

**GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECHO
CHELTENHAM, ENGLAND
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AUTHOR LOSES LIBEL ACTION

"BLACK MAGIC" CASE JUDGMENT

THE SUMMING-UP

Judgment, with costs, was entered for all the defendants in the "black magic" libel action before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division to-day. The libel action was brought by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso."

Messrs. Constable and Company, Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, were joined as defendants.

Mr. Crowley complained that the book imputed that he had practised "black magic," which, he said, was a libel upon him.

The defence was a plea of justification.

Mr. Crowley denied that he practised "black magic" at a villa which he occupied at Cefalu, Sicily, and which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he denied that he supplied to her the information on which the book was based.

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalu Villa in Sicily, stated yesterday that on one occasion a cat was sacrificed in the course of a magical ceremony. Her husband then drank a cup of the cat's blood. Mr. Crowley, in his evidence, had declared that there had never been any sacrifice of any animal in the ceremony or any drinking of blood.

Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley), resuming his cross-examination of Mrs. Sedgwick to-day asked, "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday would your life be fairly described as drink, drugs and immorality"—No.

She was turned out of the Abbey a few days before her husband's death.

Mr. Eddy: What was he suffering from?—I have no idea. I thought it was laudanum poisoning.

Mr. Eddy pointed out that in her book Mrs. Sedgwick had said he was suffering from enteric.

"That is true," Mrs. Sedgwick explained. "After he drank the cat's blood he was violently ill and sick and Mr. Crowley gave him laudanum, a lot of it, as medicine.

SLAPPED MOTHER-IN-LAW

Mr. Eddy: When did you marry your fourth (husband)?—I have forgotten, about seven or eight years ago.

That fourth husband had a very serious disease didn't he.—The fourth, I don't think so.

Mr. Eddy quoted from "Tiger Woman" (Mrs. Sedgwick's book) the fourth husband's mother as saying, "You foul, wicked woman. You are killing my son."

Mrs. Sedgwick said she slapped her fourth husband's mother because she annoyed her.

Mr. Eddy quoted from the book a passage describing how she aroused the resentment of a man's female companion by sitting at the same table.

"She became insulting," the passage continued, "my nostrils dilated as they do when I'm angry. At last she got up and danced with the man. As they passed by she looked backwards at me and said, 'She is a pretty little thing, but it is a pity she has false teeth.'

"I jumped up and slapped her as hard as I could on the face. Waiters immediately bundled us upstairs into the street, fighting all the time."

"You have got a very violent nature?" asked Mr. Eddy.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No.

After questions about other letters, Mr. Eddy asked: "Did you ever authorize anyone to extract those letters from your case and give them to Mr. Crowley."—No.

NO RIGHT TO LETTER

Mr. Hilbery called on Mr. Eddy to produce a letter of February 24th 1933 from the defendant's solicitors to Mrs. Sedgwick.

Mr. Justice Swift: He clearly has no right to have it. Whoever has possession of those letters is in possession, according to this lady's evidence, of stolen property. They have no right to have it. Merely asking somebody whom you suspect of being in possession of stolen property to produce it doesn't give

you the right to give secondary evidence of the document if that person doesn't produce it.

Mr. Hilbery: The witness says she has been permanently deprived of the possession of the letters against her will.

Mr. Justice Swift: I don't see why we should not use the good old English word "stolen" if the facts warrant it. We shall never know in this case how, because we shall have no opportunity of finding out, but it would be very interesting to know how Mr. Crowley came to be in possession of these letters.

When some of the copies of the missing letters were produced and referred to, Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilbery that they should remain in the custody of the court. He instructed the Associate of the court to keep them until the case was over.

"Then remind me to discuss them again please," he added.

EXPENSES FOR WITNESSES

Mr. Hilbery said this was all his evidence. He wished, however, to refute any suggestion that the solicitors instructing him had been a party to purchasing any evidence.

Mr. Eddy: My suggestion was, is, and will be that money explains the presence of Miss Betty May (Mrs. Sedgwick) in the witness box. I do not make any sort of imputation upon the solicitors.

Mr. Justice Swift: Does not money play a very important part in producing in the witness box most witnesses who have no interest whatever in the case?—They all expect to get their expenses.

Mr. Eddy: I am not prepared for a single moment to assume that the money paid this woman really represented expenses. My position is that she was, in fact, demanding money and getting it.

MAGIC AS ARCH-HUMBUG

It was indicated that the solicitor would be called later.

Mr. Martin O'Connor, for Miss Hamnett, referring to Mr. Crowley's refusal to accept his challenge to try his magic in court, said it was appalling that "in this enlightened age a court should be investigating magic which is arch-humbug practised by arch-rogues to rob weak-minded people."

"I hope this action," he added, "will end for all time the activities of this hypocritical rascal."

Mr. Justice Swift, directing the jury, said: "Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by the man describing himself as the greatest living poet.

"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."

The judge refused a stay of execution.