

EVENING STANDARD

13 April 1934

"BLACK MAGIC": WOMAN WINS

The Judge on Crowley's "Dreadful, Horrible, Blasphemous, Abominable Stuff"

Jury Stop Case After Judge's Words

Mystery of "Tiger Woman's" Letters

The jury stopped the Aleister Crowley "Black Magic" libel action to-day, after having been addressed by Mr. Justice Swift. They returned a verdict in favour of Miss Nina Hamnett and the other defendants sued by Mr. Crowley.

Judgment was given for the defendants, with costs.

Mr. Crowley, the author, brought an action against Miss Hamnett alleging libel in her book *Laughing Torso*, which he said imputed to him the practice of "black magic." Other defendants were Messrs. Constable and Co., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers.

In addressing the jury Mr. Justice Swift said:

"I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another. I thought that I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness.

"I thought that everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me.

"I have learnt in this case that we can always learn something more if we live long enough."

"I have never heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as that which has been produced by the man who describes himself to you as the greatest living poet."

Mr. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley) asked for a stay of execution.

Mr. Justice Swift: No Mr. Eddy, it was a plain question of fact for the jury.

Mr. Eddy.—I was desirous of pointing out before the jury gave their decision exactly what had to be done before a verdict could be returned at all. It is no use my doing it now, but I would desire to call your attention to the form of the summing-up to be administered, particularly the need of calling attention

to the cross-examination and so forth.

A dramatic figure in the closing stages of the case this afternoon was Miss Betty Sedgwick, one-time model for Epstein, the Tiger Woman of her own book.

The allegation was made by Mr. Eddy (Mr. Crowley's counsel)—and denied—that she was giving evidence as a "bought witness."

Then came a surprise. Mention was made of certain correspondence said to belong to Mrs. Sedgwick, but produced in the present case by Mr. Crowley.

Mr. Justice Swift asked her:

"Do you know how Mr. Crowley got possession of your letters to the solicitors?"

"No," replied Mrs. Sedgwick.

"They Were Stolen"

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (for the publishers and printers).—Did you ever authorise Mr. Crowley or any agent of his to take possession of these letters?—No, certainly not.

Mrs. Sedgwick said that when she last saw the correspondence with the solicitors it was in a little case which she carried everywhere with her. Everything had been taken from the case.

Mr. Hilbery, K.C.—Until they were produced with the suggestion that there was documentary evidence that your evidence had been paid for, did you know the letters had gotten into Crowley's possession?—No.

You just knew they were stolen?—They were stolen.

Copies Produced

Mr. Justice Swift: Where were they stolen?—Either in my little cottage or in the hotel in London. I think it was in London that I missed them. Yes, it was, I remember.

"It would be interesting," said Mr. Justice Swift, "to know how Mr. Crowley came to be in possession of these letters between the defendants' solicitors and this lady."

When copies of missing letters were produced and referred to Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilbery that they remain in the custody of the court until the case ends: "Then remind me to discuss them again," he said.

"Drinks and Drugs"

Earlier in her cross-examination Mrs. Sedgwick was asked by Mr. Eddy: "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday would your life be fairly described as drinks, drugs and immorality?" "No." she replied.

Mrs. Sedgwick said that she had not drugged for years. She took cocaine when she was 18, but not after she was 25.

Another name for "Tiger Woman" was revealed to-day. She said that a lot of people knew her by the name of Bumble Toff.

"Did you know anyone of the name Poodle Diff," Mr. Eddy asked. "Yes," she answered, "an old friend."