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AUTHOR'S LIBEL ACTION

ALLEGED "BLACK MAGIC" IMPUTATION

Counsel and the "Abbey" in Sicily

QUESTION ABOUT HASHEESH

The hearing was resumed, before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division, London, yesterday, of the libel action by Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," which, he alleged, imputed that he practised black magic. Other defendants were Constable & Co., Ltd., publishers, and Charles Whittingham & Briggs, printers, the defence being a plea of justification.

At the material time, Mr. Crowley had a villa on the mountainside at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as "The Abbey of Thelema." He denied that he practised black magic there.

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., for the printers and publishers, in cross-examination, asked Mr. Crowley about a poem, and the latter said that the author of those words had been "dead for years."

Mr. Hilbery—Is the Aleister Crowley who wrote it dead?

Mr. Crowley—Do I look like it? It is not Aleister Crowley who wrote that. It is an imaginary figure in a drama—I created the drama. "I created this work of an imaginary author," Mr. Crowley added.

PROPAGANDA IN U.S.

Mr. Hilbery read an extract from an article which Mr. Crowley said he contributed to a Chicago magazine before America came into the war, and asked: Did you write that against your own country?

Mr. Crowley—I did, and I am proud of it.

Mr. Hilbery—Was it part of the German propaganda in America?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley explained that what he wanted to do was to over-balance the sanity of German propaganda by turning it into absolute nonsense.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he wrote "The Diary of a Drug Fiend," which was assailed in the Press. He agreed, too, that in a newspaper article he had written: "I have been shot at with broad arrows. They have called me the worst man in the world."

Mr. Hilbery—Did you say: "Horatio Bottomley branded me as a dirty degenerate cannibal?"—Yes.

In a London flat, which he once had, said Mr. Crowley, was "a hall of mirrors, the function of which was to concentrate the invoked forces." On one occasion he invoked the forces with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants.

Mr. Hilbery—Was that your black magic or your white magic?—Is it white magic, in which you protect yourself from such things.

Mr. Crowley said that because of his magic he had once walked in the street in Mexico in a scarlet robe and with a jewelled crown without anyone seeing him.

"SACRIFICES"

Mr. Hilbery—As a part of your magic you do believe in a practise of bloody sacrifice, do you?—I believe in its efficacy but I do not approve of it at all.

Don't approve it? You say—in this book on magic—"For nearly all purposes, human sacrifice is best"?—Yes, it is.

Mr. Justice Swift—Do you say that you don't approve it?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley said that at the villa at Cefalu there was a sort of square box "used as an altar." On it were a book purporting to contain the laws, and candles for ceremonial purposes, incense, a dagger and a sword were used, and he wore an appropriate robe.

Mr. Hilbery—In some of the ceremonies were you endeavouring to get concentrated spiritual ecstasy?—Yes.

Did you keep hasheesh and other drugs at Cefalu? There was no hasheesh, but there was opium and strychnine.

Are you skilled to administer hasheesh?—I can get the desired results in ten minutes.

Mr. Hilbery, referring to the "Abbey" in Sicily, asked: "With your approval, an inmate had a razor or knife with which to cut himself if he stumbled into using a forbidden word, whatever it was?"

Mr. Crowley—They were not gashes, but minute cuts. You can see marks of them on my own arm.

The hearing was then adjourned.