

**THE MIDLAND DAILY TELEGRAPH  
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**"BLACK MAGIC" LIBEL ACTION**

**Judgment For Defendants**

**JURY QUICKLY MAKE UP  
THEIR MINDS ON ISSUE**

**JUDGE'S STRONG WORDS  
IN REVIEW OF CASE**

The hearing was resumed by Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division to-day, of the "Black Magic" libel action 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." He admitted that he called himself "Beast 666" out of the Apocalypse. Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he denied that he supplied to her the information of which he book was based.

**PROCEEDINGS AT CEFALU VILLA**

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Love-day, 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 than drank a cup of the cat's blood. Mr. Crowley, in his evidence, had declared that there never had been any sacrifice of any animal in the ceremony of 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," replied Mrs. Sedgwick, who added, she had not drugged herself for years. She denied she was living a very fast life in London. "I was a model, and I sat to keep both of us," she added.

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that on the day of her arrival in England from Sicily she supplied information to a Sunday newspaper.

"I am suggesting," remarked Mr. Eddy, "that you are the source of all these stories about 'the worst man in the world.' "

Asked if there was a word of truth in her evidence about the "terrible sacrifice of a cat," she replied: "Absolutely true—everything about the cat is true."

Mr. Eddy: Are many of the cats in Sicily wild and destructive animals?—I only knew two and they were very charming cats.

Mr. Eddy suggested that the shooting of a wild cat by Mr. Crowley was the basis for her story.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No, no.

### **CAUSE OF HUSBAND'S ILLNESS**

Witness stated that she was turned out of the Abbey a few days before her husband's death.

Mr. Eddy: What was he suffering from?

Mrs. Sedgwick: 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 violent and sick, and Mr. Crowley gave him laudanum, a lot of it, as medicine. I told Scotland Yard I thought it was laudanum poisoning at the time."

Mrs. Sedgwick admitted she herself did not actually write "Tiger Woman," her autobiography. Questioned about the story in her book regarding Crowley's threat to expel her from the abbey, she said it was true that she fired a revolver at Crowley, missed, and he picked her up and flung her outside through the front door. She called her book "Tiger Woman," she said, and she was the tiger woman because she thought she was rather feline in looks and thought it rather a good name for her name. It had nothing to do with her temper.

## STOLEN LETTERS

Questioned regarding correspondence between herself and her solicitors regarding giving evidence, Mrs. Sedgwick surprised the court by telling the Judge the letters had been stolen, she believed in London. She agreed that until they were produced with the suggestion that there was documentary evidence, that her evidence had been paid for, that she did not know how the letters got into Crowley's possession.

Mr. Justice Swift: It would be very interesting to know how Crowley came to be in possession of these letters between the defendant's solicitor and this lady.

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.

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.

## CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

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-roguers to rob weak-minded people. I hope this action," he added, "will end for all time the activities of this hypocritical rascal."

Later seeing two jurymen talking together, Mr. Justice Swift stopped Mr. O'Connor in his address.

One of them said: "The jury wish to know whether this is a correct time for us to intervene."

Mr. Justice Swift: You cannot stop the case as against the defendants. You may stop it against the plaintiff when Mr. Eddy has said everything he wants to say.

Mr. Eddy finally addressed the jury for Mr. Crowley.

Mr. Justice Swift, directing the jury, said: "Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by a 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," said the Judge. "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." He asked the jury if they were still of the same opinion as they had intimated earlier?

The foreman said that the jury were unanimous. They found a verdict for the defendants, and judgment was entered for all the defendants, with costs.

Mr. Justice Swift said that there was no reflection upon the solicitor for the publishers and printers.

### **STAY OF EXECUTION REFUSED**

When Mr. Eddy asked for a stay of execution and referred the summing up, Mr. Justice Swift remarked: "I thought I had followed the instruction of Lord Justice Scrutton. I still think that I did, but you can go and point out to him that I did not. Some day another jury will re-investigate this matter."

The Judge refused a stay of execution.

As to the documents in his custody, the Judge told the defence: "We will keep the letters in Court, and we shall certainly have them in proper custody if you take them to another Court."