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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 III.

Through the tangled and obscure details of the Ryerson divorce scandal in Detroit, which is just now being aired in the Michigan courts, the name of Aleister Crowley is sparking from day to day—with little scraps of evidence, like lurid lightning flashes, that promise amazing revelations—only to plunge the whole affair into deeper blackness and mystery than before.

It is developing that Albert W. Ryerson, rich publisher and owner of a big office building and a magnificent home, grew interested in Crowley's cults, publishing one of the volumes of Crowley's "Equinox," and became a member, according to his friends, of the "O. T. O." which has many secret lodges in America and Europe.



Wealthy Albert W. Ryerson, of Detroit, Who, His Young Wife Charges, Tried to Convert Her to the "O. T. O." One of Crowley's Weird Love Cults. She is Suing Ryerson, Who Is Fifty-two Years Old, for Divorce, as a Result.

Ryerson's first wife, Vida Marsh Ryerson, filed a divorce suit against him on the ground that he was practicing the "Do what thou wilt" code of morality said to include "free love."

Then, according to the court evidence, Ryerson found himself a second wife, Bertha Bruce Ryerson, a "bobbed-haired, fiery beauty," who was "to become the priestess of the cult," and who admitted on the witness stand that she was known to the initiates as "Bruce of the O. T. O." Ryerson became enraged as her, and they separated when he discovered the extent to which she had fallen under the influence of Crowley's philosophies.

And now, to-day, a third wife, Mazie Mitchell Ryerson, is denouncing Ryerson and seeking to divorce him, on the charge that he was practicing Crowley's wicked rites and sought to convert her to them.

Other prominent Detroit people have become involved. Other divorce suits, it is said, are pending. I shall tell more of this amazing tangle later—and a strange story it is, surpassing the most extraordinary plot ever read in fiction.



Crowley and Lea Hirsig, Known as the "Dead Soul," Whom He "Converted," by His Devil-Worshipping Practices, Into His "High Priestess." The Scrawled Inscription Is Part of a Letter in Crowley's Own Handwriting, and Refers to Him as "the Beast" and to Miss Hirsig as "the Scarlet Woman."

But now I want to expose and reveal the deeper and bigger mystery that lies behind it—"the mystery behind the mystery," which has only been hinted at in the court proceedings now going on—the true nature of the secret cult which started the Detroit scandal and the strange rites and ceremonials which have been used by Aleister Crowley to gain the mysterious world-wide power and influence he wields as supreme head of the modern "Devil Worshipers."

I have told you that when I came to this phase of Crowley's unbelievable character I would produce the evidence of reputable and well-known witnesses to substantiate the extraordinary facts.

One of these witnesses was in New York recently—Harry Kemp, poet and novelist—who has actually attended and seen with his own eyes one of the Satanist ceremonials, the nature of which has only been hinted at in a veiled way in the Detroit evidence.



Harry Kemp, the "Tramp Poet," Who Says His Moral Sense Was Outraged When He Witnessed Crowley's "Black Mass." From a Photograph Recently Taken in Paris.

Harry Kemp is on record as saying, "What I tell is so incredible that I shall be laughed at and called a liar—by those who do not know. But I wish to call attention to the fact that I give the name and address of Aleister Crowley, and that I am willing to make affidavit that everything I say is true."

"Crowley himself invited me to witness this ceremonial.

"In answer to my knock, the door was opened by a girl in a straight black robe. Entering, I found myself in a large, high-ceilinged studio, the atmosphere of which was colored a deep blue with the reek of peculiar-smelling incense. The place was divided with high-hung black curtains into three separate rooms.

"In the first room stood row on row of books bound in black and marked on their backs with queer, distorted crosses wrought in silver. The second room was fitted up with divans and literally carpeted with multitudes of cushions tossed here and yon. In the third and larger room stood a tall, perpendicular canopy, under which the high priest (Crowley) sat during the celebration of the 'Black Mass.'

"Directly in front of it, on a floor tessellated in mosaics with parti-colored patterns and marked with cabalistic signs, stood the 'altar,' a black pedestal, to the top of which was affixed a golden circle. Across the latter lay a golden serpent, as if arrested in the act of crawling.

"I heard someone behind a curtain playing a weird, Chinese-like air on some sort of stringed instrument. The 'feel' of the whole place was decidedly uncanny.

"After the high priest of the Satanists had himself shown me about, we withdrew to the library, which was then inspected.

