

**THE LIVERPOOL POST
AND MERCURY
LIVERPOOL LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND
13 APRIL 1934
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BLACK MAGIC LAWSUIT

WOMAN'S STORY OF A "SACRIFICE"

ALLEGED KILLING OF A CAT

An invitation to demonstrate magic in court was made by counsel yesterday in the King's Bench when the hearing was continued before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury of the "black magic" libel action.

Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, claims damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," and Messrs. Constable and Company, Limited, the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers. Mr. Crowley complains that the boom imputed that he practiced "black magic," and he declares this is a libel upon him. The defence is a plea of justification.

Suggested Experiment On K.C.

It was Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), resuming his cross-examination, who requested Mr. Crowley to try his magic in court. "You said yesterday," said Mr. O'Connor, "that, as the result of early experiments, you invoked certain forces with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants. Try your magic now on my learned friend (pointing to Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C.). I am sure he will not object."

"I would not attack anyone," replied Mr. Crowley "I have never done wilful harm to any human being."

Mr. O'Connor.—Try your magic now. I am sure my learned friend will consent to your doing so.

Mr. Crowley.—I absolutely refuse.

Mr. Justice Swift.—We cannot turn this court into a temple, Mr. O'Connor.

On a later occasion (continued Mr. O'Connor, to the plaintiff) you said you succeeded in rendering yourself invisible.

Would you like to try that on now, for, if you don't, I shall pronounce you an imposter?—You can ask me to do anything you like. It won't alter the truth.

Counsel then dealt with the ritual observed in the ceremonies at the villa Cefalu, in Sicily. Mr. Crowley denied that a cat was killed in the ceremony, and that part of the cat's blood was drunk by a person taking part.

“Object Of My Magic”

Re-examined by Mr. J. P. Eddy (his counsel), Mr. Crowley agreed that he had studied black magic, though only as a student.

“I was just coming out from years of abominable torture,” he explained. “I wanted to find out what a church was like, and I sneaked secretly into a church at the danger of incurring the severest penalty, because, among the Plymouth Brethren, even the idea of entering a church might have incurred damnation.

Have you at any time practiced black magic?—No.

What is the object of the magic you believe in?—Mt particular branch is the raising of humanity to higher spiritual development.

How do you suggest that that is attained?—In individual cases by various exercises suited to the person, and in the general case by the establishment of the general formula that one should do one's duty in that station of life which God has been pleased to call one.

Mr. Crowley said he merely kept opium and strychnine in his medicine chest for medicinal purposes when traveling in the tropics. He did not keep the drugs for any magical purposes. He had always written about black magic in terms of the strongest condemnation.

When Mr. Crowley's evidence was concluded Mr. Justice Swift asked him to tell the court “the shortest and, at the same time, comprehensive definition of magic which he knew.”

Mr. Crowley.—Magic is the science of the art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will. White Magic is if the will is righteous and Black Magic is if the will is perverse.

Mr. Justice Swift.—Does that involve the invocation of spirits? It may do so. It does involve the invocation of the holy guardian angel who is appointed by Almighty God to watch over each of us.

Then it does involve invocation of the spirits?—Of one spirit. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Is it, in your view, the art of controlling spirits so as to effect the course of events?—That is part of magic—one small branch.

If the object of the control is good, then it is White Magic?—Yes.

If the object of control is bad, then it is Black Magic?—Yes.

Case For The Defence

Opening the defence for the publishers and the printers, Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., said the question for the jury was whether the passages in "Laughing Torso," of which complaint was made, would be read by any reasonable person as worsening the character of Mr. Crowley. What right had a man who had for years been professing contempt for the standards of ordinary decency to complain of injury to a reputation which he had written about himself as being that of the worst man in the world.

The first witness called for the defence was Mrs. Betty May Sedgwick. She said she was formerly the wife of Frederick Charles Loveday, who had been referred to in the case as Raoul Loveday. She was married to Mr. Loveday in 1922. Shortly afterwards they met Mr. Crowley and, up to the end of 1922, Mr. Loveday saw Mr. Crowley from time to time.

Mr. Lilley (for the publishers and printers).—With or without your approval?—With my very strong disapproval.

In consequence of a communication which Mr. Loveday received from Mr. Crowley did you and he go out to Sicily at the end of 1922?—Yes.

Describing the villa, Mrs. Sedgwick said there were five triangular boxes painted in various colours on the floor. On the floor was a red circle. In the centre of the circle was a pentagram. In the centre of the pentagram was an altar. This was just a little higher than an ordinary table. In the center of this table was a star, painted in red. On the table was a box, and in the table was a cupboard. In one corner was a brazier and a bench—an old-fashioned-looking chair. There were many figures on the walls. "They were extremely improper paintings," continued Mrs. Sedgwick.

Ceremonies At The Villa

Asked about ceremonies at the villa, Mrs. Sedgwick said there was only one big ceremony and that was for about twenty-four hours and was the biggest of all.

"About half-past five in the morning," she continued, "the household were aroused and had to go out and face the sun. It was called 'Adoration.' Between four o'clock and half-past four every day the children had to stand and put their hands up to the sun. The evening ceremony was the great thing of the day. Crowley slept the whole day and lived at night. We had high tea, and Crowley would come and ask for a pail of water to wash his hands. After tea, during the Pentagram ceremony the women sat on boxes in the circle."

"It is difficult to remember what happened, declared Mrs. Sedgwick. "everything was grotesque and rather mad. There was a sort of hysterical business. They called on gods. There was an invocation which was first done in English. It was all done with due solemnity. There was an enormous painting in the room—terrible and most indecent."

"A Terrible Sacrifice"

Counsel.—Did you see any sacrifice at all?—I saw a very big sacrifice—a terrible sacrifice—the sacrifice of a cat.

Where was it sacrificed?—In the temple inside the circle and on the altar.

Mrs. Sedgwick explained that the cat had previously scratched Mr. Crowley, who declared it would be sacrificed within three days.

"Everybody was excited because they were going to have the big sacrifice," witness continued. "Mr. Crowley had a knife with a long handle. It was not very sharp. The cat was crying piteously in its bag. It was taken out of the bag and my husband had to kill the cat. The knife was blunt, and the cat got out of the circle. That was bad for magical work.

"They had to start all over again, with the cat having such a gash in its neck that they could have killed it shortly. Finally they killed the cat and my husband had to drink a cup of the cat's blood."

Mr. Eddy (cross-examining).—I suggest you have given evidence which is untrue and which you know to be untrue?—No.

How many times have you been married?—I think four times.

How many times have you been divorced?—Three.

You have written a book called "Tiger Woman"?—Yes.

Are you here just to assist the course of justice?—Yes.

The cross-examination of Mrs. Sedgwick was not completed when the hearing was adjourned until to-day.