

BARRIER MINER
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FARCE IN COURT

ALICE IN WONDERLAND TRIAL.
SECRET RITES

"Are you Cagliostro?"

"Are you James IV. of Scotland?"

These are samples of the questions put by counsel to a witness in the Law Courts yesterday during the hearing of what (says the "Express" of April 15) Mr. Justice Scrutton described as an "Alice in Wonderland" case.

Mystic rites in darkened rooms, the secret of perpetual life clairvoyant manifestations, a Buddhist monk, the influence of the planets, and Rosicrucian rituals were among the subjects discussed. It only remained to introduce the Jabberwock and the question "whether pigs have wings" to complete the entertainment.

The action was brought by Mr. George Cecil Jones, a consulting chemist, who claimed damages for libel from a newspaper called the "Looking Glass." The alleged libel was contained in a series of articles headed "An Amazing Sect," in which grave charges were brought against Mr. Aleister Crowley the "high priest" of the sect.

One of the articles stated:—

"Two of Crowley's friends and introducers are still associated with him—one the rascally sham Buddhist monk, Allan Bennett, whose imposture was shown up in "Truth" some years ago, the other a person in the name of George Cecil Jones, who was for some time employed at Basingstoke in metallurgy, but of late has had some sort of small merchant's business in the city."

Reference was also made in the articles to the Rosicrucian Order, and Mr. Samuel M'Gregor was called by the defence yesterday to show that Mr. Crowley had been expelled from the order. He described himself as "Comte M'Gregor of Gleestrae, External and Internal Head of the Rosicrucian Order."

In reply to Mr. Simmons, counsel for Mr. Jones, he admitted that he was registered at birth as Samuel Liddel Mathers.

"The name of Mathers dates from 1603," he explained. "At that time the name of M'Gregor was forbidden on pain of death, and everyone of the name of M'Gregor at the present day has had another name in the interval."

"Have you asserted that you are Cagliostro?" inquired Mr Simmons.

"No," was the answer.

Or that you were connected with James IV. of Scotland?—Every Scotsman of ancient family must have some connection with the kings.

Have you asserted that King James IV. of Scotland never died?—There is an old tradition of that nature in Scotland, and it forms the basis of one of Allan Cunningham's novels.

Do you assert that James IV. of Scotland is in existence to-day?—All I say is that there is that tradition.

And that his existence to-day is embodied in yourself? Certainly not. You are confusing me with Crowley's aliases.

Do you believe that Count de St. Germain is living?—I refer you to the tradition of the St. Germain family.

When was he supposed to have died?—In 1870.

Do you believe in these traditions?—

That is my private business.

"The Flying Dutchman is a third," suggested the Judge, "if you want to pursue this subject."

And the Wandering Jew," added Mr. M'Gregor.

"Have you any occupation?" inquired Mr. Simmons.

"I have given the best years of my life to the Rosicrucian Order," answered Mr. M'Gregor, who added that there were more than 200 members, but he could not disclose the exact number.

There are secret chiefs?—Yes.

Who are they?—I am sworn not to discuss the matter with you.

"How many persons have you expelled from the order?"

"I shall not say," declared Mr. M'Gregor loudly. "I refuse to answer any more questions."

"I do not want this court to be turned into a place of amusement," declared the judge. "This trial is becoming very like the trial of Alice in Wonderland."

Mr. William Migge, a city merchant, said he attended in the hope of obtaining some five guineas, but did not appreciate the clairvoyant manifestations.

He paid rites, and asked for the return of his money.

"It was ritual under planetary spirits," he explained. "The first rite was the invocation of Saturn, and the room was in darkness."

"What was Saturn going to do for anybody?" demanded Mr. Justice Scrutton.

"I do not know," replied Mr. Migge. "Each performance had a bearing on certain planets."

"Was there one character, taken by a lady, called the Mother of Heaven?" asked Mr. Schiller, for the "Looking Glass."

"Yes."

And another taken by a small girl, called the Daughter of Heaven?—I do not recollect. There was so much incense. I could not see much.

Was one of the people dressed as The Master?—Yes.

When Dr. Berridge, of Gloucester terrace, Hyde Park, was called as a witness he added some indistinguishable words to the oath.

"Kindly do not invent oaths of your own," the judge commanded. "Parliament has invented the oath."

Dr. Berridge hesitated to give certain evidence because there were women in court.

"Oh!" remarked the judge, "any women in court are beyond scruples of that sort."

The jury returned a verdict for the "Looking Glass," holding that the defamatory statements were true.