"In it seemed to be gathered all the mad books of the world—rituals of obscure sects, huge tomes on magic, white and black—and all the mystics were there—Bachman, Paracelsus, Swedenborg included.

"We sat before the fire, the high priest and I. He talked of magic and mysticism—and he knew what he was talking about.

"Then I saw the 'Black Mass.' I had arrived before the appointed time and was now shown to a seat near one of the black curtains and well in the background.

"One by one the worshipers entered. They were mostly women of the aristocratic type. Their delicate fingers, adorned with costly rigs; their rustling silks, the indefinable elegance of their carriage attested to their station in life.

"Everybody wore a black domino with a hook which concealed the upper part of the face, making identification impossible.

"Hung with black velvet curtains, the place had a decidedly sepulchral aspect. There was a fitful light, furnished by a single candlestick having seven branches.

"Suddenly the flame went out and the place was filled with subterranean noises like the sound of a violent wind moving innumerable leaves. Then came the slow, monotonous chant of the high priest:

"There is no Good; Evil itself is Good. Blessed be the Principle of Evil! All Hail, Prince of the World, to whom even God himself has given dominion!"



"A sound as of bleating filled the pauses of these blasphemous utterances. Gradually the darkness lightened to a gray gloom—the very ghost of light—and moving shapes became distinguishable.

"I could hardly believe my eyes as I observed what followed.

"Amid floating clouds of nauseating incense a great crystal sphere rose slowly from the floor, and from it ascended a shape like a white puff of cloud. It wafted off, alighting on the floor, and assumed the form of a diminutive nude black being. Another cloud rose from the globe, and yet another, to materialize in the same manner. These were supposed to be the incarnations of evil spirits. They bleated and capered about in absolute nudity, weaving a grotesque dance in the gloom to the music of a hidden drum and flute.

"At this juncture a woman cried to be taken out and went into hysterics. Tearing off her mask, she revealed the fair face of a girl of the pure-blooded type of Anglo-Saxon beauty. She was quickly led away, and the rites were scarcely interrupted, so intent were the worshipers on their observances.

"They began to moan and sway. The candles became lit again of their own volition. Aleister Crowley, in the role of the high priest, stepped forward to the altar, from which he took a short, curiously shaped knife. He tore open his robe at the chest. His eyes were bloodshot and stony and fixed in their sockets, as if the man had gone into a trance. His chanting grew more and more frenzied. He began gashing his breast with the knife, and now he grew calmer. His disciples came forward one by one, and he made a mystic mark in blood on each of their foreheads as they knelt.

"After this the affair rapidly degenerated into an indescribable orgy. Men and women danced about leaping and swaying to the whining of infernal and discordant music. They sang obscene words set to hymn tunes and gibbered unintelligible jargon. Women tore their bodices, some partially disrobed and one fair worshiper, snatching the high priest's dagger from a small table, slashed herself across the chest. At this all seemed to grow madder than ever. I repeat, I could scarcely believe my eyes. All modern civilization, all the moral ideas taught for centuries, were thrown to the winds. All I desired was to escape unobserved."

I quote Harry Kemp because his sworn corroboration will help you to believe the even more startling revelations I have to make about this hidden sect, which even now—at the very moment you are reading this—still has its worshipers and its secret "temples" scattered through many cities in America.

More startling? Yes! Because Harry Kemp did not see the real "Black Mass"—the amazing, prescribed and uniform secret ritual which is the central "key" ceremonial of the Devil-Worshipers the world over—and which, until now, has never been accurately described in a newspaper. Various accounts have appeared in print from time to time purporting to describe the ritual of the unholy ceremony, but they fall far short of the truth.

I have seen the real "Black Mass." I know what I am writing about—for I have also studied its origins. And the "Black Mass" is an actual ceremonial, as devoutly believed in by its participants as any form of devotion. In the early Middle Ages a strange sect called the Manicheans branched off from an orthodox Christian church. They believed that Satan was the equal of God—that God and Satan were two separate, equal beings, who ruled together over the universe, and that both had to be propitiated. They spoke of God and Satan as two equals, making wagers, taunting each other, and discussing the fate of poor human beings, just as two equal hereditary kings, for a moment friendly, would discuss their antagonistic interests. Therefore, the Manicheans argued that in order to be on the safe side it was best to worship both. And so they did. They were denounced, of course, as heretics, but the strange cult has survived—in the modern Devil-Worshipers.

In order to perform a real "Black Mass" three things are absolutely necessary.

