

**THE DAILY INDEPENDENT
SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND
14 APRIL 1934**

JUDGE HORRIFIED BY "BLASPHEMOUS STUFF"

"BLACK MAGIC" VERDICT

JUDGMENT FOR DEFENDANTS

LIBEL SUIT

WOMAN'S STORY CHALLENGED



Aleister Crowley in his ceremonial costume.

Judgment with costs was given for all the defendants yesterday in the "black magic" libel suit. The High Court jury had stopped the case.

Mr. Justice Swift expressed himself strongly on the evidence.

"I have nothing to say to you about the facts except this," said Mr. Justice Swift.

LIVE AND LEARN

I have been 40 years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another.

"I thought that I knew about every conceivable form of wickedness. I thought everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me.

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

"Never have I 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."

The action was for alleged libel which Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, brought against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers.

TIME TO STOP CASE

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. Martin O'Connor, addressing the jury on behalf of Miss Hamnett, suggested that the time had been reached when they should stop the case.

While he was speaking one of the jurors asked Mr. Justice Swift if that was a correct time for them to intervene.

Mr. Justice Swift, explaining the legal position, said that if Mr. J. P. Eddy, K.C. (for the plaintiff), wished to speak to them he was entitled to do so.

After arguments, Mr. J. P. Eddy addressed the jury, after which Mr. Justice Swift made his comments.

When Mr. Eddy continued his cross-examination of Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalu Villa, he 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 that she had not drugged for years. She took cocaine when she was 18, but not after she was 25.

When you married Raoul Loveday, was he in a poor state of health?—No. He had been very ill months before, but he got quite fit. He had great nervous energy.

SLEPT ON MATTRESS

Did you try to embark upon the life you were leading in London, whatever it was?—I was a model, and I sat to keep both of us. I was “sitting” hard because we had no money. We were living together in a furnished back-room, and I earned 1 a day. I say every day until we went to Italy.

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

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

Mr. Eddy put to Mrs. Sedgwick a statement in “Tiger Woman” that “when she and her husband arrived at Cefalu they slept on a mattress on the floor.”

“Yesterday,” observed Counsel, “You said you were told to sleep by yourself.”

Mrs. Sedgwick: Yes, that is right. My husband and I did not sleep together.

There were two mattresses in the room, she said, and her husband slept on one. “He was not allowed to be husband,” she added.

SACRIFICE OF CAT

Mr. Eddy then questioned Mrs. Sedgwick regarding the “terrible sacrifice of a cat.”

“Is there a word of truth in that?” he asked.

Mrs. Sedgwick: Absolutely true—everything about the cat is true.

Are the cats in Sicily—or many of them—wild and destructive animals?—I only knew two, and they were very charming cats.

I am suggesting that if there is any basis for your story, it is that a wild cat was shot?—No, no.

You were living in the house from November, 1922, to March 1923?—Yes.

With your husband.—Not altogether, because I was turned out.

When were you turned out?—I can’t remember. It was near his death anyway—a few days before.

Was your husband well treated in his illness?—I suppose he was in a way.

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

VIOLENTLY ILL

Mr. Eddy said that in her book Mrs. Sedgwick had said he was suffering from etheric.

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

Mr. Eddy referred to another passage describing an occasion when Mr. Loveday drank some spring water, despite a warning from Mr. Crowley not to do so.

"Had the drinking of this water anything to do with his illness?" he asked.

"I should think not," was the reply.

ASKED TO GO

Mr. Eddy: Were you ordered to leave Cefalu, ort did you leave of your own accord?—I asked to go.

Mr. Eddy referred to a passage in the book in which Mrs. Sedgwick said:

"He (Mr. Crowley) ordered me to go and there was a terrible scene. I should have said before that there were several loaded revolvers which used to be about the abbey. They were very necessary for we never knew when brigands might attack us . . .

"I seized a revolver and fired it wildly at the mystic. It went wide of the mark and he laughed heartily.

"Then I rushed at him, but couldn't get a grip of his shaven head. He picked me up in his arms and flung me bodily from the front door."

Mrs. Sedgwick said she didn't see any brigands, but was told they were about.

Mr. Eddy: Yesterday I suggested that you are not here merely out of a sense of duty to assist my Lord and the jury to get at truth, but that you had regarded this case as a means of getting money?—No.

In regard to your position in this case I put it to you plainly that you are here as a "bought" witness?—No. I am here to help the jury.

She admitted having written to Messrs. Waterhouse and Company, solicitors for the printers and publishers, asking for £5 "on account of my personal expenses incurred in connection with my recent services in regard to evidence.

"Are you known as Bumble Toff?" asked Mr. Eddy, handing a letter to the witness.

Mrs. Sedgwick replied that lots of people called her by that name. She did not remember having received it.

Mr. Eddy: Do you know anyone by the name of Poddle Diff?

Mrs. Sedgwick: Yes, he is an old friend of mine?

Have you had letters from Poddle Diff?—Years and years ago.

The letter was not read, and was handed back to counsel.

LETTERS WERE STOLEN"

Witness said she never authorized anyone to extract those letters from her case and give them to Mr. Crowley.

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.

Mr. Hilbery: Were there other letters in the case?—Yes, everything was taken from the case—the contents were all stolen.

Until they were produced here with the suggestion that it was documentary evidence that your evidence had been "bought" did you know that had got into Crowley's possession?—I didn't know at all.

Mr. Justice Swift: Where were they stolen from—From my cottage or from the hotel when I was in London. I always took the case about with me everywhere.

Mr. Hilbery called on Mr. Eddy to produce a letter of 24 February, 1933.

JUDGE'S COMMENT

Mr. Justice Swift: He clearly has no right to have it. Whoever has possession of those letters is in possession of stolen property.

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.

SOLICITOR ABSOLVED

At the conclusion of Mrs. Sedgwick's re-examination, Mr. Hilbery said that was all the evidence he proposed to call subject to the fact that he would like to call Mr. Harper (of Messrs. Waterhouse) when the cheques were available to refute any suggestion that he 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. I suggest they were put in the position by the attitude taken up by the witness.

Mr. Harper was absolved from any implication of purchasing evidence.

Referring to Mr. Crowley's refusal to accept his challenge the previous day to try his magic, Mr. O'Connor (in opening the case for Miss Hamnett) 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."

Mr. O'Connor then suggested to the jury as reported above, that the point had been reached at which they should stop the case.