

UNKNOWN
26 April 1911

KING'S BENCH DIVISION.

Before Mr. Justice SCRUTTON
and a Common Jury.

"AN AMAZING SECT"

The association of his name with a man against whom allegations were made in a series of articles headed, "An Amazing Sect," was the ground of an action for damages for libel brought by Mr. George Cecil Jones, consulting chemist, against the publishers of *The Looking Glass* (The Looking Glass Publishing Company), Mr. West de Wend Fenton, the editor, and Messrs. Love and Malcolmson (Ltd.), the printers. Defendants deemed that the words complained of were capable of bearing the defamatory meaning alleged, or any defamatory meaning; further, that in their ordinary signification the words were true in substance and in fact, and is so far as they were expressions of opinion were fair and bona-fide comment on matters of public interest.

Mr. Simmons (instructed by Bullock and Co.) was counsel for plaintiff. The defendant publishing company were represented by Mr. Schiller (instructed by Mr. Gottlieb); Mr. Peerton appeared in person; and Mr. Rowlands (instructed by Messrs. White and Leonard) was for the printers.

In opening plaintiff's case, Mr. Simmons said the libel was of so serious a character that if a tithe of it were true his client was not fit to associate with human beings. It was a libel accusing him on immorality of a most revolting description. Plaintiff who is 38 years of age, having a wife and two children, carried on business as consulting and analytical chemist, at 42, Great Tower-street. He was professionally educated at an institution now known at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, and after holding several important appointments, established himself in his own business. He became a friend of Mr. Aleister Crowley, about whom defendants published a series of articles charging him with immorality. The articles commenced on Oct. 29, 1910, and on Nov. 26 there was a further

article, in which, in one sentence, defendants linked plaintiff with practices which they suggested were carried on by Crowley. Counsel proceeded to quote from this article, which alleged that Mr. Crowley put himself forward as a High Priest of a sect, and the words. "By their friends ye shall know them," were used. The article proceeded:

In 1898 Crowley became a member of the Rosicrucian Order, a very ancient association, whose principal object is the study of the mystic philosophy of ancient religions, and which possesses a vast amount of traditional lore on this and kindred subjects, while requiring from its members due respect and honour for religious ideas, as well as good moral character. Two of Crowley's friends and introducers are still associated with him—one the rascally sham Buddhist monk, Allan Bennett, whose imposture was shown up in *Truth* some years ago; the other a person of the name of George Cecil Jones, who was for some time employed at Basingstoke in metallurgy, but of late has had some sort of small merchant's business in the City. . .

Counsel proceeded to read articles published in *The Looking Glass*, which it was alleged, charged Crowley with immoral behaviour. Among other things written of him were:

His aliases would grate an Old Bailey criminal. He called himself MacGregor with an ignorance so astounding of the history of that name as to tempt one to believe that he had never read the works of Walter Scott. Like his worthy associate, Bennett, he endeavoured to use it for the purposes of advertisement. Count Svareff, Count Skellatt, Edward Aleister, Lord Boleskine, Baron Rosencreutz, are a few of the aliases under which he has figured from time to time. . . In 1908 he began to show up in true colours. Being sent from Paris to London on certain matters connected with the Order, he enormously exceeded his instructions, and stole certain property of the Order, which he took up with him to Boleskine. . . He was formerly expelled from the Rosicrucian

Order as a man of evil character and acts, and he was forced to retract a libel which he circulated about the head of this Order. . . . Last year he went down to Cambridge and started *some sort* of rites there, in which he endeavoured to indulge the undergraduates to join. The authorities, however, received a timely warning, and Crowley made no headway. Many of his poems are of the most obscene and revolting character. Other statements about him we refrain from printing, as they are of too horrible a nature, but we think we have said enough to show that justified, and we challenge Crowley to disprove any one of the statements we have made.

Another article purported to describe the proceedings at a meeting of a sect which. it was alleged, Crowley was the head.

Plaintiff, giving evidence, said he first became acquainted with Crowley in 1898. During that time he had never known or seen anything wrong in connection with him—nothing, for instance, that would prevent him introducing Crowley to his wife. He was trustee for Crowley's child.

Mr. Simmons: Are you a member of this "amazing sect"?—No; I don't know that there is such a sect, except what I have read.

Are you a member of the Rosicrucian Order?—No.

Mr. Schiller: Have you ever applied to become a member of the Rosicrucian Order?—No. Except from having read seventeenth-century tracts, I know nothing about it.

Counsel produced a paper to which plaintiff admitted having appended his signature.

Is it not offering yourself as a candidate for an Order?—Yes; it is the "Order of the G. D. and the Outer."

Is that a degree of the Rosicrucian Order?—No. Since that date our signatures were obtained by fraud.

Do you represent Mr. Crowley as a person of unblemished character?—I have no reason to believe his character is worse than yours. (Laughter.)

Did you introduce Mr. Crowley to the Order G. D.?—I got him a form to sign.

Did Crowley call himself by other names during the time you knew him?—He has called himself by one or two other names.

Did he call himself Count Svareff?—Yes; he took a flat in Chancery-lane in that name.

Did he call himself Lord Boleskine?—Yes.

His Lordship: Why does he call himself by these odd names? Is he sane?—I think he would admit he isn't if he were here.

Counsel: Did he also call himself the Earl of Middlesex?—I never heard of it.

Mr. Fenton: If these statements about Crowley are not true, don't you think it strange that he has never taken any action against us?—I think it very strange.

Replying to further questions, plaintiff said he was still a friend of Crowley.

This was plaintiff's case.

Mr. Schiller, for the defendant company, said it was quite clear from letters that passed between the solicitors on each side that the quarrel was with Mr. Crowley, and not with Mr. Jones. Defendants submitted that they were entitled to comment in strong terms upon anyone who chose to consort with men like Crowley and Bennett. Although, as defendants alleged, plaintiff at first, through his solicitors, denied present association with Crowley he had taken an opposite line that day. He had not disassociated himself from Crowley—a man whom his wife had had to divorce, and who had been expelled from the order which he joined because he was regarded as a man not fit to remain in it.

Called by the name "MacGregor," a witness, after taking the oath, asked whether his full name was desired. It having been intimated that it was desired, witness announced a long list of Christian names and the surname "Mathers." "Mathers," he explained, amidst laughter. "dates from 1603, when the name of MacGregor was suppressed."

Counsel: You commonly go under the name of MacGregor?—Yes, from my great-great-grandfather, from whom I have a Franco-Scottish title.

You live in Paris?—Yes.

Are you known there as Comte MacGregor de Glenstrae?—Yes.

Witness said the plaintiff was a member of the Rosicrucian Order, and took the oath of admission to the second order.

Counsel: Does the Rosicrucian Order go back to considerable antiquity?—Yes.

Did it fall into abeyance, and did you revive it?—Yes, with two others.

Witness added that plaintiff introduced Crowley into the Rosicrucian Order. Crowley was subsequently expelled. He had

known Crowley to go under several different names.

"Once," said witness, "he called himself MacGregor, and with hardly any knowledge of the history of the name. (Laughter.) He couldn't even tell me what line of MacGregor he came from." (Much Laughter.)

The hearing was adjourned.