1. A renegade priest who has actually been ordained in the church.

2. A maiden "pure in mind and heart and body."

3. A consecrated wafer.

Aleister Crowley believed that he was a priest, because he believed that he was a reincarnation of Eliphas Levi, the Abbe Constant, an able scholar of the church, who made an elaborate study of magic.

The girl was selected from the "high priestesses."

Imagine a large studio, hung with black curtains to represent a chapel. Dim lights. The "worshippers," men and women in black hoods, are seated as solemnly and quietly, on benches, as if they were in a real church. Their attitude is devout. Presently they kneel.

The "altar," on an elevated platform at the end of the room, is hidden by a thick veil. Slow music, of a distinctly religious tone, is wafted from muted violins.

The "priest" enters slowly from a side door. He is garbed precisely like those you have seen, except that the cross on his surplice has given place to a different symbol. He is followed by the "high priestess," who serves as his acolyte. She is barefooted, bareheaded, with her hair hanging down over her shoulders, garbed only in a robe of scarlet. She swings a censer, in which incense is burning, while the "priest" bows before the veiled "altar."

Then the "priest" begins to recite a Latin ritual, the form of which, it is said, has been handed down secretly for hundreds of years. The word "Lucifer" is substituted for "God" and the word "Evil" is substituted for "Good."

The worshipers kneel at the beginning of the invocation, and the curtains of the "altar" are drawn aside to an accompaniment of tinkling bells and swinging censers.

In the background of the "altar" and at either side are flickering candles in seven-branched candelabra and single candlesticks. Immediately behind the "altar" proper is a distorted silver cross.

The "altar" itself is a wooden block about four feet high and three feet across the top, covered with black velvet.

Lying upon this "altar" is the girl nude.

Her head thrown backward at right angles to the body, her arms and streaming blonde hair hang perpendicularly along the right side of the block; and her lower limbs, bent at right angles at the knees, hang down the left side—in such a way that her whole body makes a sort of cover for the "altar," forming the top and two sides of a rectangle.

She lies motionless as a statue, absolutely white in the dim light, like a figure cut out of marble.

On her chest is a broad-based golden chalice or cup containing the wine—unholy travesty.

The girl herself is delicately formed, of slender sculptural outline—apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age. Except for her slight breathing I can imagine she is made of wax or stone. I do not know who she is. Her features are only dimly discernible, but I do not think that I have ever seen her before—or that I shall ever see her afterward.

As if in a trance, she continues to lie motionless for a half hour, while the "priest" intones his profane ritual, the violins still playing their muted, religious music, the "worshipers" joining in the litanies and responses.

But the litany is a prayer to Satan to "redeem us from virtue."

At the culmination of the "Black Mass" the "priest" lifts the cup from the living "altar," drinks of the wine, and sprinkles a little of it on the girl's body, where it gleams like tiny drops of blood on the white skin.

The girl lies motionless on the "altar," untouched by the "priest," throughout the ceremonial. The curtains are drawn and the abominable performance is ended.

This is the real "Black Mass." No "magic." No orgies. No saturnalias. Unholy, blasphemous, but quiet and solemn.

The orgy which Harry Kemp witnessed, and at which I was not present, was a different sort of ceremonial. The only part of his evidence which I have found difficult to reconcile with the facts—in the light of my long and intimate knowledge of Crowley and his priestess—is his description of the actual materialization of the dancing figures of evil spirits that came out of the smoke.

I have seen Crowley try to do that—and fail. Perhaps he didn't expect to succeed. One never knew when the real mystic ended and the charlatan began. He sincerely believed that he was able to invoke demons and spirits and actually to talk with them and make them do his bidding—but he declared to me that he had never been able to see or touch them—to make them physically visible. I asked him outright about the materializations which Harry Kemp described, and Crowley admitted to me that they were illusions—partly explained by the hypnosis of the spectators and partly by tricks which Crowley had learned during his long stay in India.

But that Crowley had, and has to-day, powers of some kind which he is able to command and use—however rationally you may choose to explain them—is a fact admitted both by his followers and his enemies.

In the next chapter I shall tell how the influence of Aleister Crowley began to spread in America; how he suddenly began to

paint weird and amazing "spirit-inspired" pictures; how he was hailed by his disciples as a "second Gauguin"; how the big exhibit of these paintings at the Liberal Club in New York broke up in a dreadful riot, and how the pictures were torn from the walls when it was discovered that they all had a "terribly wicked, hidden meaning."

(To Be Continued)