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(page 3)

GREATEST POET AMBITION.

MR. CROWLEY DEFENDS HIS WRITINGS.

SACRIFICE A PART OF MAGIC.

The hearing was resumed before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division yesterday of the libel action by Aleister Crowley, against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," which he alleged imputed that he practised "Black Magic."

Other defendants were Constable and Company, Ltd., publishers, and Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, the defence being a plea of justification.

At the material time Mr. Crowley had a villa on the mountainside at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He denied that he practised "Black Magic" there.

Resuming his cross-examination Mr. Hilbery, K.C., referred to a book entitled "Clouds Without Water," upon which he suggested Mr. Crowley had built his reputation as an author.

Mr. Hilbery, having read a poem, asked: "Is that not filth?"

Mr. Crowley: You read it as if it were magnificent poetry. I congratulate you.

Depends on Views.

Referring to "Clouds without Water," Mr. Crowley said that the book has only been circulated in a very small way.

Mr. Hilbery: Do you want your reputation to be wider?—I should like to be universally hailed as the greatest living poet.

Later Mr. Crowley said: It is not Aleister Crowley who wrote that. It is an imaginary figure in a drama. I created the drama.

Mr. Hilbery next quoted from a volume entitled "The Winged Beetle." "Are those poems all erotic?" he asked.

"No," replied Mr. Crowley.

Would it be true to say that book like these others contains disgusting words?—It all depends upon your views.

Influence of Love.

Mr. Hilbery, after quoting from another poem, asked "On any basis, literary or otherwise, 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.

"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 and I am proud of it."

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

And written as such?—I endeavoured successfully to have it accepted as such. What I wanted to do was to overbalance the sanity of German propaganda, which was being very well done, by turning it into absolute nonsense. How I got Mr. —— to publish that rubbish I cannot think. He must have been in his dotage.

Bottomley's Attack.

Mr. Crowley admitted that he was the author of a publication in 1922 entitled "The Diary of a Drug Fiend" which was assailed in the Press.

Questioned about a newspaper article, Mr. Crowley admitted that he wrote: "I have been shot at with broad arrows. They have called me the worst man in the world."

Mr. Hilbery (reading from the article): "They have accused me of doing everything from murdering women and throwing their bodies in the Seine." Is that true?—I hear a canard about me every week.

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

Walked Unseen.

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

Mr. Hilbery: Was that because of your magic?—Yes.

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

Mr. Hilbery: With your approval an inmate (in a villa) had a razor knife with which to cut himself if he stumbled into using a forbidden word, whatever it was?—They were not gashes but minute cuts. You can see marks of them on my own arm.

The hearing was adjourned.