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**JURY STOP ALEISTER CROWLEY'S
BLACK MAGIC LIBEL ACTION**

JUDGMENT FOR DEFENDANTS

**MR. JUSTICE SWIFT AND
"STOLEN LETTERS" IN THE CASE**

The special jury in the King's Bench Division which has been hearing, before Mr. Justice Swift, Mr. Aleister Crowley's libel action, stopped the case and returned verdicts for the defendants.

Mr. Crowley, an author, claimed damages for alleged libel against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled *Laughing Torso*, Messrs. Constable and Co. Ltd., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers. He complained that the book imputed that he practiced "Black Magic." The defence was a plea of justification.

At the material time Mr. Crowley had a villa on the mountainside at Cefalù, Sicily. He denied that he practiced "Black Magic" there. Miss Hamnett was once one of his students.

The case is being heard before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury.

Resuming his cross-examination yesterday of Mrs. Betty Sedgwick (who stated on Thursday that while she and her former husband were staying at Mr. Crowley's Sicilian villa she saw a cat sacrificed as a part of a magical ceremony), Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley) asked: "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday, would your life be fairly described as drink, drugs and immorality?"

"No," replied Mrs. Sedgwick. She added that she had not drugged herself for years. She took cocaine when she was 18, but not after she was 25.

Living a very fast life in London?—No.

£1 A DAY AS ARTIST'S MODEL

Did you try to embark Mr. Loveday upon the life you were

leading in London, what-ever 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.

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

After your arrival in Sicily, articles about Mr. Crowley appeared?—Yes.

Have you supplied information to a Sunday newspaper?—Yes.

Have you been paid for it?—Yes.

When did you supply that information?—On the day I arrived in England from Sicily.

I am suggesting that you are the source of all these stories about "The Worst Man in the World" (as Mr. Crowley is alleged to have been called). Within how many hours or days of your arrival from Sicily were you at the offices of the Sunday newspaper?—I should think about a week, but I cannot be sure.

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

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

THE CAT SACRIFICE WOMAN INSISTS THAT IT TOOK PLACE

Is there a word of truth in your evidence regarding the "terrible sacrifice of a cat"?—Everything about the cat is true.

Have 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.

Mr. Justice Swift: I do not understand. Was there a cat shot or was there not?

Mr. Eddy (to witness): Did Mr. Crowley shoot a cat himself?—No, he shot a dog outside in the courtyard.

I am suggesting that this statement of yours about the sacrifice of a cat and your husband, who, you agree, was a man of refinement, drinking the blood of the cat, is pure fiction?—No, every word of it is true.

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

With your husband?—Not altogether, because I was turned

out.

Was that because of your husband's illness, to get proper accommodations for you?—No.

When were you turned out?—I cannot remember. It was near his death, any way, a few days before. (Mr. Loveday died at the villa.)

Were the children at the Abbey well cared for?—No.

Were they ill-treated?—No. I do not think they were well brought up and well looked after. They had to fend for themselves, as it were. They were with the peasants most of the time.

FIRED AT CROWLEY

Mr. Eddy read a passage in her book in which Mrs. Sedgwick wrote: "They were delightful children, healthy and well fed, and with no appearance of being oppressed by their unconventional surroundings," and asked "Is that true?"

"I didn't say they were underfed. I didn't approve their upbringing," Mrs. Sedgwick replied.

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

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

"That is true," Mrs. Sedgwick said. "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. I told Scotland Yard I thought it was laudanum poisoning at the time."

Were you ordered to leave Cefalù, or did you leave of your own accord?—I asked to go.

Mr. Eddy read a passage in Mrs. Sedgwick's book, in which she said:

"He (Mr. Crowley) ordered me to go and there was a terrific scene. I should have said before that there were several loaded revolvers which used to lie 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."

Was he a good shot?—No. He shot one dog; others he just wounded.

In reply to another question, Mrs. Sedgwick said Raoul Loveday was her third husband.

How soon after March 1923, did you marry the fourth?—Many years.

In the meantime were you leading an immoral life?—No.

What were you doing to earn a living?—I was a model.

When did you marry your fourth husband?—I have forgotten. About seven or eight years ago.

Your book is called *Tiger Woman*. Are you "Tiger Woman"?—Yes.

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

Nothing to do with your violent nature?—I am not violent.

