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BLACK MAGIC AND LIBEL SUIT

Mr. Aleister Crowley's Action

VILLA STORIES DENIED

Aleister Crowley, the author, brought a libel action before Mr. Justice Swift in the King's Bench to-day against Miss Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "laughing Torso." Mr. Crowley alleged that passages in the book imputed that he practiced Black Magic, and he said this was a libel upon him.

Other defendants were Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Biggs, printers.

The defence was a plea of justification.

Opening the case for Mr. Crowley, Mr. Eddy said some people might think Mr. Crowley had shown a want of restraint in some of his works. It might well be that that was, in some measure, due to the fact that he was brought up in the strict environment of the Plymouth Brethren sect.

Two Magics

He inherited a large fortune, and was devoted to poetry, art, travel, and mountaineering. For many years he had been interested in magic—white magic, and had always fought against Black Magic.

Two forms of magic to which Mr. Eddy referred were White Magic and Black Magic, the former, he said, being on the side of the angels and the latter on the side of the devil and all his works.

The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed was that which stressed the will.

In 1920 he started a little community in Cefalu, Sicily, for the purpose of studying that form of magic.

It was an old farmhouse, and Mr. Crowley's bedroom was described as "The room of nightmares" because of fantastic frescoes on the walls. But that had nothing to do with Black Magic.

A passage in the book stated that Mr. Crowley "had a temple called the Temple of Thelema at Cefalu, where he was supposed to practice "black magic."

Baby and Goat

One day, the passage continued, a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was also a goat there. This all pointed to Black Magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

Mr. Crowley, counsel added, denied the suggestion that he supplied the information to Miss Hamnett, who was at one time a student of his.

Giving evidence, Mr. Crowley said he met Miss Hamnett two or three years before the war and employed her in connection with the painting and decoration of his studio in London.

"The villa which I took at Cefalu," continued Mr. Crowley, "was situated on a hillside. I decorated my own room with frescoes similar to religious paintings in the Notre Dame. There were fantastic gargoyles. People said they looked like nightmares.

Raoul Loveday

In 1922, said the plaintiff, a young man Raoul Loveday came to the villa and stayed there until his death in 1923.

His constitution had been weakened by an accident. While jumping from a college at Oxford he was impaled on a spike, where he hung for over two hours before relief arrived.

"Nor did the life he was leading in London before I rescued him do much to improve his health," said Mr. Crowley.