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INVITED TO "TRY MAGIC" IN COURT

Author's Emphatic Refusal

VILLA IN SICILY

Ceremonies Described by a Woman

Before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury, in the King's Bench Division, yesterday, the defence was opened in the "Black Magic" libel action.

Mr. Aleister Crowley, an author, claimed damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, the authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," which he alleged imputed that he practised "black magic."

Other defendants were Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Charles Whittingham and Griggs, 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 practised "black magic" there.

Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), resuming his cross-examination, invited 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."

Mr. Crowley: I absolutely refuse.

Mr. Justice Swift: We cannot turn this court into a "temple."

Mr. O'Connor (to Mr. Crowley): On a later occasion 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.

Mr. Crowley denied that he supplied Miss Hamnett with the information on which the book was based, and that, after the book was published, he read it and said that all the stories were

correctly reported, except that it was the wrong woman who was mentioned.

Counsel then dealt with the ritual observed in the ceremonies at the villa at Cefalu.

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.

40 YEARS AGO **Mr. Crowley "Roaming the Heather"**

Re-examined by Mr. J. P. Eddy, Mr. Crowley said no objection had ever been taken on moral grounds to any of his books, "except the case of Mr. James Douglas's disgraceful attack on his drug fiend book, which was published by one of the strictest publishers from the moral point of view.

Did one gentleman write a book about you in your defence?—Yes.

Mr. Eddy next asked Mr. Crowley about a passage in his "Confessions" (concerning which he had been cross-examined), and said the passage referred to a village girl, and showed that Mr. Crowley "went roaming with her amid the heather."

"How old were you?" asked Mr. Eddy.

"I was a boy, 15 or 16," replied Mr. Crowley. "Roaming the heather with anyone is a terrible offence in itself in the surroundings in which I was brought up."

Mr. Eddy: Whether it was an offence or not, was it over 40 years ago—Yes.

Mr. Justice Swift: How long ago is it since you published an account of it?—The date of the publication is 1929.

As late as 1929 you were publishing these stories as interesting incidents about your life?—As instructive incidents.

As instructive of what?—I must tell your Lordship I regard life as a sacred trust. We all of us have to find ourselves spiritual truth, and many of us make great errors. I don't believe that any human being has been free from error. Many never attain to the highest at all. Many waste their lives hopelessly; but those who earnestly aspire to God are led by Him, and all their early errors are excused.

Asked the object of the book, "Confessions," Mr. Crowley said "The main object is to give an account of the development of my character. I specialised in mountaineering, and hold many mountaineering records. still."

Mr. Eddy: These books describe what you were doing in various parts of the world?—I gave an account of all incidents which I considered relevant.

Object of Magic

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 practised black magic?—No.

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

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 it for any magical purposes.

When Mr. Eddy was referring to an article in 1933 concerning Mr. Crowley's German propaganda in America, Mr. Justice Swift remarked, "When he was writing in America, he was writing for American citizens and carrying out the old adage about what you should do in Rome. But in 1933 he had come back to this country, and, not only was the War over, but he was about to appeal to the 'burgesses and churls.' " (A reference to one of Mr. Crowley's poems.)

Mr. Eddy: If there was German propaganda, why did you indulge in it?—In order to destroy it. I reported my activities to the chief of our organization, Captain (later Commodore) Guy Grant, and was in communication with the Hon. Everard Fielding. I came back immediately after the War, and if I had been a traitor I should have been shot—and a good job too.

Counsel quoted the following from a newspaper article written by Mr. Crowley: "I have been accused of being a black magician. No more foolish statement was ever made about me. I despise the thing to such an extent that I can hardly believe in the existence of people so debased and idiotic as to practise it."

"Does that represent your true view about black magic?" Mr. Eddy asked.

Mr. Crowley said it did, and that he had always written about black magic in terms of strongest condemnation.

Black Magic Defined

When Mr. Crowley's evidence was concluded, and he was about to leave the witness box, Mr. Justice Swift asked him to give "the shortest, and at the same time comprehensive definition of magic which he knew."

Mr. Crowley: Magic is the science or the art of causing change to occur in conformity with 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 affect the course of events?—That is part of magic, one small branch.

If the object of control is good, then it is white magic?—Yes.

If the object of the control is bad, what spirits do you invoke?—You cannot invoke bad spirits. You must evoke them and call them out.

When the object is bad, you evoke evil spirits?—Yes. You put yourself in their power. In that case, it is possible to control evil spirits for a good purpose. As we might if we use the dangerous elements of fire and electricity for heating and lighting, etc.

Spirit of Magnanimity

The next witness was Carl Germer, who said that he was a German at present living in this country. He had known Mr. Crowley since 1925. Mr. Crowley was his guest at his house in Germany for several months. He believed there was black magic. Mr. Crowley had never practised or advocated black magic in his hearing.

Asked the difference between black magic and white magic, Mr. Germer said, "Black magic is sinister, and tries to do harm to others. White magic would define people who work for the benefit of others.

Cross-examined, Mr. Germer said he had seen Mr. Crowley invoke spirits.

Mr. O'Connor: What spirits?—The spirit of magnanimity.

How do you know it was the spirit of magnanimity?—I suppose you have got to be sensitive in order to perceive.

Mr. Justice Swift: Can you point to any difference between the spirit of magnanimity and the spirit of hospitality?—I believe so. I think that is very easy.

You are sure it was the spirit of magnanimity which came and not the spirit of hospitality?—I believe so.

Mr. O'Connor: Where did it come from?—It probably came from heaven. I don't know.

