spiritual stimulus is a subject misunderstood and neglected by the modern woman. Sit down."

From Lea, all this time, not a word, not a sob, not a plaint. "She is engaged in holy meditation," Crowley continued. "Our conversation will not disturb her."

And while Lea stood there, still bound, like a picture of some unwritten martyr, Crowley calmly made me a learned discourse, which I wish I could reproduce, of the importance of asceticism and whipping and fasting and voluntary torture and mortification of the flesh as practiced by holy men and women and early church fathers of the middle ages.

If I convey the idea that Crowley, at this period of his extraordinary career in America, was occupying himself solely with the domination of one woman, I am giving you a wrong picture of his character. The man's dynamic energy was terrific. He was writing from five to seven thousand words per day on the manuscript of the "Equinox" volume which was later to involve A. W. Ryerson, the Detroit publisher, his wife and half a dozen other beautiful Western women in the "O. T. O." scandal, which has not yet reached its end; he was beginning to paint the pictures which later caused an unforgettable sensation and another scandal still later when they were exhibited at the Liberal Club; he was conducting mystical séances which were arousing the serious interest of some of America's leading physic authorities; and he was bringing under his influence, in one way or another, many women, some of whom were destined later to figure in his strange career.

The most interesting of these was Kitty Reilly, a tall New York girl, whom Arnold Genthe, a judge of beauty, regarded as one of the most extraordinary types he had ever seen—a girl of about twenty-two, with an enormous mass of flaming red hair, sea-green eyes, and a disdainfully curved mouth that suggested the women of the Burne-Jones and Rossetti paintings.



Miss Katherine Reilly Presented an Extraordinary Type of Beauty with Her Flaming Red Hair and Sea-Green Eyes. It was Love of Her That Led to the Terrific Fight Between Aleister Crowley and the Famous Dutch Artist, Leon Kennedy.

She was in love with Leon Kennedy, a Dutch artist, whose fantastic paintings are well known among modernists in Paris and New York. Kennedy was also a mystic, but of a totally different type from Crowley. Crowley believed that supreme spiritual exaltation could be obtained by either extreme of living—that is, through

drugs, orgies, excesses and debaucheries—or by fastings, mutilations and mortification of the flesh. Kennedy on the other hand, believed there was only one “way”—complete subjugation of the physical senses and living by the spirit alone. Consequently he wanted Kitty Reilly, who was engaged to him to consent to a marriage which would be a “spiritual union” only. He admired Crowley as a “great mystic,” but deplored his “wickedness.”



Leon Engers Kennedy, Who Loved Kitty Reilly, Fought Crowley on Her Account, and Afterward Married Her.

Kitty and Kennedy both frequented Crowley’s studio to listen to his brilliant talk. No drama would ever have come of their association if Kennedy hadn’t suddenly become interested in “psychochromes” (soul-paintings). He had delved deep into occultism and believed that he had won the art of seeing people’s “auras,” the mysterious, luminous, colored emanations which are said to radiate visibly from every human being like the piebald aereoles of the saints in sacred art. Science, by-the-way, is inclined to believe in these emanations but doubts that they can be detected by any human being. Kennedy, however, thought he could see them plainly as the nose on your face. And so, he set about doing the portrait of Kitty’s soul—the result with curves and swirls photographically reproduced on this page. Unfortunately the colors cannot be reproduced, for it is the colors that were most important. According to the mystics, blue stands for spirituality, yellow for intellectuality, purple for perfection, and red for passion.

Aleister Crowley watched the progress of this painting with sardonic interest, and commented on it with a biting wit—insisting that Kennedy was painting a picture not of Kitty, but of a creature that existed only in his own one-sided imagination.



Leon Enger's Remarkable Painting Which He Called "The Portrait of Kitty Reilly's Soul." It Was Painted in Pale Blues, Yellows and Purples.

About this time, with the picture two-thirds completed, Kitty and Kennedy, with a crowd of half a dozen other people, were in Crowley's studio on night, listening to him talk. It was impersonal conversation on the history of Egyptian religion—the kind of stuff you would expect to hear from some professor of archaeology, but Crowley managed to make it human and fascinating.

Kitty, along with the rest, became absorbed and interested. Her eyes were glued on Crowley's face. Suddenly Kennedy interrupted to cry out:

"My God, her aura is turning red!"

