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**BLACK OR WHITE MAGIC.**

**PRACTISED BY 'THE  
WORST MAN IN THE WORLD.'**

**Devotees Drink Blood  
of Slaughtered Cats.**

According to evidence given at a recent trial in England there was in existence in Sicily a strange society, one of whose customs was to slaughter cats on an altar. The blood was then drunk by those present. The head of the society was an Englishman.

In the King's Bench Division, London, before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury, the hearing took place of an action by Mr. Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley, and author, of Carlos Place, Grosvenor Square, W., against Constable and Co., Limited, of Orange Street, W.C. Charles Whittingham and Griggs (printer) Limited, of Brunswick Park road, London, and Miss Nina Hamnett in respect of an alleged libel in a book entitled "Laughing Torso," published, printed, and written by the defendants respectively.

The defendants denied that the words complained of were defamatory and further pleaded that, if they were, they were true in substance and in fact.

Mt. J. P. Eddy, who appeared for the plaintiff, said that "Laughing Torso" purported to be an account of the authoress' own life, with intimate studies of her friends and acquaintances. Mr. Crowley complained that in that book he was charged with having practiced that loathsome thing known as Black Magic. So far from it being true that Mr. Crowley had ever practiced Black Magic, he had been fighting it for years. The magic on which he placed stress was connected with the importance of the will. He thought that no one could achieve anything in the world unless he ascertained what he was fitted for, and then followed his true purpose. In 1920 Mr. Crowley started a little

community or order at Cefalu, in Sicily, to study that form of White Magic. He took an old farmhouse on a hillside remote from the town, and there he was joined by a little band of people—men and women and occasionally two or three children. Mr. Crowley's bedroom at the farmhouse was called "the room of nightmares," because he had covered the walls with fantastic frescoes. It had nothing in the world to do with Black Magic. The community did nothing remotely resembling Black Magic. In Miss Hamnett's book the following passage occurred:—

Crowley had a temple in Cefalu, in Sicily. He was supposed to practice Black Magic there, and one day a baby was said to have disappeared mysteriously. There was also a goat there. This all pointed to Black Magic, so people said, and the inhabitants of the village were frightened of him.

That was quite inaccurate. No child disappeared mysteriously, and the only goat on the premises was kept for its milk.

### **"A SYMBOLIC CURL."**

Mr. Crowley, giving evidence, said that Black Magic was never practiced at Cefalu. The visitors did not give any understanding to obey him in everything.

Did you supply the inmates with razors, commanding them to gash themselves whenever they used the word "I"?—That is a foolish fabrication.

Is it true that privacy was not allowed and that ablutions had to be done in public in the courtyard?—No.

Mr. Crowley said that it was not correct that he made the men shave their heads, except for a symbolic curl in front, nor that he made the women wear their hair short and dye it red for six months. He also denied that he ever performed at Cefalu the "Ceremony of the Pentagram" in a room decorated with cabalistic signs and sacrificial knives, intoning incantations and finally performing ecstatic dances and lashing himself into a frenzy. Nor, on Fridays, did he conduct an obscene invocation to Pan. He did not sacrifice animals and invite the inmates to drink their blood.

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C., for the publishers and printers (cross-examining): For a number of years have you been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest type of newspaper.

From the time of your adolescence have you openly denied all moral conventions?—No.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he had practiced magic since the days when he had come down from Cambridge, and that he had taken the motto of "Frater Perdurabo."

Did you take to yourself the designation of "The Beast, 666?"—Yes.

Do you call yourself the "Master Therium?"—Yes.

What does "Therium" mean?—Great wild beast.

Do these titles convey a fair expression of your practice and outlook on life—"The Beast 666," only means "sunlight." You can call me "Little Sunshine." (Laughter).

Have you published material too indescribably filthy to be read in public?—No. I have contributed to certain pathological works which were only for circulation among students.

Mr. Crowley admitted that the police at Cefalu asked him to leave, but said that the same thing occurred to a great many other distinguished Englishmen. He claimed to be a master magician and had taken the degree that conferred that title. He denied that in his published works he had advocated unrestricted sexual freedom. He had protested against the sexual oppression that existed in England.

### **MAKING A SKELETON LIVE.**

Mr. Crowley said that last June he supplied the material for an article in a Sunday newspaper. In that article it was stated:—"They have called me the worst man in the world." In the article he said that practically the whole of his life had been spent in the study of magic. As the result of early experiments he invoked certain forces with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants. On a later occasion he succeeded in rendering himself invisible. On another occasion he placed a dead bird in a skeleton's mouth to see if he could make the skeleton live as he had been reading about such phenomena in some medieval book. All these experiments, however, were connected with the practice of White Magic and not with that of Black Magic.

