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**BLACK MAGIC LAWSUIT
AUTHORESS SUED BY AN AUTHOR
ALLEGED LIBEL IN A BOOK**



Mr. Aleister Crowley

Extraordinary evidence in which reference was made to "black magic" was given before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench yesterday in an action for libel brought by Aleister Crowley, an author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers.

Mr. Crowley alleged that Miss Hamnett, in her book, "Laughing Torso," included passages that charged him with practicing "black magic." The defence was a plea of justification.

The Plymouth Brethren

Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley) said that some people might think Mr. Crowley had shown want of restraint in some of his works. That might be in some measure due to the fact that he was brought up in the strict environment of the Plymouth Brethren. For many years he had been interested in magic, and had always fought against "black magic," which was 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 at a villa in Cefalu, Sicily, for the purpose of studying that form of magic. A passage in Miss Hamnett's book stated that Mr. Crowley "had a temple called the Temple of Thelema at Cefalu where he was supposed to practice "black magic."

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

"One day (the passage continued) a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. This all pointed to black magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

An Academy of Good Manners

Mr. Crowley, in the box, said he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and inherited between 30,000 and 40,000. He had studied the religions of the world, and had been interested in "black magic" since 1897. 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 village [*sic*] which I took at Cefalu," he continued, situated on a hillside. There was a large room, out of which led other rooms. I decorated it with frescoes similar to religious paintings in Notre Dame. It was known as the Abbey of Thelema, and in 1920, when I first went there, there were four people. Others came and went, but there were never more than eleven."

They formed a household, he went on, and the guiding principle was good manners. The words "Do what thou wilt shall be the will of the law. Love is law, love under will" were the general principles on which, he maintained, all mankind should base conduct. No man has a right to waste his time on doing things which were mere wishes or desires. He should devote himself wholly to his true work in this world. Those words would forbid "black magic" which was suicidal.

"A Foolish Fabrication"

Mr. Eddy.—Did you supply the inmates with razors and command them to gash themselves whenever they used the word "I"?—A foolish fabrication.

Is it true privacy was not allowed?—It is not true. It was particularly necessary to respect privacy because of the accommodation.

Mr. Eddy then put to Mr. Crowley the following particulars in the defence; "Every day after tea plaintiff performed a ceremony known as Pentagram. He entered, robed, a room decorated with cabalistic signs and seated himself on a throne before a brazier containing a charcoal fire, around which were hung sacrificial knives and swords and surrounded by a magic circle.

"The adult inmates were required to attend, and when all were assembled the plaintiff rose, and taking one of the swords held it by pointing to the altar while he intoned an invocation in a strange language. Following this he would walk over to members of his congregation and utter a further incantation while resting the point of the sword on his or her forehead. The plaintiff then proceeded to execute ecstatic dances, lashing himself into a frenzy, brandishing his sword, and leaping the magic circle."

Mr. Eddy.—Is that an accurate account of what was done at Cefalu?—It is not accurate.

Mr. Crowley denied that it was an obscene invocation or that animals were sacrificed, or that he invited people to drink their blood.

Practice of Magic

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (cross-examining).—For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Have you from the time of your adolescence openly defied all moral conventions?—No.

Counsel (reading from Mr. Crowley's autobiography).—"Judaism is savage and Christianity is fiendish superstition." Does that represent your views? He asked. "No," said Mr. Crowley.

Mr. Hilbery.—You have practiced magic from the days when you were just down from Cambridge?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" (the Greek [*sic*] Wild Beast).

Mr. Hilbery.—In 1898 did you get yourself initiated into a secret society called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn?—Yes.

Is it true to say that practically all your works are erotic in tendency and grossly indecent in expression?—It would be entirely untrue to say anything of the kind.

Not Desired by Mussolini

Have you published material which is too indecent to be read?—No. I have contributed certain pathological books entirely unsuited to the general public and only for circulation among students of psycho-pathology.

Were you finally expelled from Cefalu by Fascists?—Like H. G. Wells and other distinguished Englishmen, my presence was not desired by Mussolini.

In 1929 in Paris did they refuse to grant the renewal of your identification cards, so that you had to get out of France?—Yes.

Mr. Hilbery referred to a number of passages in Mr. Crowley's book "The Confessions of Aleister Crowley."

You assert in the book that you had the distinguishing marks of a Buddha at birth?—Yes.

Do you believe that?—Yes. I have got some of them now.

Your magic is like your poems, a mixture of eroticism and sexual indulgence?—It does not involve anything of the kind.

Is the gratification of your own sexual lusts one of your principal interests and pursuits?—No.

Mr. Hilbery read from a poem entitled "Madonna of the Golden Eyes," and suggested that it was highly sexual and highly indecent.

Mr. Crowley.—I cannot see that it is indecent. It is an expression of passion such as you find in "Romeo and Juliet."

In regard to another of his publications, Mr. Crowley denied that his portrayal of a clergyman was a mockery of the Christian point of view. "I am exposing Black Mass," he declared. "I am the modern James Douglas."

Mr. Hilbery.—James Douglas happens to have said of you that you were the worst man in the world.

Mr. Crowley.—I never heard him say it. I think it was Mr. Horatio Bottomley—one of that gang, anyhow.

The hearing was adjourned.