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AUTHOR AND THE PRACTICE OF MAGIC

Refusal to Make Himself Invisible in Court

Invitations to try his magic and make himself invisible in court were refused by Mr. Aleister Crowley when what has become known as the "Black Magic" libel case was resumed to-day.

Mr. Martin O'Connor in making the suggestion in regard to Mr. Crowley's claim to be able to achieve invisibility, said, "If you don't I shall denounce you as an imposter," to which Mr. Crowley replied, "You can ask me to do what you like; it won't alter the truth."

In further cross-examination, Mr. Crowley denied that at his villa in Sicily a cat was killed in the course of a ceremony and its blood drunk.

In reply to the Judge, Mr. Crowley gave a definition of magic in which he said, "magic is a science or art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will. White magic is if that will is righteous, while black magic is if the will is perverse."

'I ABSOLUTELY REFUSE'
Reply to Counsel's Invitation

The case is being heard by Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division.

Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, is claiming damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled *Laughing Torso*, and Messr. Constable, and Co., 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 upon him.

The defence was a plea of justification.

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

In evidence he admitted that he called himself "Beast 666" and "The Master Therium" (the Great Wild Beast), both out of

the Apocalypse.

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.

Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), resuming his cross-examination to-day, said:

You said yesterday 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 the temple, Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. O'Connor: You said, Mr. Crowley, on a later occasion: "I succeeded in rendering myself invisible." Would you like to try that now? If you don't see, I shall denounce you as an imposter—You can ask me to do what you like. It won't alter the truth.

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (for the publishers and printers), asked the judge's permission to put a few more questions relating to the ceremonies at Mr. Crowley's abbey at Cefalù.

On one occasion, he asked, was an animal killed in the course of a ceremony?

Mr. Crowley: No.

A cat?—No, not to my knowledge.

Was some of the blood of the animal—the cat—drunk?—No. There was no cat, no blood, and no drinking. The whole thing is a fabrication.

Answering Mr. J.P. Eddy in re-examination, Mr. Crowley said he had written and published over 100 books, thousands of poems and over 80 short stories.

"No objection has ever been taken on moral grounds to any books of mine," he declared, "except in the one case of James Douglas's disgraceful attack on *The Diary of a Drug Fiend*, which was published by one of the greatest publishers in London and one of the strictest from a moral point of view."

Mr. Eddy: If you have enemies have you also got friends?—I trust so.

Did one gentleman think it right to write a book about you in your defence?—Yes.

Is that book called *The Legend of Aleister Crowley*?—Yes.

Mr. Eddy questioned Mr. Crowley about his published confessions, and in particular about one incident in his youth when he went roaming with a village girl amid the heather.

How old were you then? asked Mr. Eddy.

Mr. Crowley: I was a boy with a tutor. I was 15 or 16 years old. Roaming in the heather with anyone would be a terrible offence in itself in the atmosphere in which I was brought up. Simply to look at a girl across the street was considered an offence and was dealt with in the severest way.

"I regard life as a sacred trust," Mr. Crowley declared a little later. "We all have to find ourselves spiritually. Many of us make great errors. I don't believe that any human being has been free from error. Many fall by the wayside. Many never seek to attain to the higher life at all. Many waste their lives hopelessly, but those who earnestly aspire to God are led by Him, and all their earlier errors are excuse.

Years of Torture

Asked about black magic, Mr. Crowley said he studied it as a student.

"At that time," he added, "I was coming out from years of torture. I wanted to find out what a church was like. I stole secretly into a church, a Church of England, and was in danger of undergoing the severest penalties, because in the Plymouth Brethren even the act of entering a church when there is no service going on might incur damnation.

My mother refused to go into the church when my aunt was married. She preferred to stay outside in the rain.

Mr. Eddy: Have you at any time practiced black magic?—No.

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

Mr. Eddy: You said you had no hashish at Cefalù, but you had opium?—Yes, in the medicine chest, It is necessary, to carry opium in all hot countries.

Was it there for any magical purpose? No.

And you had strychnine?—It was mixed in pills or tablets I had as tonics.

And heroin?—I had heroin prescribed for me by a Harley-street physician for acute attacks of asthma from which I suffered.

Questioned about his alleged German propaganda during the war, Mr. Crowley said he indulged in it to destroy it. He reported his activities to the chief of the British propaganda organisation, Captain, later Commodore, Gaunt.

He was in communication during the war, he said, with the Hon. Everard Fielding, who was a great friend of his.

"I came back to England immediately after the war," he added, "and if I had been a traitor I should have been shot, and a good job too."

Mr. Crowley said he first saw the passages in Miss Hamnett's book of which he complained only a few days before he issued the writ.

Before Mr. Crowley left the witness-box Mr. Justice Swift asked him for the shortest yet comprehensive definition of magic.

Calling on the Spirits

"Magic," replied Mr. Crowley, "is a science or art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will. White magic is if that will is righteous, while black magic is if the will is perverse."

Mr. Justice Swift: Does it involve the invocation of spirits?—It may do so. It does involve the invocation of the holy guardian angel who is appointed by Almighty God to watch over us.

Mr. Justice Swift: Then it does involve the invocation of spirits?—One spirit. God is a spirit, and they who worship him worship him in the spirit and in truth.

Mr. Justice Swift: Is it in your view the art of controlling spirits so as to effect the course of events?—That is a part of magic; one branch.

Mr. Justice Swift: If the object of the control is good, then it is white magic?—Yes.

Mr. Justice Swift: And if the object of the control is bad, then it is black magic?—Yes.

Mr. Justice Swift: When the object of the control is bad, what spirits do you invoke?—You cannot invoke evil spirits. Invoking means bringing down. You evoke evil spirits; you must call them up.

SPIRIT OF MAGNANIMITY Witness's Story of an Invocation

Mr. Carl Germer, a German now living in England, said he

was a merchant and had written books.

"I have known Mr. Crowley since 1925," he said, "and am a believer in magic in the sense in which he has defined it. I know many people who admire him very highly in Germany and many in America."

Mr. Constantine Gallop (for Mr. Crowley): Throughout the whole of the time you have known Mr. Crowley has he ever advocated or practiced black magic?—Not at all; just the opposite.

Mr. Germer said Mr. Crowley had stayed with him in Berlin.

Mr. Martin O'Connor (cross-examining): Have you ever seen Mr. Crowley invoke spirits?—Yes.

What spirits?—The spirit of magnanimity.

How did you know it was the spirit of magnanimity?—I suppose you have to be sensitive in order to perceive.

Mr. Justice Swift: Can you point to any difference between the spirit of magnanimity and the spirit of hospitality?—I believe so. I think that is very easy.

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

Mr. O'Connor: Where did the spirit come from. It probably came from Heaven?—I don't know.

How long did it stay?—I don't know. I did not have a stopwatch with me. I think you are joking.

Mr. O'Connor: I am.

Me. Germer: I am giving a joking reply.

Mr. Germer said he had seen Mr. Crowley invoke the sun.

Mr. O'Connor: What was the result of the invocation?—None.

Mr. Crowley did not get very far with the invocation business was Mr. O'Connor's comment.

Mr. O'Connor: Are you acquainted with invisible planes?—Yes.

Where could I find one?—The musical plane. Music is invisible.

Have you ever seen any persons on an invisible plane?—No.

I should like to learn black magic. Tell me how I can.—I cannot instruct you.

Do you know any black magician in England who specializes in killing babies?—No.

This concluded the plaintiff's case.

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.

The hearing was adjourned.