

**THE STRAITS TIMES
SINGAPORE
21 APRIL 1910**

**THE ROSICRUCIANS.
MODERN RITES IN ANCIENT MYSTERIES.**

Secret Society Revelations.

Mystic rites handed down from remote antiquity and cherished by the Society of Rosicrucians were discussed in the High Court in connection with a dispute between the Order and a gentleman who was said to have been expelled. The Rosicrucian order was instituted in its modern form in 1888 for the study of mystical philosophy and the mysteries of antiquity, and following somewhat on the lines of Freemasonry. The plaintiff in the action, Mr. Macgregor, is chief or head of the Order, and defendant, Mr. Aleister Crowley, is editor of a journal called *The Equinox*, which is published half-yearly at the two equinoctial days in the year. It was also stated by counsel that he had been expelled from the Order. Pending an action, plaintiff had obtained from Mr. Justice Bucknill an interim injunction restraining defendant from publishing in the third number of the magazine, which should be published on March 22, an account of the initiation ceremony of the Order, the claim being that this was in violation of a contract to maintain secrecy as to the proceedings of the Order, and in violation of plaintiff's copyright in the proceedings of the Order.—Mr. Whately (for defendant, who now appealed), said the second number of *The Equinox*, published last September, contained an article entitled, *The Temple of Solomon the King*, in which reference was made to the meetings of the Order of Rosicrucians and there was a notice to the effect that the publication would be continued in the March number. The matter was in the form of a serial.—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams: Was it a romance?—Mr. Whately: I do not know, my lord. I cannot describe it. (Laughter). Proceeding, counsel submitted that there was no contract, and no cause of action. Neither was there any obligation on the part of his client to plaintiff. If there was any obligation to anybody it was to the society, and that could not be a legal obligation, because they were a voluntary association, and were not the plaintiffs. As to the rights of plaintiff being infringed.—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams understood that each member of the

Order held all the other members under an implied contract not to disclose what took place at the meetings.—Sir F. Low said that was the case put to the judge.

The Pledge of Secrecy.

There were no rules, but apparently there was a pledge of secrecy given. Mr. Whately, continuing, said defendant had prepared the articles complained of from old books which were perfectly well-known, and not from anything of which plaintiff possessed the copyright. If the publication of the next number of the magazine was stopped the publication would practically be stopped altogether, because the subscribers would be scattered. Although the action was based on something that appeared in the September number, not a word was heard of it until the March number had been printed,—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams: That is a question of pounds, shillings, and pence.—Mr. Whately: It is a very serious matter to my client.—Sir F. Low: Our complaint is that wherever our ritual was got from, it was a gross breach of faith for defendant, after being admitted and allowed to attend the meetings, and then being expelled from the Order, to start publishing this matter.—Lord Justice Moulton: He has as much right to publish what is in the old books about the Rosicrucians as anybody else.—Sir F. Low: He is not entitled to publish a ritual ceremony which he had pledged himself to secrecy about, even if it was got from the Bible.—Lord Justice Moulton: Anybody who knows anything about these societies knows that the ritual of most of them has been published.—Sir F. Low: Your lordship must not ask me to admit that.—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams: I have not observed any indication that you are, either of you, Masons. (Laughter)—Sir F. Low: I don't propose to give your lordship any, either (Laughter). The society is in no way a Masonic society.—Lord Justice Farwell said he could understand the publication of a trade secret doing a person irreparable injury, but he could not see how any damage, irreparable or otherwise, could be done by the publication in question.—Sir F. Low: If it is done it will be irreparable, because the cat will be out of the bag.—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams: But so much of the cat came out of the bag in September. (Laughter). Lord Justice Farwell: And I think it is a dead cat. (Laughter).—Sir F. Low: But if they have let one out they may let out another. Counsel suggested that defendant had been actuated in the matter by a desire for revenge for his expulsion from the society.—Lord Justice Vaughan Williams: I see plaintiff says he is the earthly

chief of the Order, and subject to the guidance of the Spiritual Order.

The Spiritual Order.

Lord Justice Farwell: What is the Spiritual Order? (Laughter).—Sir F. Low: I cannot go into, my lord. It is clear the spiritual head would not be answerable for costs. (Laughter). Lord Justice Vaughan Williams thought the appeal ought to succeed, and the injunction be discharged. Plaintiff had delayed his action until just before the publication of the new number of the magazine, whereas he might have proceeded a month or six weeks ago, before the printing began. He did not decide, however, on that ground alone, but he also thought that the publication could do plaintiff no harm, in view of what appeared in the last number of *The Equinox*.—Lord Justice Moulton agreed. He was satisfied that if there was any reality in plaintiff's case, there was in the second number of the magazine such a breach and such a threat of continued breach that plaintiff was in a position to assert his rights. He was of the opinion, however, that plaintiff knew that Mr. Crowley was the editor in November last, and that he would have had no difficulty then in bringing his action in respect of breach and threatened breach. As a matter of fact, he let it go on till just before the third number had been issued, and then came and asked the court, before he had established any right, but merely on the possibility of his having some right, which had been infringed, to give him the very serious remedy of an interim injunction to prevent publication. In his lordship's opinion he had not shown such promptitude in asserting his rights at a time when they could be effectively asserted as to justify the granting of an injunction now.—Lord Justice Farwell also thought plaintiff had disentitled himself by the delay, and added that, having regard to what had appeared in the second number of *The Equinox*, he did not think there was any possibility of irreparable damage being done to him if the third number was allowed to come out. The appeal was accordingly allowed, with costs.