

**THE WESTERN MAIL
AND SOUTH WALES NEWS
CARDIFF, GLAMORGAN, WALES
11 APRIL 1934
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BLACK MAGIC "DENIAL."

Man Who Was Expelled From Italy.

BOOK IMPUTATION ALLEGED.

A man, whom counsel said had been "publicly denounced as the worst man in the world," was plaintiff in an action in the King's Bench Division on Tuesday.

Plaintiff was Aleister Crowley, who alleged that these imputations were contained in Miss Nina Hamnett's book, "Laughing Torso," and he sued Miss Hamnett, the publishers, and the printers.

A denial was made that at a villa in Cefalu, Sicily, where Mr. Crowley established a small community, "Black Magic" was practised.

One room, called the "Room of Nightmares," was covered with fantastic frescoes, but it had nothing to do with "Black Magic."

For many years, said Mr. Crowley, he had been interested in magic, but this was "White Magic," which was on the side of the angels, while "Black Magic" was on the side of the devil.

To a question whether in more than one country he had achieved evil repute, Mr. Crowley said, "No sensible man thinks anything bad of me; it was only a small gang of persons quite unworthy even of my contempt."

Asked why he was expelled from Cefalu by the Fascists, Mr. Crowley said: "Like H. G. Wells and other distinguished Englishmen, my presence was not desired by Signor Mussolini."

£40,000 FORTUNE.

The defence in the case was a plea of justification.

Mr. Eddy, for Mr. Crowley, said the magic in which Mr. Crowley believes was that which stressed the will, and in 1920

he started a little community in Cefalu, Sicily, for the purpose of studying it.

He took an old farmhouse remote from the town, and there he was joined by a little band who at first only numbered five, and never more than a dozen.

Mr. Crowley originally met Miss Hamnett in 1912 or 1913 when she was an art student and employed her in his studio, and in her book she described many of the people she met.

Mr. Crowley, in the witness-box, said he was 58 and the author of many books. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and inherited a fortune of between £30,000 and £40,000.

Mr. Crowley said he took a villa at Cefalu. At first there were only four people there, including himself, a governess, and a small Swiss boy names Hansi. Later, many more people came, and an additional building was taken on another part of the hillside.

Mr. Crowley denied that he told Miss Hamnett the things of which he complained in the book. No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purposes, but the inhabitants were not frightened by it. The inhabitants were all his very good friends.

REPUTATION INJURED.

Cross-examined by Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., for the publishers and printers, Mr. Crowley said he was asking for damages because his reputation had suffered.

Counsel: For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Counsel referred to one of Mr. Crowley's books called "White Stains."

Do you assert that "White Stains" is a testimony to your "pre-ter-human innocence." Is that to try to excuse the book its indescribable filth?—No. This book is a serious study of the progress of man to the abyss of madness, disease and murder. My innocence consists in my thinking it would be taken seriously. You say it is full of unspeakable filth. It is not. There are moments in which the man does go down into all these abominations. It is a warning to people.

Mr. Hilbery: You have made a sonnet of unspeakable filth?—Yes.

The hearing was adjourned until to-day.