Mr. Crowley said that at one period he conducted ceremonies of the "rites of Illusis," and as a result a being was caused to take human form and be seen

Was not one of the rule which you enjoined in the Abbey that nobody should use the first person singular "I" except yourself as master?—That is not true at all.

Was it with your approval that an inmate had a razor or a knife with which to cut himself if he stumbled into using the

forbidden word?—Yes. But it did not cause gashes. They are minute cuts. You can see marks of them on my own arm.

Referring to certain of the ceremonies Mr. Crowley denied that he worked himself up until his voice rose to a shriek. During the ceremony he walked round the temple.

In the circumambulation did you use a dancing step?—There is a three-fold step which sometimes resembles a waltz, but it was not done as a dance.

Mr. Crowley said that he went round the floor at a pace which resembled that of a tiger stalking a deer. He had never performed a ceremony naked in the presence of any other person.

Mr. Crowley, further cross-examined by Mr. Martin O'Connor (who appeared for Miss Hamnett) was asked to try his magic on Mr. Hilbery, to attack him and to see if he could do him "any harm." Mr. Crowley declined to do so.

Mr. O'Connor: You say that on one occasion you rendered yourself invisible. Would you like to try to do so now, for if you do not I shall denounce you as an imposter?—You can ask me to do anything you like, but it will not alter the truth.

Asked by Mr. Hilbery whether during one of the ceremonies at the house at Cefalu, a cat was killed, Mr. Crowley denied that that was so.

### **"UNBRIDLED LICENCE."**

Mr. Hilbery, opening the defence, said that Mr. Crowley since 1898 had written and published books and poems which he had himself described as "the excreta of Aleister Crowley." He had put himself before the public with challenge after challenge to all those standards of decency, conduct, and morality to which ordinary people subscribed in their daily lives, reserving to himself, presumably, a freedom which might be described as unbridled licence. Having put himself before the world in that light, could he complain if the world regarded him in the light he had so proclaimed?

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, formerly the wife of Frederick Charles Loveday, who was known as Raoul, said that she and her husband met Mr. Crowley in 1922. Her husband saw Mr. Crowley from time to time against her wishes. In November, 1922, she and her husband went to Cefalu. On their arrival Mr. Crowley greeted them with the words, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." Raoul answered: "Love is the law. Lover un-

der will." Mr. Crowley asked her to say the same words, but she refused.

Describing the big room in the house, Mrs. Sedgwick said that there was a large red circle on the floor in the centre of which was painted a pentagram. In the centre of the pentagram was a seven-sided star painted on it. On it was a book and candles. In one corner of the room was a brazier and a bench, and there were some extremely improper paintings on the wall.

Mr. Crowley would sleep all day and "live" at night. At tea-time he would appear. After the meal a ceremony would take place. Mr. Crowley wore a robe with a cowl, and his "spiritual wife" also took part in the ceremony. She was dressed in scarlet, and was known as the Scarlet Woman. The ceremony lasted about two hours. The inmates sat round the circle in the temple. Mr. Crowley sat on a seat near the brazier, on which incense was burning. He would rise and make passes with a sword and go before each person and "breathe him in." A ritual was read. On Fridays there was a special invocation of Pan. In Mr. Crowley's own room there were "terribly indecent" paintings.

Did you ever see any sacrifice during a ceremony?—I saw a terrible sacrifice—the sacrifice of a cat.

Where was it sacrificed?—On the altar.

Mrs. Sedgwick said that after a invocation lasting three hours, the cat was killed. Its blood fell into a bowl and he husband had to drink a cup of that blood.

At the end of Mr. O'Connor's speech the jury asked whether they could intervene.

His Lordship told the foreman that the jury could stop the case as against Mr. Crowley when Mr. Eddy had said everything he wanted to say and he (his Lordship) had taken care to see that the jury knew what issues they had to try.

Mr. Eddy then addressed the jury. At the end of his speech the jury intimated that they were still of the same opinion.

His Lordship, in directing the jury, said that he had never heard such abominable stuff as that which had been produced by the man who described himself as the greatest living poet.

The jury returned a verdict for the defendants, for whom judgment was accordingly entered with costs. A stay of execution was refused.