"It's always red, you fool!" retorted Crowley.

Kennedy buried his face in his hands. Kitty, a little heartless toward her fiancé, and perhaps a little tired of his "spiritual adoration," beamed on Crowley, and seemed pleased at having suddenly become the center of interest.

Crowley, who was a master of the unexpected, whatever else you may say of him, turned to Kennedy.

"My son, you have always regarded me as a wicked man. Now I, Baphomet, The Beast, am going to give you some good advice. And it will be precisely the advice you would get from your old-fashioned Methodist family preacher in Georgia—that is, if you happened to be in Georgia and to be a Methodist.

"Kitty loves you. It is true that in loving you she loves a simpleton, but that is her affair. Also you love her. She is a woman

and you are a man. Your talk of 'purely spiritual unions' is silly rot. Keep it up and you'll lose her. Besides, it's human. Here is my advice: Take Kitty to the nearest church and marry her—unless she prefers a home wedding. Go on a long honeymoon with her—to Holland. Kitty will make a magnificent mother. After you have had a child or two—then do all the soul-paintings of her you want. Paint her in blues and greens and all the colors of the rainbow. Paint her as a purple cow, if it pleases you. But make her happy first."

Kennedy answered:

"A. C., I think, for once, that you mean well, but you do not understand. Kitty is a pure spiritual soul—see, now! Her aura is already becoming blue again—"

"You're hopeless!" cried Crowley. "But, no! If common sense is no good, I'll try another way! You, with your crazy colors! Pale blue, is she? Well, in spite of you, I'll do you the favor of turning her red for you—permanently—with the Mark of the Beast!"

And before anyone had divined his intent, Crowley leaped at Kitty and sank his teeth in her neck! It was quicker than the leap and bite of a dog or wolf—and over more suddenly. I don't think he touched her at all with his hands. Crowley was back in his chair, grinning like a devil. Kitty, after one sharp scam—of rage as much as pain—was holding her handkerchief to her throat.

"My God, this is terrible!" cried Kennedy, busy helping Kitty staunch the slight flow of blood, but not making the slightest attempt to retaliate against the man who had bitten her.

Kitty, not really badly injured, was denouncing Crowley in the most violent language a well-bred girl could think of. Beast and swine and mad dog were some of the epithets she hurled at him. It required no "mystic" to see that Kitty's aura was "red" at that moment. She was as angry as only a red-haired woman can get.

Crowley, not a whit disturbed and evidently hugely enjoying the scene he had made, still grinned as he replied:

"My dear, you are ungrateful. It was all for your good, I assure you. The act required great self-sacrifice on my part. I do not care for human flesh as a diet."

The climax of this amazing drama over the "spiritual aura" of Kitty Reilly (after all, it was but a minor scene in the bigger melodrama of Crowley's activities in America) came one night in my own apartment, which was then at No. 23 Christopher street.

Kitty and Kennedy had dropped in. She was watching us at a game of chess. The doorbell rang. It was Crowley.

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law," he said with pompous solemnity, and added, with a grin at Kennedy, "but that implies you must have brains enough to know what you really wish."

"I shall do what I want—and it's this," replied Kennedy, trembling with rage. "I want you to let Kitty alone. If you ever so much as touch her or speak to her again I'll break every bone in your body."

Crowley sat down, Kennedy, white with anger, made a pretense of going on with the chess game. Crowley was smoking a cigarette. He made it glow red and, quick as a cat, jammed it inside Kennedy's collar, saying, "All you need is stirring up."

Kennedy clawed at his neck until he had ripped open the collar, and then leaped like a wild animal on Crowley. They were about equally matched and rolled over and over the floor, pounding and choking each other. Over went my center-table, down crashed a mirror, and the struggle ended, with my interference, in a dead-lock.



They went apparently still, hating each other. But they were a strange crew. And you'll be surprised at the sequel. Kennedy finally took Crowley's advice—and thanked him for it. Kennedy and Kitty were happily married—a real marriage. They went to Holland, and just the other day I had a picture postcard from them, sending "kindest regard to everybody."

In the next chapter I shall go more seriously into the "black magic" which Crowley practiced here.

(To Be Continued)