

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO  
CHELTENHAM, ENGLAND  
12 APRIL 1934**

**CHALLENGE IN "MAGIC" CASE**

**AUTHOR ASKED TO TRY IT ON COUNSEL**

**"I REFUSE"**

The "black magic" libel action again came before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division to-day. Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, claimed damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso" and Messrs. Constable and Company, Ltd., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers.

Mr. Crowley complained that the book imputed that he practised "black magic," and he said this was a libel on him.

The defence was 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.

Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he denied that he supplied any of the information on which she based the statements in the book of which he complained. He also denied that a baby mysteriously disappeared, as the defence alleged, from the "Abbey of Thelema."

**BLACK MAGIC CHALLENGED**

Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), resuming his cross-examination to-day, invited Mr. Crowley to try his magic in court.

"You said yesterday," said Mr. O'Connor, "that as the result of early experiments, you invoked certain forces with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants. Try your magic now on my learned friend (pointing to Mr. Hilbery). I am sure he will not object."

"I would not attack anyone," replied Mr. Crowley. "I absolutely refuse."

Mr. Justice Swift: We cannot turn this court into a temple, Mr. O'Connor.

"On a later occasion," continued Mr. O'Connor to Mr. Crowley, "you said you succeeded in rendering yourself invisible. Would you like to try that on now, for if you don't I shall pronounce you an imposter?—You can ask me to do anything you like. It won't alter the truth.

Counsel then dealt with the ritual observed in the ceremonies at the villa at Cefalu. Mr. Crowley denied that a cat was killed in the ceremony and that part of the cat's blood was drunk by a person taking part.

"There was no cat, no animal, no blood and no drinking," he declared.

### ROAMING IN HEATHER

Mr. Eddy next asked Mr. Crowley about a passage in his "confessions" (concerning which he had been cross-examined), and said the passage referred to a village girl, and showed that Mr. Crowley "went roaming with her amid the heather."

"How old were you?" asked Mr. Eddy.

"I was a boy of 15 or 16," replied Mr. Crowley.

"Roaming the heather with anyone is a terrible offence in itself in the surroundings in which I was brought up."

"Merely to look at a girl across the street was considered an offence and dealt with in the most severe way."

(Mr. Crowley's family were Plymouth Brethren.)

Mr. Crowley agreed that he had studied black magic, though only as a student.

Mr. Eddy (Mr. Crowley's counsel): Have you at any time practised black magic.—No.

What is the object of the magic you believe in?—My particular branch is the raising of humanity to higher spiritual development.

Mr. Eddy asked Mr. Crowley why he indulged in German propaganda in America during the war.

Mr. Crowley: In order to destroy it. I reported my activities to the chief of our organization, Captain—later Commodore—Guy Gaunt, and was in communication with the Hon. Everard Fielding. I came back immediately after the war, and if I had been a traitor I should have been shot—and a good job too.

Carl Germer, a German merchant living in England, said that many people in Germany admired Mr. Crowley very highly. He had seen Mr. Crowley invoke the spirit of magnanimity.

Mr. Justice Swift: You are sure it was the spirit of magnanimity which came, and not the spirit of hospitality?—I believe so.

The case for Mr. Crowley was concluded.

### **THE DEFENCE**

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery (for the printers and publishers) said the question for the jury was whether the passages in "Laughing Torso," of which complaint was made, would be read by any reasonable person as worsening the character of Mr. Crowley. What right had a man who had for years been professing contempt for the standards of ordinary decency to complain of injury to a reputation which he had written about himself as being that of the worst man in the world?