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"BLACK MAGIC" LIBEL ACTION

Sequel to Statements in the "Laughing Torso"

MR. CROWLEY'S APPEAL DISMISSED

The appeal in the "black magic" libel action was dismissed to-day by the Court of Appeal.

Giving judgment, Lord Justice Greer said the Court had come to the conclusion that though there might be something to be said in favour of the view that the summing up was not as full as it ought presumably to have been, the only possible result was a verdict for the defendants.

Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, appealed from the judgment of Mr. Justice Swift in an action he brought against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of "Laughing Torso"; Constable & Co., publishers; and Charles Whittingham & Briggs, the printers.

Mr. Crowley said the book imputed to him the practice of black magic. According to him, black magic was "foul and criminal," and he had never practised it.

The case for the respondents was that on Mr. Crowley's admissions in the witness-box, and on statements made in his published works, he had practised a form of magic which was "the negation of what every decent and right-minded person had ever held to be either decent or sacred." They also maintained that his reputation was that of a "black magician."

Mr. Eddy, in reply for Mr. Crowley said that though there was much to suggest that his client had practised magic, there was a vital distinction between white and black magic. The Court might take cognisance of an Act of Parliament passed in 1735.

Lord Justice Greer: If you go back so far as that he would probably have been burned at the stake, whether he called his magic white or black. (Laughter).

"THE ONLY POSSIBLE RESULT"

Lord Justice Greer, giving judgment dismissing the appeal, said the Court had come to the conclusion that though there might be something to be said in favour of the view that the summing-up was not as full as it ought reasonably to have been, the only possible result in this case, having regard to the evidence and admissions of Mr. Crowley, was a verdict for the defendants.

"It is not a question of speculating or guessing," continued the Lord Justice. "I, personally, have come to the conclusion that, however much the contentions of Mr. Eddy had been repeated by the judge, the result would have been exactly the same as it was." For a long time Mr. Crowley had been cross-examined, and he had made admissions in regard to his conduct which Mr. Justice Swift described as admissions of the grossest kind he had heard in 40 years experience at the Bar and on the Bench.

Lord Justice Slessor concurred, and the appeal was dismissed with costs.