

YORKSHIRE TELEGRAPH
13 April 1934

**JUDGE'S SCATHING VERDICT
FOR THE DEFENDANTS.**

**STUFF DECLARED
"HORRIBLE AND BLASPHEMOUS."**

**SCORN ON CLAIM TO BE
"GREATEST LIVING POET."**

"TIGER WOMAN'S" STORY OF THE VILLA.

"DRINKING OF CAT'S BLOOD" ASSERTION.

The jury in the "Black Magic" libel suit, after an earlier intimation of a desire to intervene, to-day found a verdict for the defendants, and Mr. Justice Swift entered judgment for all defendants with costs.

The judge, in his remarks to the jury said: "Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by a man (Mr. Crowley, the plaintiff) describing himself as the greatest living poet."

COPIES OF LETTERS IMPOUNDED.

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, Limited, publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, were joined as defendants.

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

The defence was a plea of justification.

Mr. Crowley denied that he practiced "black magic" at a villa which he occupied at Cefalù, 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 on which her book was based.

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalù 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 never had been any sacrifice of any animal in the ceremony or any drinking of blood.

MRS. SEDGWICK RECALLED.

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 said she had not drugged herself for years.

Witness said she took cocaine when she was 18, but not after she was 25.

Replying to further questions, Mrs. Sedgwick said Raoul Loveday had been very ill six months before she married him, but he got quite fit. He had great nervous energy.

Counsel: Did you try to embark him upon the life you were leading in London?—I was a model, and I sat to keep both of us. We had no money. We were living in a furnished back room, and I earned £1 a day. I sat every day until we went to Italy.

THE MOVE TO SICILY.

Mrs. Sedgwick said one morning a communication came from Mr. Crowley to her husband, summoning him to Cefalù.

Mr. Eddy: Did your husband tell you Mr. Crowley wanted to give you both a change in Sicily, and to enable you to live a clean life there?—No.

Witness admitted she had supplied information to a London newspaper and had been paid for it. She supplied it on her return from Sicily.

While she was in Cefalù there was no other visitor at the house other than the witness and her husband—only the people

of the "Abbey."

Mr. Eddy read from Mrs. Sedgwick's book a passage which ran:

"Raoul rapped on the door; we waited a few moments; the door was flung open; there stood the mystic in all the glory of his ceremonial robes. He had, evidently prepared for our arrival."

Mrs. Sedgwick: I have mixed this up with the clergyman's wife. I am wrong there.

Mr. Eddy: On your return to England was one of the first places you went to the offices of a Sunday newspaper?—Not for a long time—a week afterwards.

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

In a Sunday newspaper of March 4th, 1923, he said there appeared a story headed, "Young Wife's Story of Crowley's Abbey." and Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that this was the information for which she was paid.

Counsel: Did you write the article?—No.

Did you write this book (*Tiger Woman*)?—No.

A few facts, and somebody else has done the rest; is that it?—Yes.

Did it surprise you to see what had been happening (according to you) at Cefalù when you read this story purporting to be your story?—No, it did not.

"THE SCARLET WOMAN."

Counsel read from an article in the newspaper: "We knocked at the door and it was opened by a woman, whom we were to know later as Jane."

"Which of these stories is right?" he asked.

Mrs. Sedgwick: Well, the journalist did it. I told him it was Leah—"The Scarlet Woman"—opened the door.

Mrs. Sedgwick, in reply to further questions, said: "We all pretty well lived in Crowley's room after the pentagram." She persisted that drugs were kept in his desk, which was unlocked, and were available to the people there.

ADHERENCE TO "CAT" STORY.

Asked if there was any 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.

She was turned out of the Abbey, she said, 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 violently 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."

Witness denied she was reckless as to what stories were communicated to the public as true.

DESIGNATION OF "TIGER WOMAN."

Raoul, said witness, was her third husband.

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

Mr. Eddy: Are you a "Tiger Woman?"

Yes.

Why?—Because I am rather feline in looks I thought perhaps it was rather a good name for me.

Mrs. Sedgwick said she slapped her fourth husband's mother because she annoyed her. "You have a very violent nature?" asked Mr. Eddy.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No.

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that she was known as "Letoff," and had received letters signed "Poodlediff" from an old friend of hers.

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

Mr. Justice Swift: Are these produced by Mr. Crowley?—Yes

Do you know how Mr. Crowley got possession of your letters?—I can't imagine how he got them.

Mrs. Sedgwick declared that all the contents of her case were stolen.

Mr. Justice Swift: Where were they stolen from?

Witness: From my cottage, or from the hotel, when I was in London.

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. 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.

COPIES OF LETTERS IMPOUNDED.

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.

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.

It was later indicated that the solicitor would be called later.

COUNSEL AND ARCH-ROGUES.

Mr. Martin O'Connor issued Crowley a 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 practiced 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."

INTERRUPTION FROM JURY.

Seeing two jurymen 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 then made his final submissions and said no reasonable jury could do otherwise than find a verdict in favour of Mr. Crowley, notwithstanding the view that had been indicated. The law of libel was available to everybody whether he was of good or of bad character.

JUDGE'S SCATHING REMARKS.

In his remarks to the jury Mr. Justice Swift said: "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 than which has been produced by the man who describes himself as the greatest living poet."

He asked the jury if they were of the same opinion still.

The jury asked whether they might retire. Mr. Justice Swift said that if there was any doubt about the matter the case must go on.

The foreman said the jury were unanimous. They found a verdict for the defendants. Judgment was entered for all the defendants with costs.

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

Mr. Eddy asked for a stay of execution.

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

In refusing the stay of execution the Judge said: "Some day another jury will re-investigate this matter."