

NORTHERN ECHO (DARLINGTON,UK.)
4 February 1930

A Cancelled Lecture at Oxford.
Mr. Aleister Crowley.
"Disciplinary Action" Would be Taken.

An extraordinary situation has arisen in connection with the Oxford University Poetry Society.

A meeting had been arranged for last night to be addressed by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the writer, on the subject of The Medieval magician, but at the last minute the lecture was cancelled. The secretary of the Society, Mr. H. Speaight, sent a letter to Mr. Crowley as follows:—

"I am writing to tell you that we have been unfortunately been forced to cancel next Monday's meeting of the Poetry Society. It has come to our knowledge that if your proposed paper is delivered disciplinary action will be taken involving not only myself but the rest of the Committee of the Society. In these circumstances you will, I trust, understand why we have had to cancel the meeting.

"I feel I must apologise to you for the trouble I have caused you. I must admit that I had credited the University with more tolerance—or at any rate, with a greater sense of humour. "Again many apologies. Perhaps I shall have some later occasion of meeting you. "PS—I hope you will understand that no official step has been taken, but it has been made perfectly clear that an official step will be taken if you did come to speak to the Society."

MR. CROWLEY INDIGNANT.

When a Northern Echo reporter called on Mr. Crowley at his charming little cottage in Kent he had just heard the news.

"I challenge anyone to show why I should not lecture at Oxford today," he said. "Full investigations will be made. If there has been a misunderstanding, the lecture will be given later. If the ban is official the lecture will be printed and sold at the street corners of Oxford. There is some underhand business behind this.

"I had been invited by Mr. Speaight to talk to the Society on Gilles de Rais, a medieval magician, who was a contemporary and comrade of Joan of Arc.

"Perhaps the refusal to let me lecture has come because Gilles de Rais is said to have killed 600 children in ritual murder, and in some way, this was connected with myself, since the accusation that I have not only killed but eaten children is one of the many false statements that have been circulated about me in the past. "Probably," added Mr. Crowley, with a smile, "the authorities are afraid that I may kill and eat 800 Oxford graduates.

ALLEGATION ABOUT A PRIEST.

"The main point about my lecture was to show that the allegations against Gilles de Rais were unfounded, just as they were against Joan of Arc. Those were curious times, and anyone was liable to be burned as a witch on the least evidence. It was quite a popular lecture; in fact, it really made fun of some of the beliefs in witchcraft.

"I understand that there is a Roman Catholic priest behind all this business. I have reason to believe that the ban is not official. "Mr. P. R. Stephenson, of the Mandrake press, my publishers, is going to Oxford on Monday to make investigations. We want all the facts, for I have spent many hours preparing the lecture, only to find that it has been cancelled at the last moment."

Mr. Crowley laughed again as he added "I hope he will come back safely to tell me and is not arrested while he is in Oxford. It must be a surprise to some people to learn that I am in England at all. They cannot believe that I would not be hanged immediately on landing."

The Northern Echo man then asked both Mr. Crowley and Mr. Stephenson, who was also present, whether they could give what they supposed to be any reason for the cancellation of the lecture.

They said they thought the whole trouble was the death of Mr. Raoul Loveday at Cefalù, in Sicily, while he was Mr. Crowley's secretary. Mr. Loveday was a young Oxford undergraduate, and in a London newspaper it was alleged that Mr. Crowley was responsible, either directly or indirectly, for his death. This allegation was false they said.

Mr. Stephenson handed me a book called Tiger Woman, published recently, and written by Mr. Loveday's young widow,

Betty May Loveday, and pointed out the chapter dealing with her husband's death.

This stated that she and her husband were at the Abbey in Sicily, at which Mr. Crowley, who is referred to as "The Mystic," conducted all sorts of magical rites.

HIS FATAL DRINK.

She says that they went out for a long walk in the mountains, and before leaving "The Mystic" warned them that whatever happened they must not touch any water that they came across.

Although tortured with thirst Betty May said that she refrained, but her husband could not stand the thirst and drank from a spring. He died shortly afterwards from enteric fever.

A doctor was called in, she writes, and her husband died under medical supervision.