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BLACK MAGIC EXPOUNDED IN COURT

**ALEISTER CROWLEY DEFENDS BOOKS
AGAINST K.C.'S SUGGESTIONS**

**LIBEL ACTION AGAINST
A FORMER WOMAN PUPIL**

Black magic was discussed before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division yesterday, when Aleister Crowley, the author, brought a libel action against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled *Laughing Torso*.

He alleged that passages in the book imputed that he practised "black magic," which, he said, was a libel upon him. Other defendants were Messrs. Constable and Co. Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers.

The defence was a plea of justification.

Mr. J. P. Eddy, for Mr. Crowley, said some people might think Mr. Crowley had shown a want of restraint in some of his works. That might, in some measure, be due to the fact that he was brought up in the strict environment of the Plymouth Brethren sect.

He inherited a large fortune, and was devoted to poetry, art, travel, and mountaineering. He had climbed the Alps and walked across the Sahara. For many years he had been interested in magic, and had always fought against black magic.

"ROOM OF NIGHTMARES"

There were two forms of magic, white magic and black magic, the former being on the side of the angels and the latter on the side of the devil and all his works. The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed stressed the will.

In 1920 he started a little community at a villa in Cefalù, Sicily, for the purpose of studying that form of magic. It was an old farmhouse, and Mr. Crowley's bedroom was described as "The Room of Nightmares," because of the fantastic frescoes on the walls. But that had nothing to do with black magic.

A passage in the book stated that Mr. Crowley:
"had a temple called the Temple of Thelema at Cefalù, where he was supposed to practice black magic.

One day a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was also a goat there. This all pointed to black magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

Mr. Crowley, counsel added, denied the suggestion that he supplied the information to Miss Hamnett, who was, at one time, a student of his.

INTERESTED IN BLACK MAGIC SINCE 1897 MR. CROWLEY'S EVIDENCE

Giving evidence, Mr. Crowley said when he was young he rebelled against the "general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren."

He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and inherited between £30,000 and £40,000. He had studied the religions of the world, and had been interested in black magic since 1897.

He met Miss Hamnett two or three years before the war, and employed her in connection with the painting of his studio in London.

Mr. Eddy: What was the guiding principal of this household?—Good manners.

You are familiar with the words: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is law, love under will"?—I am.

Did they have any reference to this house?—They are the general principles on which I maintain all mankind should base his conduct.

What, do they mean?—The study of those words has occupied the last thirty years of my life. There is no end to what they mean, but the simplest application to practical conduct is this: That no man has a right to waste his time on doing things which are mere wishes or desires, but that he should devote himself wholly to his true work in this world.

Have those words anything to do with black magic?—Only indirectly. They would forbid it, because black magic is suicidal.

How did this household at Cefalù pass their time?—Each person had a certain duty connected with the house. I had a secretary there. There was a magnificent rock which I took the children to climb. there was the sea and a secluded cove, where one could spend the day without interference from the

inhabitants. There was also a beautiful sandy beach for swimming and one could walk across the mountain. The people in the house mostly helped me with my work.

Did they pursue studies?—Some did. Visitors came from all parts of the world for the purpose of learning what I had to teach.

BASIS OF BLACK MAGIC

"I approve some forms of magic and disapprove others," Mr. Crowley said in reply to another question.

What is the form you disbelieve?—That which is commonly known as black magic, which is not only foul and abominable, but, for the most part, criminal.

Invited to give a few examples, Mr. Crowley said:

"To begin with, the basis of all black magic is that utter stupidity of selfishness which cares nothing for the rights of others. People so constituted are naturally quite unscrupulous.

In many cases black magic is an attempt to commit crime without incurring the penalties of the law. The almost main instrument of black magic is murder, either for inheritance or for some other purpose, or in some way to gain personally out of it.

Is murder of children associated with black magic?—It is most common. Alleged black magicians have been condemned to death, I say black magic is malignant.

Did you ever practice black magic at Cefalù?—Never.

THE PENTAGRAM CEREMONY

Mr. Crowley denied that he told Miss Hamnett the things of which he complained in the book. No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purposes, but the inhabitants were not frightened by it.

Mr. Eddy then put to Mr. Crowley the following particulars in the defence:

"Every day, after tea, the plaintiff performed a ceremony known as Pentagram. The plaintiff entered robed into a room decorated with cabalistic signs, and seated himself on a throne before a brazier containing a charcoal fire, around which were hung sacrificial knives and swords, and surrounded by a magic circle.

"The adult inmates were require to attend, and, when all were assembled the plaintiff rose from his seat, and taking one

of the swords from the side of the brazier held it pointing to the altar, while he intoned an invocation in a strange language. Following this he would walk over to members of his congregation and utter a further incantation whilst resting the point of the sword on his or her forehead.

"The plaintiff then proceeded to execute ecstatic dances, lashing himself into a frenzy, brandishing his sword, and leaping the magic circle."

