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(page 11)

AN AUTHOR & MAGIC

Drugs At Villa In Sicily

"TEMPLE" IN A LONDON FLAT



Miss Nina Hamnett.

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

Other defendants were Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers. The defence was a plea of justification. At the material time Mr. Crowley had a villa at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He denied that he practiced "black magic."

Resuming his cross-examination of Mr. Crowley, Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. read from several of Mr. Crowley's books. After quoting from a poem, Mr. Hilbery asked: "Is that anything but disgusting and infamous?"

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

A War-Time Article

Mr. Hilbery.—Before America came into the war, when the affairs of the Allies were in great jeopardy, did you contribute to a Chicago magazine?—I did.

Counsel read an extract from an article in the magazine. "Did you write that against your own country," he asked. "I did, and I am proud of it," replied Mr. Crowley.

Was it part of the German propaganda in America?—Yes.

And written as such? I endeavoured successfully to have it accepted as such. I wanted to overbalance the sanity of German propaganda, which was being very well done, by turning it into absolute nonsense.

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

You never took any action against the people who wrote and published those things about you?—No.

But because this silly little paragraph in this book appeared you run to your lawyer to bring an action for the injury to your reputation—that reputation being that you are "the worst man in the world.

Did you have a flat in your early days in Chancery-lane?—Yes.

Did you have two temples in that flat?—Yes, but one wasn't really a temple; it was just a lobby.

You said: "I constructed a temple in the flat. It was a hall of mirrors, the function of which was to concentrate the invoked forces"—Yes.

As a part of your magic, do you believe in a practice of bloody sacrifice? I believe in its efficacy.

If you believe in its efficacy, you would believe in it being practiced, and say it could be practiced without impropriety?—I do not approve it at all.

You say (in his book of magic), "For nearly all purposes human sacrifice is best"?—Yes, it is.

Mr. Justice Swift.—Do you say that you don't approve it?—Yes.

Altar In Sicilian Villa

Mr. Hilbery.—At the villa at Cefalu was there an altar for the purpose of the ceremonies?—If you like, yes.

Were there candles upon it which were used for ceremonial purposes?—Yes.

Was incense used?—Yes.

For the purpose of ceremony, did you require a knife?—There were no knives, magically speaking, but there was a dagger and a sword.

Did you keep hasheesh and other drugs at Cefalu?—There was no hasheesh.

Opium?—Yes.

Strychnine?—Yes.

Are you skilled to administer hasheesh?—Yes; I can get the desired results in ten minutes.

I suggest that hasheesh was used for the inmates of your villa?—It was not.

Was heroin used at the villa?—It had been prescribed for me by a Harley-street doctor for asthma.

Mr. Hilbery (referring to the ritual of plaintiff's magic circle).—Did you raise your voice as your ecstasy increased?—I hate raising my voice.

Mr. Justice Swift.—So we have observed.

Asked if he walked round the room, Mr. Crowley said he went round at a pace resembling that of a tiger stalking the deer. He had never performed a ceremony naked—not in the presence of another person.

Judge "Not Trying Shelley"

Mr. Hilbery referred to articles in which Mr. Crowley was described as "the king of depravity," "the wickedest man in the world," the man we would like to hang," "another traitor trounced," and "the notorious Aleister Crowley."

Mr. Justice Swift.—It is said of you: "It is hard to say whether he is man or beast."

Mr. Crowley.—It was said of Shelley that he was sent from hell.

Mr. Justice Swift.—I am not trying Shelley. I am trying your case. When that was said in the public Press did you take any steps to clear your character?—I was 1,500 miles away. I was ill and penniless.

Mr. Justice Swift.—I didn't ask about your health. Did you take any steps to clear your character?—I wrote to my solicitors and then it was impossible.

Mr. Justice Swift.—The answer is that you took no steps to clear your character?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley added that he did not take any action with reference to the earlier articles because he was advised that his action would last fourteen days and that he would have to find £10,000 to fight it.

Mr. Justice Swift.—Now you see how absurd that advice was, because this case won't take anything like fourteen days. I imagine you have not found £10,000, have you?

Mr. Crowley agreed, in cross-examination, that in his "Confessions," he had said that once, in Mexico, he walked in the street in a scarlet robe and with a jeweled crown without anyone seeing him.

Mr. Hilbery.—Was that because of your magic?—Yes.
The hearing was adjourned.