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The "Black Magic" Libel Action

AUTHORESS SUED BY AN AUTHOR

"Laughing Torso" References

PLAINTIFF ON THE INVOCATION OF FORCES

When the hearing was resumed in the King's Bench Division to-day of the libel action brought by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, writer of "Laughing Torso," which he alleged imputed that he practiced "black magic" the plaintiff was further cross-examined.

He remarked that he would like to be hailed as the greatest living poet, adding "the truth will out, you know."

He admitted that he had said "Horatio Bottomley branded me as a dirty degenerate cannibal," and added just afterwards, "I also had the reputation of being the best man in the world."

"Would Like To Be Hailed as Greatest Living Poet"

The hearing was resumed before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division to-day of the libel action by Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," which he alleged imputed he practiced "black magic."

Other defendants were Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, the defence being a plea of justification.

At the material time Mr. Crowley had a villa on the mountain side at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He denied that he practiced "black magic" there.

In his cross-examination yesterday Mr. Crowley agreed that he assumed the designation of "Beast 666," and "The Master Therium" (the Great Wild Beast).

"666 is the number of the sun, and you can call me "Little Sunshine," he added/ He also said he had the distinguishing marks of a Buddha at birth, and still had some of them. He claimed to be a "Master magician," saying that he took a degree which conferred that title.

Is Not that Filth?

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, L.C., for the printers and publishers, in cross-examination to-day, read a poem from the book "Clouds Without Water," and asked Mr. Crowley, "is that not filth?"

Mr. Crowley: You read it as if it were magnificent poetry. I congratulate you.

Later Mr. Crowley remarked "I should like to be universally hailed as the greatest living poet. The truth will out, you know."

Asked about another poem Mr. Crowley said that the author of those words had been "dead for years."

Mr. Hilbery: Is the Aleister Crowley who wrote that dead?

Mr. Crowley: Do I look like it? It is not Aleister Crowley who wrote that. It is an imaginary figure in a drama—I created the drama.

"I created this work of an imaginary author," Mr. Crowley added.

Still another poem was mentioned by Mr. Hilbery, who asked: "Is that anything but disgusting and infamous?"

Mr. Crowley: It means, if I may say so, that even the most vilest of women can, through the influence of love, become a refining and inspiring influence in a man's life."

Horatio Bottomley's View

Mr. Hilbery: Did you say "Horatio Bottomley branded me as a dirty degenerate cannibal?"—Yes.

There was some laughter at this, and Mr. Justice Swift sternly intimated that a repetition of the laughter would cause him to have the court cleared.

"I also had the reputation of being the best man in the world," declared Mr. Crowley a few moments later.

He agreed that he had been depicted with his thumbs in a position representing the horns of a ram. In a London flat which he once had, was "a hall of mirrors the function of which was to concentrate the invoked forces." *On one occasion he invoked the forces, with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants.*

Mr. Hilbery: Was that your black magic or your white magic?—It is white magic in which you protect yourself from such things.

Mr. Crowley said that because of his magic he had once walked in the street in Mexico in a scarlet robe, and with a jeweled crown, without anyone seeing him.

A Villa In Sicily

Mr. Crowley said that at the villa at Cefalu there was "a sort of square box" used as an altar. On it were a book purporting to contain the laws and candles for ceremonial purposes.

Incense, a dagger, and a sword were used, and he wore an appropriate robe.

Mr. Hilbery: In some of the ceremonies were you endeavouring to get concentrated spiritual ecstasy?—Yes.

Did you keep hashish and other drugs at Cefalu?—There was no hashish, but there was opium and strychnine.

Are you skilled to administer hashish?—I can get the desired results in 10 minutes.

Mr. Hilbery, referring to the "abbey" in Sicily, asked "With your approval an inmate had a razor or knife with which to cut himself if he stumbled into using a forbidden word, whatever it was?"

Mr. Crowley: They were not gashes, but minute cuts. You can see marks of them on my own arm.

Asked if heroin was used there, he said that it had been prescribed for him for asthma.

Ritual of Magic Circle

Questioned about the ritual of his magic circle. Mr. Crowley said that he walked round the room in "a sort of threefold step which resembles the waltz. The pace resembles the pace of a tiger stalking the deer," he added. He had never performed a ceremony naked in the presence of another person.