Mr. Eddy: Is that an accurate account of what was done at Cefalù?—It is not accurate.

Was there any throne?—There were chairs.

Were there any sacrificial knives?—No.

What is the Pentagram?—It is a ceremony which invokes God to afford the protection of his Archangel.

Mr. Crowley denied that the ceremony was erotic, or that animals were sacrificed, and he invited people to drink their blood.

When he was returning to London he met Miss Hamnett in Paris. "She was a kind of clearing-house for the artistic world," he added.

CROSS-EXAMINATION "DENOUNCED AS WORST MAN IN THE WORLD"

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (cross-examining): From 1932 to the present time you have it on record that you have suffered in your reputation because the book imputed to you that you were a person who used coarse and vulgar conversation?—I believe there is something of that in the statement of claim.

Are you asking for damages because your reputation has suffered?—Yes.

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

Did any paper call you the Monster of Wickedness?—I don't remember which papers.

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

And proclaimed your contempt for all the doctrines of Christianity?—I think that is quite wrong. I don't have any contempt for all the doctrines of Christianity.

Reading from Mr. Crowley's autobiography, "Judaism is savage and Christianity is fiendish superstition," counsel asked: Does that represent your views?—No.

You have practiced magic from the days when you were just down from Cambridge?—Yes.

“CALL ME ‘LITTLE SUNSHINE’”

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of “Beast 666” and “The Master Therion” (the Great Wild Beast). “666 is the number of the Sun, and you can call me “Little Sunshine,” he added. He was at Cambridge from 1895 to 1898, and became interested in magic there.

In 1898 did you get yourself initiated into a secret order called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn?—Yes.

Was the society devoted to the practice of magic?—Yes.

You have written one or two novels?—Yes, and about eighteen short stories.

Have most of your poems been privately printed?—Certainly not.

Is it true 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. I have published a collection of fifty-two hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary which were highly praised in the Catholic Press.

Have you published material which is too indecent to read, too indescribably filthy to be read in public?—No, I have contributed certain pathological books entirely unsuited to the general public and only for circulation among students of psychopathology.

Is it true that in more than one country you have achieved notoriety?—What is notoriety?

Evil repute.—Then how can I tell? No sensible person thinks anything bad about me.

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

“THE STAVISKY GANG”

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 would not 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.

Have you been attacked in unmeasured terms in the Press of many countries?—I am not so familiar with the gutter Press

as that.

They have all accused you of black magic, haven't they?—I don't read such stuff as a rule, I am a busy man, and I don't waste my time on garbage.

Mr. Hilbery quoted passages from *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, and asked: You say in the book that you were a remarkable child?—I must have been.

You assert that you had the distinguishing marks of a Buddhist at birth?—Yes.

Do you believe that?—Yes. I have some of them now.

TOOK DEGREE AS MAGICIAN

And you continue in your claim to be a master magician?—Yes, that is the technical term. I took a degree which conferred the title.

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

Is the gratification of your own sexual lusts one of your principle interests and pursuits?—No.

Mr. Crowley, questioned about other passages, declared that he knew about a Chinese classic, *Yi King*, about the age of 14, and that at the age of four he was reading the Bible.

Is *White Stains* (a book of which Mr. Crowley said he was the author) 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.

You have made a sonnet of unspeakable things, haven't you?—Yes.

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 handed to some expert on the subject in Vienna.

Was that done because you feared there might be a prosecution if they were published in this country?—It was not. It was a refutation of the doctrine that sexual perverts had no sense of moral responsibility and should not be punished. I maintained that they had, and showed the way they got from bad to worse.

You know it is an obscene book?—I do not know it. Until it got into your hands it never got into any improper hands at all. (Laughter.)

Mr. Justice Swift (sternly): If there is any more laughter at the back of the court, the back of the court will be cleared.

Mr. Hilbery: Is it technically an obscene book?—Yes. Technically I think it is, and I should not write a book like that to-day. In describing a disease you have to describe it in proper terms.

Do you agree that it would be quite impossible to paraphrase what these poems really were about in open court?—These subjects were all for the clinical wards, mental hospitals, and such places.

Do you think the sonnet is a particularly suitable form to employ when the book is for clinical purposes?—I should not do it now. At that time it was the only form of expression I had. That was my preternatural innocence.

ART AND MORALS

Mr. Hilbery referred to another book, "The Soul of Osiris," and suggested that it was highly sexual. Mr. Crowley said what he had written was "portrayed in the language God has given me for that purpose."

Is what I have read indecent?—But you have read it out of its context. The law has laid down that art has nothing to do with morals.

Mr. Crowley objected to the use of the word sex, and said if one looked for it one could find something indecent in the Bible and the works of Shakespeare, Swift, down to Thomas Hardy.

In regard to another of his publications Mr. Crowley denied that his portrayal of a clergyman was a mockery of the Christian point of view. "I am exposing Black Mass," he declared.

The hearing was adjourned until to-day.