"Black Magic" Lawsuit

Weird Rites Denied

"Beast 666" Challenges Woman's Book

Questions about black magic were put when the action was begun in the King's Bench Division, London, yesterday of a libel action brought by Mr. Edward Alexander Crowley, the author, known as Aleister Crowley.

The action is against Constable & Co., Ltd., the publishers; Charles Whittingham & Griggs, Printers, Ltd.; and Miss Nina Hamnett, the authoress.

The ground for the action was contained in a passage in Miss Nina Hamnett's book, "Laughing Torso," which read, "Crowley had a temple in Cefalu in Sicily. He was supposed to practise black magic there, and 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 in-habitants of the village were frightened of him."

The defence was a plea of justification.

Inherited £30,000

Mr. Crowley, in evidence, said that when he was young he rebelled against the "general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren." He inherited between £30,000 and £40,000.

Speaking of the villa at Cefalu, he said "I decorated my room with frescoes similar to religious paintings in Notre Dame. There were fantastic gargoyles—any odd thing that came into my mind. People said they looked like nightmares."

The villa was known as the Abbey of Thelema.

He had studies magic. "There are various forms of magic, as there are different forms of prize-fighting and all-in wres-tling. I approve some forms of magic and disapprove others."

Mr. Eddy (for Crowley)—What is the form you disbelieve?

Mr. Crowley—That which is commonly known as black magic, which is not only foul and abominable, but for the most part criminal.

Mr. Eddy—Is the murder of children associated with black magic?—It is most common.

Did you ever practise black magic at Cefalu?—Never.

Is it true that men shaved their heads, leaving a symbolic curl in front, and that the women dyed their hair red for six months and then black for the rest of the year?—It is not correct.

Mr. Eddy, reading from the particulars, mentioned a ceremony known as the "pentagram," in which the plaintiff was said to have "entered, robed, into a room decorated with cabalistic signs," and "proceeded to execute various ecstatic dances, lashing himself into a frenzy, brandishing his sword, and leaping the magic circle."

Mr. Crowley said that that was not accurate. There was no truth in a story that he sacrificed animals and invited inmates of the villa to drink their blood.

No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purposes, but the inhabitants were not frightened by it. The inhabitants were all his very good friends.

"Beast 666"

Replying to Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., for the defendants, Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" (the Great Wild Beast).

"It only means sunlight," he said. "666 is the number of the sun, and you can call me Little Sunshine."

In 1898 he got himself initiated into a secret order called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a society devoted to the practice of magic. He had written a number of books and many poems.

Have you published material which is too indecent 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.

Mr. Hilbery referred to Mr. Crowley's book, "The Confessions of Aleister Crowley."

You assert that you had the distinguishing marks of a Buddha at birth?—Yes. I have got some of them now.

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

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

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

The hearing was adjourned.