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"BETTY MAY'S" LETTERS

Mr. Crowley Again In Court

JUDGE'S QUESTIONS

How They Came Into A Man's Possession

The hearing of a case for the defence was continued at the Old Bailey, to-day, when the trial of Edward Alexander Crowley, aged 58, who was described as an explorer, was resumed.

Crowley was charged with receiving four original letters and one copy, said to have been stolen from Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, professionally known as "Betty May," an artist's model, of South Hill Park Gardens, Hampstead.

Mr. Melford Stevenson (prosecuting) said the letters disappeared from Mrs. Sedgwick's attaché case, and were later produced during the hearing of a libel action in the High Court in which Crowley was the plaintiff.

The letters referred to the payment of certain expenses by a firm of solicitors to Mrs. Sedgwick, who was a witness for the defence in the action.

Mr. George Mather, a merchant, of Cambridge-terrace, London, continuing to-day his evidence for the defence, said that when he told Crowley that Cruze had the letters in his possession Crowley said he would like to see them and see if they were relevant and he would like copies."

"I got copies of the letters in question," said Mather, "and Mr. Crowley asked me to secure the originals."

Mr. Gallop.—Assume that these letters were stolen. Had you the slightest knowledge that they had been stolen?—None.

HOW HE GOT THEM

The Judge.—Did you form any opinion at all as to how this man came to be in possession of letters not addressed to him?—By reason of their association.

You thought they were given to him?—Yes.

Mr. Gallop.—Were you absolutely innocent of any suspicion that these letters were stolen?—Absolutely.

Mather said that after Crowley asked him to secure the letters he went back to see Cruze and asked him to loan him the letters. Cruze said he wanted them returned after the High Court trial.

GAVE HIM £5

Mr. Gallop.—Was anything said by Cruze on the subject of money?—He said he wanted money to redeem his luggage. It was held for rent. Mather added that he gave Cruze £5 for the letters and handed them to Mr. Crowley.

The Judge.—Where did you get £5 from?—Mr. Crowley.

Mr. Gallop.—Were they lent, obtained or procured for the purpose of being disclosed to the judge and jury in the libel action?—Quite.

Was it the intention that they should be disclosed when Mrs. Sedgwick was in the witness box?—Yes.

Did you see anything wrong in what you were doing and do you now?—Certainly not.

Mather said he was not present at the trial of the action but it came to his knowledge after the action that the letters had been kept in the possession of the court and he endeavoured to find Cruze and tell him so.

Crowley was then called. Taking the oath in a very deliberate fashion, he described himself as an author and poet, writing under the name of Aleister Crowley.

Mr. Gallop.—Is this the first time there has been any charge against you in any place in the world?—Yes.

He said he would first like to say something about some remarks that Mr. Gallop had made in the opening with regard to his book.

"The book which I wrote," he said, "was written in pursuance of my professional duty to professors of medicine."

"IMPERFECTLY INFORMED"

Mr. Gallop.—You disapprove of my comments on the character of that work?—I think you were imperfectly informed. I wrote it in 1897-98.

Apart from the criticism justly or unjustly levelled against you for that book, has anything ever been levelled against your character in any court?—Not in any court.

Were you plaintiff in the action Constable and Another?—I was, and I am.

In the course of that action did you hear that Mrs. Sedgwick would probably be called as a witness against you?—Yes.

Did you form an opinion as to her integrity?—Yes.

In a phrase, did you regard her as a trustworthy person or otherwise?—Otherwise.

“CLEAR AND CONVINCING”

Crowley said that in December, 1933, Mr. Mather told him that Mr. Cruze knew all about the projects of Mrs. Sedgwick, and would disclose the whole affair to him.

“Mather told me,” said Crowley, “a story which I found perfectly clear and convincing. He said Betty May was preparing to commit perjury. That I already knew from several sources.

Mather said Cruze’s story could be substantiated, and that he had some letters in his possession.

