

DAILY TELEGRAPH
25 November 1910

Scottish Divorce Suit.
The MacGregor Tartan.

Lord Salveson heard evidence in the Court of Session, Edinburgh, yesterday, in an undefended action of divorce at the instance of Rose Edith Kelly, or Skerrett, or Crowley, residing at the vicarage, Camberwell, against her husband, Alister [sic] Crowley, formerly called Edward Alexander Crowley, of Boleskine, Foyers, Inverness-shire, and residing at 21 Warwick-road, Earl's-court.

The pursuer, aged 35, examined by Mr. Jameson, said she was the daughter of the Rev. F. F. Kelly, vicar of Camberwell. She was married in 1897 to Captain Frederick Thomas Skerrett, who died in August, 1899. In 1902 she was staying in Paris with her brother, Mr. Gerald Kelly, an artist, and there made the acquaintance of the defender.

Was he then calling himself Alister Crowley?—No he was then Count Skerrett. I knew, however, his real name was Alexander Edward Crowley. Later he called himself Macgregor in order to identify himself with Scotland.

In July, 1903, she went to Strathpeffer, and while there she met Mr. Crowley. He was then calling himself Alister Crowley Macgregor. She knew he bought Boleskine before 1900, and that his home was there—the only home he ever had. He was much attached to Scotland, and tried to identify himself with it as much as possible. He used to wear the kilt and all that sort of thing, and always gave himself out as a Scotsman. At Strathpeffer on Aug. 11 he asked her to marry him, and she consented. They were married next day in Scottish fashion, because he told her he was a Scotsman. In the marriage certificate he gave his name as Macgregor, but his father's name was given as Edward Crowley. After the marriage they went to stay at Boleskine, which was a large house with two or three farms on the property. Shortly after the marriage the defender assumed the name of Lord Boleskine. That was, he said, because people in Scotland took the names of their property.

Counsel: I take it he is a little eccentric?—Oh, yes.

A FRIEND'S CHILD

In July 1904, a child was born, who died twenty-one months later. For a year they travelled about in the East together, and in 1906 she and her husband were at Hong Kong. Her husband left her there to return home to America, telling her to go straight home. She was very annoyed at being left in that condition. She came back to England and joined her father in June, 1906. At her father's house a baby was born in September, 1906, and she was suing for custody of that child.

They then lived at Chislehurst for two years, and in March, 1908, she went to stay at Warwick-road, where the house was taken in her name, the defender wishing to avoid responsibility for the rent, as he was becoming a little impecunious. They stayed there until the summer of this year, and she left because her husband had been treating her cruelly. He had been frequently bruising her. She left him on July 21. On Aug. 5 she learned from the charwoman that her husband had a woman staying with him the previous night. Some time before the defender had asked her to take care of a child for one of his most intimate friends, and from what he said she thought it was a friend's child. She, however, accidentally opened a letter addressed to the defender, which gave the address of the mother a Miss Zwee, and the pursuer went to see her. She learned that the defender was the father of the child, and she thereupon raised that action.

Replying to Lord Salvesen, witness said Boleskine still belonged to the defender, but it was left for five years. Later she stated that it was bonded.

What is your nationality?—My father says he is Irish. I was born in England.

Witness added that she had seen Miss Zwee, and she had seen the child at King's-cross-mansions. The defendant was so interested in the child that he asked her to go to Scotland with it and take her own also, but she did not go. Miss Danby of Fulham, a charwoman, stated that she stayed the night at 21, Warwick-road. After Mrs. Crowley left, in order to finish some work, the defender, about midnight, on Aug. 4, rang for two cups of tea, which witness took up to the library. There she saw a short and dark woman, who was gaily dressed, and wore a lot of jewellery.

Witness heard a lot of laughter during the night, and in the morning took up two cups of tea to the defender and his companion.

Charles Hardie, of Chelson, chauffeur, said Miss Zweek, who was a friend of his wife, boarded with them. The defender, whose portrait he identified, frequently visited her.

Lord Salvesen (looking at the defender's photograph): He looks as if he belonged to the stage.

Counsel: He is a literary character; he rather affects the artistic.

CURIOUS IDEAS.

Gerald Festus Kelly, artist, said he was the brother of the pursuer. He became acquainted with Alister Crowley in Cambridge during the witness's first term, about August, 1897. They were both undergraduates. Since then they had been intimately acquainted. The year after leaving Cambridge he went to Paris to study art, and the defender was a frequent visitor at his studio, where he met witness's sister. The defender was very fond of having Scottish blood in his veins, as he thought, and in 1900 or 1901 he bought Boleskine to be his permanent home. He had curious ideas of how to fit up the house. He had a room covered with mirrors, which he called a temple. He was a Cabalist, and studied ancient MSS. In London he lived in hotels and Boleskine was the only home he had.

When he got to Boleskine he took the name of Macgregor, to identify himself with Scotland. While he was travelling abroad the defender sometimes signed himself Crowley and sometimes Macgregor. He changed his name from Alexander to Alister because it was Scottish, but he retained the name of Alister Crowley for literary work. The defender got some mark of distinction from an Indian chief, and he announced his intention of calling himself "Lord Boleskine."

Mr. Jameson: That is the history of how he became a peer?—In every way he tried to identify himself with Scotland.

He took his title from Scotland, and Boleskine is a good estate?—Oh, yes.

There is a good deal of land about it? Yes; but it is perpendicular most of it (Laughter.)

Witness said Boleskine was a big house, and the defender's many objects of art were stored in it. He added that when he went to Strathpeffer in 1903 the defender was appearing in complete Highland costume, and the Macgregor tartan was very bright.

Lord Salvesen: Personally, I never could get up my admiration for the Macgregor tartan from an artistic point of view, although its associations were romantic.

Replying to his lordship, witness said he knew very little about the defender's people—the defender was very secretive. Witness believed that his father had a lot of money. He did not know what Boleskine cost—he should think about £4,000. From a friend he learned that the place was not worth what was paid for it. He was a very stupid man about money affairs. The defender was a great traveller and great climber.

Lord Salvesen: You say he is a writer—does he make anything by it?—Certainly not.

Lord Salvesen thought the domicile had become Scottish whatever it was originally, and seeing also that the marriage took place in Scotland, he thought there was a sufficient ground for granting a decree. Accordingly his lordship granted a divorce with custody of the child to the pursuer, with aliment at the rate of £1 per week.