

**THE EVENING EXPRESS  
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**"TRY YOUR MAGIC IN COURT"**

**MR. CROWLEY REFUSES  
DRAMATIC INVITATION**

**"I SHALL DENOUNCE YOU  
AS AN IMPOSTER—*Counsel.***

**CASE FOR DEFENSE OPENS**



**MISS NINA HAMNETT**

A dramatic invitation by counsel to Mr. Aleister Crowley, the magician, to demonstrate his magic in court, was one of the striking incidents in today's hearing of what has become known as the Black Magic Libel Action.

Mr. Crowley refused.

He claimed that the particular branch of magic he practiced was the raising of humanity to higher spiritual developments.

In opening the case for the defence, Mr. Malcolm Hilbery, for the publishers and printers of the book, said: "What right has a man who for years has been professing contempt for the standards of ordinary decency to complain of injury to a reputation which, he had written himself, as being the worst man in the world?"

The case is being heard before Mr. Justice Swift.

Mr. Crowley, the author, claims damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, the authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," and Messrs. Constable and Company, Ltd., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers.

Mr. Crowley complains that the book imputes that he practised "black magic," and alleges that this was a libel upon him.

The defence is a plea of justification.

At the material time Mr. Crowley had a villa at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He denied that he practiced "black magic" there.

He admitted in evidence that he called himself "Beast 666" and "The Master Therium" (The Great Wild Beast)—both out of the Apocalypse.

Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he denied that he supplied any of the information on which she based the statement in the book, of which he complained.

He denied that a baby mysteriously disappeared, as the defence alleged, from the "Abbey of Thelema."

Mr. O'Connor resumed his cross-examination of Mr. Crowley immediately the court opened.

"You said yesterday," said Mr. O'Connor, "that as the result of early experiments you invoked certain forces with the result that some people were attacked by unseen assailants. Try your magic now on my learned friend (pointing to Mr. Hilbery, K.C.). I am sure he will not object.

"I would not attack anyone," replied Mr. Crowley. "I have never done willful harm to any human being."

Mr. O'Connor: Try your magic now, I am sure my learned friend will consent to you doing so.

Mr. Crowley: I absolutely refuse.

Mr. Justice Swift: We cannot turn this court into a temple, Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. O'Connor, having invited Mr. Crowley to try his magic in court, continued:—"On a later occasion you said you succeeded in rendering yourself invisible. Would you like to try that on now, for if you don't I shall pronounce you as an imposter?"

Mr. Crowley: You can ask me to do anything you like. It won't alter the truth.

Counsel then dealt with the ritual observed in the ceremonies at the villa at Cefalu.

Mr. Crowley denied that a cat was killed in the ceremony, and that part of the cat's blood was drunk by a person taking part. "There was no cat, no animal, no blood, and no drinking," he declared.

"If you have enemies have you friends?" asked Mr. J. P. Eddy (Mr. Crowley's counsel).

Mr. Crowley: I trust so.

Did one gentleman write a book about you in your defense?—Yes.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he had studied black magic, though only as a student.

Have you at any time practiced black magic?—No.

What is the object of the magic you believe in?—My particular branch is the raising of humanity to higher spiritual development.

Mr. Crowley said he merely kept opium and strychnine in his medicine chest for medicinal purposes when travelling in the Tropics. He did not keep it for any magical purposes.

Mr. Crowley said that he had always written about black magic in terms of the strongest condemnation.

Mr. Eddy: Have you ever regarded it as a joke to be charged with black magic?—No, never.