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"BLACK MAGIC" PRACTICE DENIED

Wealthy Man Sues Woman Author

LIBEL ACTION

"Beast 666" or "Little Sunshine"

Alleging that passages in a book, entitled *Laughing Torso*, imputed that he practised black magic, Aleister Crowley brought a libel action before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division yesterday. The defence was a plea of justification.

The defendants were Miss Nina Hamnett, the authoress of the book, Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Griggs, printers.

Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley) said there was one passage in the book which was a piece of mere vulgarity, "typical of the book," he added, "and I do not propose to embarrass the jury by making any reference to it." For many years Mr. Crowley has "been interested in magic, and has always fought against black magic, which was on the side of the devil and all his works.

The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed was that which stressed the will. In 1920 he started a little community at a villa in Cefalù, where he was supposed to practise black magic." The passage continued: "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.

VILLA IN SICILY
Known as The Abbey of Thelema

Giving evidence, Mr. Crowley said he was educated at Trini-

ty 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 and decoration of his studio in London.

"The villa which I took at Cefalù," continued Mr. Crowley, "was situated on a hillside. The summit was at a height of 4,000 feet. The villa faced an immense rock, like Gibraltar, and dominated the cathedral city of Cefalù." He decorated his own room with frescoes similar to religious paintings in the Notre Dame. There were fantastic gargoyles—any odd thing that came into his mind. People said they looked like nightmares. The villa, which was an old farmhouse, was known as the Abbey of Thelema, and he first went there in 1920."

The guiding principle of the household was good manners. He was familiar with the words "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the law, love under will."

Mr. Eddy: What do they mean?—The study of those words has occupied the last 30 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.

"Foolish Fabrication"

Describing the household at Cefalù, Mr. Crowley said that each person had a certain duty connected with the house.

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

Mr. Crowley agreed that there were various forms of magic, some of which he approved, and some that he did not.

Mr. Eddy: 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.

"In many cases," said Mr. Crowley, "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.

Mr. Eddy: 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. It is evil in its purpose and means, or both.

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

It is said that the inmates of the Abbey had to sign a book?—There was a visitors' book.

Did they give an undertaking to obey your Will?—No.

Did you supply the inmates with razors, and command them to gash themselves whenever they used the word, "I"?—That is a foolish fabrication.

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

Mr. Eddy: It is said that everyone was instructed to enter the innermost sacred thoughts in a magical diary. What do you say about that?

Mr. Crowley explained that, for the purpose of training in self-control and the development of certain little-used powers of mind, certain exercises were given, and it was suggested that it would be convenient, both to the students and the instructor, if they recorded their progress.

He 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. "The inhabitants," he added, "were all my very good friends."

Pentagram Ceremony

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 required 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.

There were not any sacrificial knives, said Mr. Crowley. The pentagram, he explained was a ceremony which invoked God to afford the protection of His archangel. All in the household were free to take this pentagram.

Mr. Crowley denied that it was an obscene invocation, 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.

Beast 666

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (cross-examining): 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 contempt for all doctrines of Christianity.

"I am a student of religions, and my views are altered with my advance in study," said Mr. Crowley.

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

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" (the great wild beast).

Mr. Hilbery: Are these titles chosen as a fair expression of your practices and outlook on life?—It depends on what they mean.

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

Mr. Crowley said he was at Cambridge from 1895 to 1898, and there became interested in magic. In 1898 he was initiated into a secret order called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a society devoted to the practise of magic.

He had written a number of books and many poems, but the topic of magic was not involved in his books and poems.

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

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. I have published a collection of 52 hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary which were highly praised in the Catholic Press.

Have you published material which is 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 psych-pathology.

“Not Desired by Mussolini”

Mr. Hilbery: 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.

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.

Mr. Crowley explained that some of the Hearst papers in America, the lower papers of England, and a paper in France and in Italy had attacked him, though the decent newspapers had all treated him properly.

Mr. Hilbery: 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 don't waste my time on garbage.

Counsel then referred to a number of passages in Mr. Crowley's book, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*. Mr. Crowley agreed that there were no statements in the book that were false, though there might be inaccuracies.

Mr. Hilbery: 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 Buddha at birth?—Yes.

Do you believe that?—Yes. I have got some of them now,
And you continue in your claim to be a master magician?—
Yes, that is the technical term. I took a degree which conferred
that title.

“A Serious Study”

Mr. Hilbery: 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
principal interests and pursuits?—No.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he was the author of a certain
book, and, asked if it was a book of indescribable filth, he rep-
lied,

“This book is a serious study of the progress of a man to the
abyss of madness, disease, and murder. There are moments
when he does go down into all those abominations, and it is a
warning to people against going over.”

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

Mr. Crowley said he thought that only 100 copies of the
book were printed, and were handed to some expert on the
subject in Vienna.

Mr. Hilbery: 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 pu-
nished. I maintained that they had, and showed the way they
go: from bad to worse.

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.

You wanted to give poetical expression to the pathological
outlook of the pervert?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley said these subjects were all for the clinical
wards, mental hospitals, and such places.

A SONNET Written for Clinical Purposes

Mr. Hilbery: Do you think the sonnet is a particularly suit-
able 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 ex-

pression I had. That was my preternatural innocence.

Mr. Hilbery referred to another book, and suggested that it was highly sexual.

Mr. Crowley's reply was that what he had written was "portrayed in the language God has given me for the purpose." He said it was legitimate in literature to describe the innermost feelings of a robber or murderer or of a man who was being tortured in mind. The law had laid it down that art has nothing to do with morals.

Mr. Hilbery: May we assume that you have followed that in your practice?—My view has nothing to do with it. I have always endeavoured to use the gift of writing which has been vouchsafed to me for the benefit of my readers.

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

Mr. Hilbery read a stanza from a poem, entitled "Madonna of the Golden Eyes" and suggested that it was highly sexual and highly indecent.

Mr. Crowley: I cannot see that it is indecent. It is an expression of passion such as you find in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Regarding another of his publications, Mr. Crowley denied that his portrayal of a clergy-man was a mockery of the Christian point of view. "I am exposing Black Mass," he declared. "I am the modern James Douglas."

Mr. Hilbery: James Douglas happens to have said of you that you were the worst man in the world?—I never heard him say it. I think it was Mr. Horatio Bottomley—one of that gang, anyhow.