

**THE HALIFAX DAILY COURIER
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**VERDICT FOR DEFENDANTS IN
"BLACK MAGIC" LIBEL ACTION.**

MR. ALEISTER CROWLEY LOSES.

JUDGE'S SCATHING COMMENTS

"DREADFUL, HORRIBLE ABOMINABLE STUFF"

A Lesson After 40 Years' Experience

The hearing was resumed by Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury, in the King's Bench Division, to-day, of the "Black Magic" libel action, brought by Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso." Messrs. Constable and Company, Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, were joined as defendants. Mr. Crowley complained that the book imputed that he had practised "black magic," which, he said, was a libel upon him. The defence was a plea of justification.

When Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband died at the Sicilian villa, was cross-examined, she declared that she slapped her fourth husband's mother because she annoyed witness. Mrs. Sedgwick also said she described herself as "Tiger Woman" (the title of a book she wrote), because "I am rather feline in looks."

The jury returned a verdict for the defendants, and there was judgment for all the defendants, with cost.

Mr. Justice Swift, directing the jury, said "Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by a man describing himself as the greatest living poet. I have been over 40 years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another. I thought that I knew of every conceivable form of wickedness. I thought that

everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me. I have learnt in this case that we can always learn something more, if we live long enough."

Mr. Crowley denied that he practised "black magic" at a villa which he occupied at Cefalu, Sicily, and which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He admitted that he called himself "Beast 666" out of the Apocalypse. Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he denied that he supplied to her the information on which her book was based.

"NOT DRUGGED FOR YEARS."

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalu villa in Sicily, was again cross-examined by Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley). He asked "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday would your life be fairly described as drink, drugs and immorality?"

"No," replied Mrs. Sedgwick, who said she had not drugged herself for years.

She denied she was living a very fast life in London. "I was a model and I sat to keep both of us," she added. Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that on the day of her arrival in England from Sicily, she supplied information to a Sunday newspaper.

"I am suggesting," remarked Mr. Eddy, "that you are the source of all these stories about 'The worst man in the world.' "

THE CAT SACRIFICE.

Asked if there was a word of truth in her evidence about the "terrible sacrifice of a cat," she replied, "Absolutely true—everything about the cat is true."

Mr. Eddy: Are many of the cats in Sicily wild and destructive animals?—I only knew two and they were very charming cats.

Mr. Eddy suggested that the shooting of a wild cat by Mr. Crowley was the basis for her story?

Mrs. Sedgwick: No, no.

She was turned out of the "Abbey" a few days before her husband's death.

Mr. Eddy: What was he suffering from?

Mrs. Sedgwick: I have no idea. I thought it was laudanum poisoning.

Mr. Eddy pointed out that in her book, Mrs. Sedgwick had said he was suffering from enteric.

"That is true," Mrs. Sedgwick explained. "After he drank the cat's blood he was violently ill and sick and Mr. Crowley gave him laudanum, a lot of it as medicine. I told Scotland Yard I thought it was laudanum poisoning at the time.

HER FOURTH HUSBAND.

Raoul was her third husband.

Mr. Eddy: When did you marry your fourth?—I have forgotten. About seven or eight years ago.

The fourth husband had a very serious illness didn't he—The fourth, I don't think so.

Mr. Eddy quoted from "Tiger Woman" (Mrs. Sedgwick's book) the fourth husband's mother as saying "You foul, wicked woman. You are killing my son."

Mr. Eddy: Are you "Tiger Woman"?—Yes.

Why?—Because I am rather feline in looks. I thought perhaps it was rather a good name for me.

Mrs. Sedgwick said she slapped her fourth husband's mother because she annoyed her.

SEEN AT A TABLE.

Mr. Eddy quoted from the book a passage describing how she aroused the resentment of a man's female companion by sitting at the same table. "She became insulting," the passage continued. "My nostrils dilated as they do when I am angry. At last she got up and danced with the man. As they passed by, she looked backwards at me and said, 'She is a pretty little thing, but it is a pity she has false teeth.'

"I jumped up and slapped her as hard as I could on the face. Waiters immediately bundled us upstairs into the street, fighting all the time. I meant paying dearly for that insult. False teeth indeed. I plunged my fingers into her hair and pulled hard. The result was not what I had expected. I found myself lying in the gutter and clutched in my right hand—I could hardly believe my eyes—was a chestnut wig.'

"You have got a very violent nature"? asked Mr. Eddy.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No.

"BUMBLETOFF" AND "POODLEDIFF"

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that she was known as "Bumbletoff" and had received letters signed "Poodlediff" from an old friend of hers.

After questions about other letters, Mr. Eddy asked, "Did you ever authorize anyone to extract those letters from your case and give them to Mr. Crowley?"—No.

Mr. Justice Swift: Are these produces by Mr. Crowley?—Yes.

Do you know how Mr. Crowley got possession of your letters?—I can't imagine how he got them.

"STOLEN" LETTERS.

Mrs. Sedgwick declared that all the contents of her case were stolen.

Mr. Justice Swift: Where were they stolen from?—From my cottage or from the hotel when I was in London. I always took my case about with me everywhere.

Mr. Hilberry called on Mr. Eddy to produce a letter of February 24, 1933, from the defendant's solicitor to Mrs. Sedgwick.

Mr. Justice Swift: He clearly has no right to have it. Whoever has possession of those letters is in possession, according to this lady's evidence, of stolen property. They have no right to have it. Merely asking somebody whom you suspect of being in possession of stolen property to produce it doesn't give you the right to give secondary evidence of the document, if that person doesn't produce it.

Mr. Hilberry: The witness says she has been permanently deprived of the possession of the letters against her will.

Mr. Justice Swift: I don't see why we should not use the good old English word "stolen," if the facts warrant it. We shall never know, in this case, how, because we shall have no opportunity of finding out, but it would be very interesting to know how Mr. Crowley came to be in possession of these letters.

IN CUSTODY OF COURT.

When some of the copies of the missing letters were produced and referred to Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilberry that they should remain in the custody of the court. He instructed the associate of the court to keep them until the case was over.

"Then remind me to discuss them again please," he added.

Mr. Hilberry said this was all his evidence. He wished, however, to refute any suggestion that the solicitors instructing him had been a party to purchasing any evidence.

Mr. Eddy: My suggestion was, is, and will be, that money explains the presence of Miss Betty May (Mrs. Sedgwick) in the

witness-box. I do not make any sort of imputation upon the solicitors.

Mr. Justice Swift: Does not money play a very important part in producing in the witness-box most witnesses who have no interest whatever in the case?—They all expect to get their expenses.

Mr. Eddy: I am not prepared for a single moment to assume that the money paid this woman really represented expenses. My position is that she was, in fact, demanding money and getting it. It was indicated that the solicitor should be called later.

“ARCH-HUMBUG.”

Mr. Martin O'Connor, for Miss Hamnett, referring to Mr. Crowley's refusal to accept his challenge to try his magic in court, said it was appalling that “in this enlightened age, a court should be investigating magic which is arch-humbug, practiced by arch-rogues to rob weak-minded people.

JURYMEN'S QUERY.

Later, seeing two jurymen talking together Mr. Justice Swift stopped Mr. O'Connor in his address.

One of them said, “the jury wish to know whether this is a correct time for us to intervene.”

Mr. Justice Swift: You cannot stop the case against the defendants. You may stop it against the plaintiff, when Mr. Eddy has said everything he wants to say.

Mr. Eddy finally addressed the jury for Mr. Crowley.