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**White and Black Magic Figures in High Court
Action.**

MR. ALEISTER CROWLEY SEEKS DAMAGES.

ALLEGED LIBEL BY WOMAN AUTHOR.

TEMPLE CULT.

WEIRD CEREMONIES DENIED.

Aleister Crowley brought a libel action before Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division yesterday against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso."

Mr. Crowley alleged that passages in the book imputed that he practised Black Magi, and he said this was a libel upon him.

Other defendants were Messrs. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers.

The defence was a plea of justification.

It was stated that at one time Miss Hamnett was a student of Mr. Crowley.

Opening the case, Mr. Eddy said Mr. Crowley inherited a large fortune and was devoted to poetry, art, travel and mountaineering.

For many years he had been interested in magic and had always fought against black magic.

Two forms of magic to which Mr. Eddy referred were White Magic and Black Magic, the former he said, being on the side of the angels, and the latter on the side of the Devil and all his works.

The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed was that which stressed the will.

In 1920 he started a little community at a villa in Cefalu, Sicily, for the purpose of studying that form of magic.

Inherited a Fortune.

A passage in the book stated that Mr. Crowley, "had a temple called the Temple of Thelema, at Cefalu, where he was supposed to practise Black Magic"

One day, the passage continued 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.

Giving evidence, Mr. Crowley said that when he was young he rebelled against the "general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren." He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and inherited between £30,000 and £40,000. He had studied the religions of the world and had been interested in Black Magic since 1897.

He met Miss Hamnett two or three years before the war and employed her in connection with the painting and decoration of his studio in London.

"The villa which I took at Cefalu," continued Mr. Crowley, "was situated on a hillside. The summit was at a height of 4,000 feet.

"Love is Law."

Mr. Eddy: What was the guiding principle of this household?—Good manners.

You are familiar with the words "Do what thou wilt shall be the will of the law. Love is law, love under will"?—I am.

Have those words anything to do with Black Magic?—Only indirectly. They would forbid it because Black Magic is suicidal.

What did this household at Cefalu do? How did they pass their time?

Mr. Crowley—Each person had a certain duty connected with the house. There was the magnificent rock which I took the children to climb. There was the sea and a secluded cove where one could spend the day without any interference from the inhabitants. There was also a beautiful sandy beach for swimming and one could walk across the mountain.

Mr. Crowley agreed there were various forms of magic, "as there were different forms of prize fighting and all-in wrestling," he added.

"I approve some forms of magic and disapprove others," Mr. Crowley declared.

What He Believed.

Mr. Eddy what is the form you disbelieve?—That which is commonly known as Black Magic, which is not only foul and abominable; but for the most part criminal. In many cases Black Magic is an attempt to commit crime without incurring the penalties of the law. The almost main instrument of Black Magic is murder.

Is murder of children associated with black magic?—It is most common. Alleged black magicians have been condemned to death. I say black magic is malignant. It is evil in its purpose and means or both.

Did you ever practise black magic at Cefalu?—No.

It is said that the inmates of the Abbey had to sign a book?—There was a visitors' book.

Did they give an undertaking to obey your will?—No.

It is said drugs were stored in your room and were available for the inmates?—I had a medicine chest containing 24 large bottle of various medicines.—The sort of thing that is made especially for explorers. As to their being available to anyone, no one is going to take anything nasty.

Foolish Fabrication.

Was it true there was a rule that people should gash themselves if they used the word "I"?—A foolish fabrication.

Is it true privacy was not allowed?—It is not true.

Were there locks on the doors?—No.

Is it true that men shaved their heads, leaving a symbolic curl in front, and that the women dyed their hair red for six months and then black for the rest of the year?—It is not correct.

It is said that everyone was instructed to enter their innermost sacred thoughts in a magical diary. What do you say about that?

Mr. Crowley explained that for the purpose of training in self-control and the development of certain little-used powers of mind, certain exercises were given.

He denied that he told Miss Hamnett the things of which he complained in the book. No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purposes; but the inhabitants were not frightened by it.

Weird Story.

Mr. Eddy put to Mr. Crowley the following particulars in the defence. "Every day after tea the plaintiff performed a ceremony known as pentagram. The plaintiff entered robed into a room, decorated with cabalistic signs and seated himself on a throne before a brazier containing a charcoal fire around which were hung sacrificial knives and swords and surrounded by a magic circle.

"The adult inmates were required to attend and when all were assembled the plaintiff rose from his seat and taking one of the swords from the far side of the brazier held it pointing to the altar, while he intoned an invocation in a strange language.

"Following this he would walk over to members of his congregation and utter a further invocation whilst resting the point of the sword on his or her forehead. The plaintiff then proceeded to execute ecstatic dances, lashing himself into a frenzy, brandishing his sword and leaping the magic circle.

Mr. Eddy: Is that an accurate account of what was done at Cefalu?—It is not accurate.

Was there any throne?—There were chairs.

Were there any sacrificial knives?—No.

What is the pentagram?—It is a ceremony which invokes God to afford the protection of his archangel.

Mr. Crowley denied that it was an obscene invocation or that animals were sacrificed and he invited people to drink their blood.

Severe Question.

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, K.C. (cross-examining): For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Did any paper call you "the monster of wickedness"?—I don't remember which papers.

Have you from the time of your adolescence openly defied all moral conventions?—No.

And proclaimed your contempt for all the doctrines of Christianity?—I think this is quite wrong.

Have you said Judaism is savage and Christianity is a fiendish superstition? Have you written that in one of your publications?—I cannot tell you without the context.

You have practised magic from the days when you were just down from Cambridge?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley admitted that he assumed the designations of "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" (the great wild beast).

Expelled Like Wells.

The great wild beast and Beast 666 are out of the Apocalypse?—It only means sunlight; 666 is the number of the sun and you can call me "Little Sunshine."

Is it true to say that practically all your works are erotic in tendency and grossly indecent in expression?—It would be entirely untrue to say anything of the kind.

Have you published material which is too indecent to be read in public?—No. I have contributed certain pathological books entirely unsuited to the general public.

Were you finally expelled from Cefalu by the Fascists?—Like Mr. H. G. Wells and many other distinguished Englishmen my presence was not desired by Mussolini.

In 1929 in Paris did they refuse to grant the renewal of your identification cards so that you had to get out of France?—Yes.

Have you been attacked in unmeasured terms in the Press of many countries? They have all accused you of Black Magic, haven't they?—I don't read such stuff as a rule.

Mr. Hilbery then referred to a number of passages in Mr. Crowley's book "The Confessions of Aleister Crowley."

Marks of a Buddha.

You assert that you had the distinguishing of a Buddha at birth?—Yes.

Do you believe that?—Yes. I have got some of them now.

And you continue in your claim to be a master magician?—Yes. I took a degree which conferred that title.

Your magic is like your poems, a mixture of eroticism and sexual indulgence?—It doesn't involve anything of the kind.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he was the author of "White Stains."

Mr. Hilbery: Is that an indecent book?—This book is a serious study of the progress of a man.

You have made a sonnet of unspeakable things, haven't you?—Yes.

You know "White Stains" is an improper book?—I don't know it.

The hearing was adjourned.