

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
27 April 1911

KING'S BENCH DIVISION.

**Before Mr. Justice SCRUTTON
and a Common Jury.**

**"AN AMAZING SECT"
SINGULAR LIBEL ACTION.**

Evidence which led to his lordship likening the proceedings to the trial in *Alice in Wonderland* was given at the resumed hearing of the action for damages for libel brought by Mr. George Cecil Jones, consulting chemist, of 43, Great Tower-street, against the publishers of *The Looking Glass* (the Looking Glass Publishing Company). Mr. West de Wend Fenton, the editor, and Messrs. Love and Malcomson (Ltd.), the printers.

The claim resulted in a verdict for defendants.

The alleged libel consisted of the association of Mr. Jones's name with Mr. Aleister Crowley, against whom serious charges were made in a series of articles entitled "An Amazing Sect." An article, published on Nov. 26, 1906, alleged that Crowley put himself forward as the high priest of a sect whose proceedings it purported to describe. Under the headline, "By their friends ye shall know them," was the passage:

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 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. . .

Defendants denied that the words complained of were capable of bearing the defamatory meaning; further, that in their ordinary signification the words were true in substance and in fact, and in so far as they were expressions of opinion were fair and bona fide comments on public matters of public interest.

Counsel for plaintiff was Mr. Simmons (instructed by Bullock and Co.). The defendant publishing company were represented by Mr. Schiller (instructed by Messrs. White and Leonard) was for the printers.

When the hearing was resumed there re-entered the witness-box the gentleman who had told the Court that he commonly went under the name of MacGregor, and was known in Paris, where he lived as Comte MacGregor de Glenstrae. Witness stated that Crowley was expelled from the Rosicrucian Order in 1905 because he had circulated libels against witness, the head of the Order, and was working against the interests of the Order.

Mr. Simmons (cross-examining): Is it not a fact that your name is Samuel Liddell Mathers?—Yes; or MacGregor Mathers.

Your original name was Samuel Liddell Mathers?—Undoubtedly.

Did you subsequently assume the name of MacGregor?—The name of MacGregor dates from 1603. At that time the name was forbidden on pain of death, and there is no single person of the name of MacGregor at the present day who has not had another name in the interval.

Your name was MacGregor in 1603? (Much Laughter.)—Yes; if you like to put it that way.

You have called yourself Count MacGregor of Glenstrae?—Oh, yes.

You have called yourself the Chevalier MacGregor?—No. You are confusing me with some of Crowley's aliases. (Laughter.)

Have you ever suggested to anybody that you had any connection with King James IV of Scotland? I cannot understand what you mean. Every Scotsman who dates from an ancient family must have had some connection with King James IV, as well as with the other kings.

Have you ever asserted that King James IV of Scotland never died?—Yes; that is a matter of common tradition among all occult bodies. There is an old tradition of that nature in Scotland, and it forms the basis of one of Alan Cunningham's novels.

Do you assert he is in existence to-day or not?—I refuse to answer your question.

And that his existence to-day is embodied in yourself?—Certainly not. You are confusing me with Crowley's aliases. (Laughter.)

Do you believe that Count de St. Germain is living?

Witness, in reply, referred counsel to a book and to traditions in the St. Germain family.

When was he supposed to have died?—In 1780.

Then we have two people who are supposed to be dead and who are not dead?—I am not responsible for the traditions.

You believe in the traditions?—That is my private business.

His Lordship (to counsel): The "Flying Dutchman" is a third, if you want to pursue this subject. (Laughter.)

Witness: And again, "the Wandering Jew." (Laughter.)

Mr. Simmons (continuing his cross-examination): Have you any occupation?—That is as you like to take it. For a man of no occupation I am probably the most industrious man living. (Laughter.)

Have you any business or occupation?—No. I have given the best years of my life to the work which your client's friends have stolen.

What work is that?—The Order of the Rosicrucian by whatever name you may call it. It is a work which requires acquaintance with many classical languages and endless research.

You claim that there is a Rosicrucian Order?—I do. The term "Rosicrucian Order" was a general term in the Middle Ages to express an unknown Order.

His Lordship: There are some who doubt whether it was an Order at all.

Witness: That is because it was a secret order, and therefore it was difficult for those who did not belong to it to know anything about it.