How long did it stay?—I didn't have a stop watch. I think you are joking.

"Yes, I am," said Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. O'Connor: I look upon this as an archpiece of imposture. Where did it go to after the visit?—I don't know where it went to.

"I have seen him invoking the sun." said Mr. Germer later.

Mr. O'Connor: What was the result of the invocation?—Nothing.

Are you acquainted with invisible planes?—Yes.

Where can I find one?—The musical plane. Music is invisible.

Have you seen persons on the invisible planes?—No.

I should like to learn a little black magic. Tell me how I can?—I cannot instruct you on it.

Do you know any black magicians who specializes in killing babies?—I do not.

The case for Mr. Crowley was concluded.

Opening the defence of the publishers and the printers, Mr. Hilbery said the question for the jury was whether the passages in "Laughing Torso" of which complaint was made could 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 about himself as being that of the worst man in the world?

Mr. Hilbery asked the jury to say that the whole chapter in the book referring to Mr. Crowley was nonsense, written in no unkindly spirit and without malice.

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. Shortly after their marriage they met Mr. Crowley,

and up to the end of 1922 Mr. Loveday saw Mr. Crowley from time to time, with her very strong disapproval.

In consequence of a communication which Mr. Loveday received from Mr. Crowley, she and her husband went out to Sicily at the end of 1922. They arrived at the villa at Cefalu about seven o'clock one evening, when it was dark. Raoul knocked at the door, and Leah opened it. Crowley was just walking along, and he came to the door just as Leah was opening it.

Arrival at the Villa

"I think he did not expect us quite so soon," said Mrs. Sedgwick. "Crowley said, 'Do what thou wilt shall be the will of the law.' Raoul answered 'Love is the law; love under will.' Crowley said to me 'Will you say it?' I said, 'I will not.' Crowley said, 'You cannot come into the Abbey unless you conform to the rules of the Abbey. This is the beginning, the first rule of the Abbey.' I had eventually to make the reply. Then I was admitted."

Describing one part of the villa, Mrs. Sedgwick said there were five triangular boxes, painted in various colours, on the floor; on the floor also was a red circle—quite a large 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 centre of this 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. "The altar had seven sides. It was painted white.

"When we arrived, Leah said, 'We must get you some tea,' Crowley said, 'Before they have tea, the book must be signed.' We were shown a book. You had to conform to the rules of the Abbey—and there were some very odd rules. I refused to sign. My husband did. I was ordered out of the Abbey unless I signed the book. I had no money. Ultimately I had to sign.

Asked where she slept that night, Mrs. Sedgwick said, "I was told I had always from that moment to sleep by myself in a room next to Crowley's bedroom."

CEREMONIES

Household Turn Out and Face the Sun

"The rules doe the day," said Mrs. Sedgwick, "were typed by the secretary of the Abbey and pinned to the door. We knew they came from Crowley.

Asked about ceremonies at the villa, Mrs. Sedgwick said there was only one big ceremony. It lasted for about 24 hours.

"About 5.30 in the morning," she continued, "the household were aroused, and had to go out and face the sun. It was called 'adoration.' Between 4 and 4.30 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 asked 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, and it really worries me to think about it."

Mrs. Sedgwick said Mr. Crowley was the head of the ceremony, and wore a robe of bright colours. A scarlet woman took part in the ceremony. She was the spiritual wife of Mr. Crowley, and had a magical name, which witness could not remember.

"Hysterical Business"

"People assembled in the room," said Mrs. Sedgwick, "and there were little triangular boxes on which they sat. In one corner was a chair, in which Mr. Crowley sat in front of a brazier, in which incense was burned. There were passes made with a sword, and then Crowley would go up with the sword and breathe a person into him and then out of him.

"That took place every evening, and one Friday there was a special ceremony, which was longer. The scarlet woman then wore under her robe a jeweled snake. There was a sort of hysterical business. They called on gods. There was an invocation, which was first of all done in English.

"It was all done with due solemnity. It was done in a room that had two long closed doors. There were two narrow beds. On one there was Mr. Crowley's sleeping bag. There was an enormous painting, too, in the room."

Mr. Lilley (for the publishers): What was it like?—It was terrible.

Do you mean it was indecent?—Most.

There was a medicine chest?—I don't think it was a medicine chest, but there were places where you could see where to get various things in the way of drugs.

Were some of the name son them?—They were all marked.

Tell us some of the drugs.—There was a bottle of hashish in liquid form. There was a bottle of morphia and of ether.

Was there a rule about the use of any particular word?—Yes, the word "I." Raoul was told he was on no account to use the word "I." If he did, he was to cut himself in order to remember.

Alleged Cat Sacrifice

Mr. Lilley: 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," said Mrs. Sedgwick. 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 young husband had to drink a cup of the cat's blood."

Evidence Challenged

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.

Before you went to Cefalu, were you a decent citizen or not?—I was, I think. Yes, Of course I was. Yes, I was.

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

Does it purport to be an autobiography of yourself?—Yes.

Is it true?—My whole early life and my latter life is very true, but there is one little thing that is untrue.

Mr. Eddy: Are you here as a simple witness of truth, or are you here to sell your evidence at a price?

Mr. Hilbery: Does that mean to be an imputation that we have bought this evidence. Because, if so, I resent that.

Mr. Eddy (to the witness): I shall not put any suggestion that cannot be supported by documents. Are you here just to assist the course of justice?—Yes.

Are you here because you wanted to make money out of this case and to sell your evidence?—But I have been subpoenaed to come here.

Mrs. Sedgwick admitted that part of her book was written as "padding," and was not true.

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