WOMAN'S WIG PULLED OFF

"Is this a typical thing," asked Mr. Eddy, reading a passage in the book which described a scene with another woman:

"In the room. . . I saw only one vacant chair, on which, after politely obtaining the permission of the man at whose table it was opposite, I sat down.

"My intrusion aroused the resentment of his female companion. She began . . . to try to make me appear ridiculous. . . My wits were far sharper than hers.

". . . She became insulting. My nostrils dilated, as they do when I am angry. Still she continued to jeer at me. This went on for some time. At last she got up and danced with the man who would no doubt have preferred to remain at the table. 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.

"I meant paying dearly for that insult. False teeth, indeed!

"I plunged my fingers into her hair and pulled hard. The result was not what I had expected. I found myself laying in the gutter and, clutched in my right hand—I could hardly believe my eyes—was a chest-nut wig."

Mr. Eddy: You have a very violent nature?—No.

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

How much have you made out of Cefalù up-to-date?—Nothing.

Mrs. Sedgwick added that she received two sums of £25 and £75 for newspaper articles.

In regard to your position in this case, I put it to you plainly, that you are here as a “bought” witness?—I am here to help the jury.

I am suggesting, without making any imputations against the solicitors, that you were obviously unwilling to come unless you were paid to come?—No.

“BUMBLE TOFF”

Mrs. Sedgwick admitted that she wrote 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.” At that time she had been paid between £15 and £20 for expenses of coming up from the country for a few days in connection with the case.

In reply, she received a letter stating, “I am afraid I cannot send you as much as another £5. I am grateful for your help, but I thought previous remittances covered a great deal.”

“Are you known as ‘Bumble Toff’?” asked Mr. Eddy, handing a letter to the witness.

Mrs. Sedgwick replied that lots of people called her that.

Do you know anyone by the name of ‘Poddle Diff’?—Yes; he is an old friend of mine.

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

ALLEGED THEFT OF LETTERS

Mr. Hilbery, K.C. (for the publishers and printers): Did you ever authorise anyone to extract those letters from your case and give them to Mr. Crowley?—No.

Sir Justice Swift: 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.

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 Sir Eddy to produce a letter of Feb. 24, 1933, from the defendants' 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.

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

Mr. Justice Swift: I don't see why we should not use the good ole 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.

Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilbery, and added that the letters should remain in the custody of The Court.

At the end of Mrs. Sedgwick's evidence Mr. Hilbery said he would like to call M. Harper, of Messrs. Waterhouse, to refute any suggestion that he had been a party to purchasing any evidence.

Mr. Eddy: My suggestion 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: Mr. Harper has heard what you said. He will draw his own inference as to what you mean.

SUGGESTION TO JURY

Referring to Mr. Crowley's refusal to accept his challenge the previous day to try his magic, Mr. O'Connor, 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-roguers 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 suggested that the jury should stop the case, say they heard enough of Crowley, and return a verdict for the defendants.

During Mr. O'Connor's speech one of the jury asked whether this was a correct time for them to intervene.

Mr. Justice Swift said counsel for the plaintiff was entitled to address them before they expressed any opinion.

Mr. O'Connor said he had nothing to add and would call no evidence.

Mr. Eddy submitted that no reasonable jury could do other than find a verdict in favour of Mr. Crowley.

JUDGE ON CROWLEY

Mr. Justice Swift then asked the jury if they were of the same mind as intimated earlier, and added:

"I have nothing to say about the case except this: I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another.

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

"I have learnt in this case that one can always learn something more if one lives long enough. I have never 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 foreman said the jury were unanimous, and found a verdict for the defendants.

Judgment was entered for all the defendants with costs.

Mr. Justice Swift (referring to an earlier discussion) said there was no reflection on Mr. Harper.

Mr. Eddy asked for a stay of execution.

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

Mr. Eddy: I was desirous to point out, before the jury gave their decision, exactly what had to be done before a verdict could be returned at all.

Mr. Justice Swift: You shall do that at another place when it seems convenient to you to do it. I thought I had followed the instructions of Lord Justice Scrutton. I still think that I did, but you can go and point out to him that I did not. Someday another jury will reinvestigate the matter.

Mr. C. W. Lilley (for the defence), referring to the documents which the judge had in his custody, said, "If you think it right, pending an application for them to be made on behalf of one party or the other, we should be very glad if they now stay in the custody of the Court."

Mr. Justice Swift: We will keep the letters in court, and we

shall certainly have them in proper custody.