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'BLACK MAGIC' LIBEL SUIT
BY ALEISTER CROWLEY

VANISHING BABY DENIAL

REFERENCE TO STAVISKY GANG
AND BLACKMAIL



MISS NINA HAMNETT (right) who wrote "Laughing Torso," and who is defending the action brought against her for alleged libel by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author. With her is Miss Betty May, author of "Tiger Woman."

Black magic and the devil and all his works—white magic on the side of the angels—a villa in Sicily with a "room of nightmares"—a brief reference to the Stavisky Gang . . .

These were features of strange, fantastic evidence given in the drab surroundings of the King's Bench Division yesterday.

An action for alleged libel is brought by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, arising out of passages in her book, "Laughing Torso."

Mr. J. P. Eddy and Mr. C. Gallop appear for Mr. Crowley. Mr. Martin O'Connor appears for Miss Hamnett, and Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., and Mr. Lilley for Messrs. Constable and Co., publishers of the book, who are also sued.

Justification is pleaded for the defence.

Mr. Eddy, opening Mr. Crowley's case, said that Mr. Crowley had for years been interested in magic.

There were two forms of magic—black magic, which had to do with the devil and all his works, and white magic, which was on the side of the angels.

Mr. Crowley believed in the magic that stressed the will, and in 1920 he started a small community at a villa in Cefalu, Sicily, to study the form of magic.

Because of the fantastic frescoes on the walls, Mr. Crowley's bedroom in the villa was described as "The Room of Nightmares." But that had nothing to do with black magic.

Once his Student

Miss Hamnett, once one of Mr. Crowley's students, spoke in her book of a baby that was said to have mysteriously vanished.

She mentioned that there was also a goat. People, she said, declared that this all pointed to black magic, and the villagers were frightened of him.

Mr. Crowley, said counsel, denied that he supplied the information to Miss Hamnett.

Mr. Crowley, giving evidence, said that he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and had been interested in magic since 1897.

Speaking of the Sicily villa, he said that he decorated his own room with frescoes similar to the religious paintings in the Notre Dame, including fantastic gargoyles—any odd thing that came into his mind.

There were never more than eleven people at the villa, and the guiding principle of the household was good manners.

Black magic was foul, abominable and for the most part criminal. Murder for gain was almost its main instrument. It was malignant, evil in its purpose and in its means.

The murder of children was commonly associated with it.

He had never practised it at Cefalu.

Mr. Crowley was then asked:—

"Did you supply the inmates with razors and command them to gash themselves whenever they used the word 'I'?"

"That," he replied, "is a foolish fabrication."

The villagers, so far from being frightened, were all his very good friends. It was untrue that a baby ever disappeared.

His Reputation

Cross-examined by Mr. Malcolm Hilberry, Mr. Crowley declared that he was asking for damages because his reputation had suffered.

Mr. Malcolm Hilberry: For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Have you, from the time of your adolescence, openly defied all moral conventions?—No.

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" the Great Wild Beast.

The Great Wild Beast and Beast 666 are out of the Apocalypse?—It only means sunlight; 666 is the number of the Sun, and you can call me "Little Sunshine."

Have you written a number of books, mostly poems?—A number of books and many poems.

Is it true to say that practically all your works are erotic in tendency and grossly indecent in expression?—It would be entirely untrue to say anything of the kind.

Were you finally expelled from Cefalu by Fascists?—Like Mr. H. G. Wells and many other distinguished Englishmen, my presence was not desired by Mussolini.

In 1929 in Paris did they refuse to grant the renewal of your identification cards so that you had to get out of France?—Yes.

They wouldn't have you there?—A discharged employee was blackmailing me and used his pull with the Stavisky gang or whatever it was to get me out.

Your magic is like your poems, a mixture of eroticism and sexual indulgence?—It doesn't involve anything of the kind.

One of His Works

Mr. Crowley agreed that he was the author of "White Stains."

Mr. Hilberry: Is that a book of indescribable filth?—This book is a serious study of the progress of a man to the abyss of madness, disease, and murder.

"White Stains" is described as "Being the literary remains of George Archibald Bishop, a Neuropath of the Second Empire"?—Yes. I think only 100 copies were printed and were handed to some expert on the subject in Vienna.

You know it is an obscene book?—I don't know it. Until it got into your hands it never got into any improper hands at all.

Later Mr. Crowley said that the subjects dealt with were all for the clinical wards. mental hospitals and such places.

In regard to another of his publications, Mr. Crowley said: "I am exposing Black Mass. I am the modern James Douglas."

Mr. Hilberry: James Douglas happens to have said of you that you were the worst man in the world.

Mr. Crowley: I never heard him say it. I think it was Mr. Horatio Bottomly—one of that gang, anyhow.

The hearing was adjourned until to-day.