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BLACK MAGIC

Revelations In Court

THE practice of "black magic" was referred to in an extraordinary libel action in King's Bench Division of the High Court (London) which ended on April 13.

"Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous and abominable stuff as that produced by this man, who describes himself as the greatest living poet," said Mr Justice Swift, in summing up the evidence.

The case was that in which Aleister Crowley sued an authoress, Nina Hamnett, for alleged libel of him in her book, "Laughing Torso."

Mr Justice Swift added: "I have been for 40 years engaged in the administration of the law, and I thought I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness. But now I know I can always learn something more."

Crowley alleged that Miss Hamnett imputed that he practised "black magic" at a temple at Cefalu, Sicily, where a baby was once reported to have mysteriously disappeared.

In evidence Crowley, who was educated at Cambridge, denied that he had practised "black magic." He said that he had fought it all his life, because it was suicidal. He had travelled all over the world studying religions.

His temple was decorated with frescoes similar to the religious paintings in Notre Dame, Paris.

Crowley denied that he advised his associates to cut themselves with razors as punishment. He had not forced his men associates to shave their heads, except for a symbolic curl, nor had he forced women to dye their heads red.

He explained that he took the designation "The Beast 666" because it meant "sunlight," and added, amid laughter, "you can call me Little Sunshine."

"Sacrifices"

Crowley also denied that he sacrificed animals and invited people to drink their blood. A charge that he had obscenely invoked the god Pan was untrue. Nor had he published filthy writings, advocating unrestricted sexual freedom.

Counsel read from a book Crowley wrote, stating that bloody sacrifice was the most efficacious way of practising magic, while a human sacrifice was the best.

Crowley explained that that was scientific theory. He denied that a baby disappeared at Cefalu.

Mrs Betty Sedgwick, the authoress of "Tiger Woman," formerly a model for Jacob Epstein, the sculptor, gave evidence that the temple at Cefalu had a "magic circle" on the floor, and improper paintings on the walls. Crowley presided at the ceremonies, in which his "spiritual wife —also named "the scarlet woman"—took part.

Once after three hours of "invocation," a cat was killed, and her husband had to drink its blood.

Counsel for the defence said that Crowley had preyed on weak-minded people for years. He hoped that these proceedings would end his hypocritical activities.

The jury brought in a verdict for Miss Hamnett.

Crowley later said: "The judgment is a verdict of the gods in particular dealing with my soul. I am considering an appeal."