“I wanted to know whether these letters did prove the plans of Mrs. Sedgwick that she was going to commit perjury.”

Mr. Gallop.—Was anything said by Mather as to the way the letters came into the possession of Cruze?—He told me the same story he has told to the court.

“BELIEVED EVERYTHING”

Had you any reason to doubt its truth?—None whatever. I believed everything I was told.

Mr. Gallop.—Whether he was right or wrong, did your senior counsel at the libel action take the same view as the solicitor?—Yes.

The Judge.—Did your senior counsel know the circumstances in which you obtained possession of them (the letters)?—I cannot say that, my lord.

Mr. Gallop.—After you had received that opinion did you tell Mr. Mather you would like the use of the originals?—Yes.

Crowley said £5 was handed to Mather by a friend of his he had authorised to pay him.

Mr. Gallop.—Did you at any time suspect that these letters had been stolen?—No.

Did any legal advisor of yours suggest to you the possibility that they might have been stolen?—No.

Mr. Stevenson began his cross-examination by asking Crowley, “Are you representing yourself as a respectable person whose word is to be trusted?”

Crowley.—Yes.

Mr. Stevenson.—I want to read what Mr. Justice Swift said about you. He had listened to your libel action, and the history of your activities for several days?—Yes.

Did he say this, "I thought that 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, abominable stuff as that produced by the man who describes himself to you as the greatest living poet." Is that the view of Mr. Justice Swift, having listened to your activities for several days, expressed about you?

"DISTINGUISHED MEN"

Crowley.—The quotation as far as I know is accurate. He was referring to this book.

Had he listened about your work and activities generally for the past thirty years?—Very little.

Have you been expelled from Italy?—I have, like most distinguished Englishmen.

Have you been expelled from America?—No.

From France?—No.

Have you been refused permission to remain in either of these countries?—In France they refused to renew my permission on a technical point.

Have you been expelled from India?—No.

It is clear when you acquired these letters that Miss Betty May was going to give evidence against you?—Yes.

That is why you wanted the letters?—Part of my reason.

You thought they might be used in cross-examination?—I did not think. I left it to my solicitor to think for me.

It is clear they were letters addressed to Miss Betty May?—Yes.

And you paid £5 for them or somebody did?—Yes.

"SOME COMPENSATION"

Did you think it in the slightest degree likely that that lady would consent to their passing into your possession?—I did.

Judge Whitely.—Why should you give £5 for something you could have got for nothing?—Her consent would, no doubt, be dependent on some compensation.

Had you ever in all your life heard of letters from solicitors arranging for the attendance of witnesses in court being used as security for a loan?—I have no commercial experience.

The Judge.—Did you believe it—that these letters were offered as part security for a loan?—Yes.

SOLICITOR'S STORY

Mr. Isidore Kerman, who said he was senior partner in a firm of solicitors, said he had the conduct of the libel action *Crowley v. Constable*.

Crowley's view, he said, was that Mrs. Sedgwick was trying to sell her evidence to the defendants.

The Judge.—By being paid to give evidence.

Mr. Kerman.—Yes.

Crowley told him Cruze had told Mather that Mrs. Sedgwick had given the letters, together with other documents, to Cruze because she owed Cruze certain money.

Mr. Kerman said the letters were eventually handed to his clerk, and later the originals were enclosed in the brief of Mr. Eddy Crowley's senior counsel in the libel action.

Mr. Stevenson.—It is clear that letters your client was proposing to acquire were documents which were privileged from discovery. They were, in fact letters which had passed between a witness on the other side and solicitors on the other side?—Quite right.

Judge Whitely, summing up, said that Crowley had not been previously charged with any criminal offence at all.

"So far as that is concerned he comes into this court with a good character," the judge added.

Crowley was found guilty and bound over for two years, and ordered to pay a sum not exceeding fifty guineas towards the costs of the prosecution.