Counsel: How many members are there of the Order?—I refuse to answer you. There are a great many.

Are there twenty?—There are certainly more than two with whom I am actually in touch.

You are the head of the Rosicrucian Order?—Yes.

And you exercise all the powers?—I do__all the administrative powers. I only call myself the external head.

I think you say there are secret chiefs?—I do.

You are the external and visible head, and you say you are in communication with the secret chiefs?—I do.

What are the names of these secret chiefs?—I am sworn not to give them.

Are they in existence?—I am sworn not to discuss them.

You yourself exercise the power of expulsion?—Undoubtedly.

Have you not expelled as many as fifteen people from the Order at one time?—Yes.

Mr. Simmons questioned witness as to his friendship with the plaintiff, and asked him whether at one time Mr. Jones did not contribute towards a subscription which was raised for him.

Witness replied that this was really given him because a friend of the plaintiff had enjoyed his hospitality for a long period, and had somewhat strained his resources which were not large.

Counsel was proceeding to elicit details of this incident, when—

His lordship restrained him, remarking: This trial is getting very much like the trial in *Alice in Wonderland*. (Laughter.)

Mr. G. R. Cran, a solicitor, gave evidence as to having acted for Mr. MacGregor in an action he brought against Crowley to restrain him by injunction from publication of certain rituals of the Rosicrucian Order. A judgment was obtained from the judge in chambers, but was afterwards dissolved in the Court of Appeal, on the ground that there was a delay in bringing the action.

Mr. William Migge, City merchant, gave evidence as to attendance at the first performance given by Crowley and described in *The Looking Glass* as the proceedings of "the amazing sect." He paid £5 for the series.

Counsel: What do you say as to the performance?—I did not like it.

Did you ask for your money back?—Yes.

Why did you not like the performance?—I did not think it worth the money. (Laughter.)

What did these performances purport to be?—They were supposed to be rites and rituals based on mysticism and on the planetary spirits. The first performance had something to do with the planet of Saturn.

During the performance was the room in darkness?—Part of the time.

His Lordship: What was Saturn going to do for anybody?—I don't know. Each performance had a bearing on certain planets. I think the second was to be Jupiter.

Counsel: Was there one character, taken by a lady called "The Daughter of Heaven"?—I don't recollect that. There was much incense. I couldn't see much.

Witness stated that the accounts published in *The Looking Glass* were correct so far as the rites went.

Mr. Simmons (cross-examining): What induced you to pay your £5 5s?—I was induced by a lady clairvoyant to go and see the performance.

You paid your money to see some mystic rites?—Yes.

And you thought the rites were not sufficiently mystic?—I did not care for the rites; I did not think they were worth the money. (Laughter.)

What did you expect to get for your money?—Clairvoyant manifestations of some character.

Dr. Berridge, Gloucester-terrace, Hyde Park, was called as a witness and after taking the customary oath added something.

His Lordship: Kindly do not invent oaths of your own. Parliament has invented an oath for you.

Witness stated that he was a member of the Rosicrucian Order. Hearing rumours as to Crowley, he spoke to him on one occasion when he came to London as an envoy of the Order. The rumours referred to immoralities, "which," added witness, "I do not wish to state explicitly as I see there are ladies in court."

His Lordship: Any ladies remaining in this court are probably beyond any scruples of that sort.

Witness then repeated the statements he made to Crowley as to the rumours, and that Crowley neither denied nor admitted them. He made a statement which was regarded as remarkable, and added, "But the police can find nothing about me for eighteen months or two years back."

Captain Fuller, of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, was called for plaintiff, and contradicted an account given by Mr. Cran of an interview, at which witness was present, with plaintiff.

Cross-examined, witness said he was a friend of plaintiff, and also of Crowley, whom he had known intimately for five years. He was a reader and admirer of Crowley's books.

His lordship asked the jury to answer the following questions:

Are the words complained of defamatory of plaintiff?

If so, are the defamatory statements in fact substantially true?

Are the defamatory statements, so far as they consist of opinion, fair comment on facts?

What damage has the publication caused the plaintiff?

The jury, after a brief retirement, answered the first three questions in the affirmative. To the fourth they replied, "None."

Mr. Schiller thereupon asked for judgment for defendants, and his lordship entered judgment accordingly.