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COURT CHALLENGE TO AUTHOR
Mr. Crowley Declines To Try Magic On Counsel.

Woman Tells of Scarlet-Robed
Figure in Island-Abbey Rites.

Amazing evidence of ceremonies in the island retreat of Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, at Cefalù, Sicily, was given by a woman witness in the King's Bench Division yesterday.

Mr. Crowley claims damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled *Laughing Torso*.

He complains that the book imputed that he practised "black magic" at his villa in Sicily, which was known as the Abbey of Thelema, and he said this was libel upon him. The defence was a plea of justification.

In evidence he admitted that he called himself "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" (the Great Wild Beast), both out of the Apocalypse.

Miss Hamnett was once a student of his but Mr. Crowley denied that he supplied any of the information on which she based the statements in the book.

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

"TRY MAGIC NOW"

In his cross-examination of Mr. Crowley yesterday, Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett) said:—

"You have stated 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., counsel for the publishers of the book.)

"I would not attack anyone," replied Mr. Crowley. "I have never, wilfully, done 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.

"On a later occasion," continued Mr. O'Connor, "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 an impostor?"

"You can ask me to do anything you like, it won't alter the truth," replied Mr. Crowley. Mr. O'Connor 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.

"YEARS OF TORTURE"

Mr. Crowley agreed with his counsel, Mr. P. J. Eddy, that he had studied black magic, though only as a student.

"I was coming out from years of abominable torture," he explained. "I wanted to find out what a church was like and I sneaked secretly into a church at the danger of incurring the severest penalty because, among the Plymouth Brethren (his family were Plymouth Brethren) even the idea of entering a church might have incurred damnation.

"Have you at any time practised black magic?—No. He added that he had always written about black magic in terms of strongest condemnation.

JUDGE AND MAGIC

When Mr. Crowley was about to leave the witness box, Mr. Justice Swift asked him to tell the Court "the shortest and at the same time comprehensive definition of magic which he knew."

Mr. Crowley: Magic is the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will. White magic is if the will is righteous and black magic is if the will is perverse.

Mr. Justice Swift: Does it involve the invocation of spirits?

"It may do so," Mr. Crowley replied. "It does involve the invocation of the holy guardian angel who is appointed by Almighty God to watch over each of us."

Then it does involve the invocation of the spirits?—Of one spirit. God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.

CONTROLLING SPIRITS

Is it, in your view, the art of controlling spirits so as to affect the course of events?—That is part of magic—one small branch.

If the object of the control is good, then it is white magic and if the object is bad then it is black magic?—Yes.

When the object of the control is bad, what spirits do you invoke?—You cannot invoke evil spirits. You must evoke them and call them out.

When the object of the control is bad you evoke evil spirits?—Yes. You put yourself in their power. In that case it is possible to control evil spirits or blind spirits for a good purpose, as we might if we use the dangerous elements of fire and electricity for heating and lighting, and so on.

Carl Germer, a German merchant living in this country, said Mr. Crowley had been his guest at his house in Germany.

He had never known Mr. Crowley to practise or advocate black magic.

Mr. O'Connor: Have you ever seen Mr. Crowley invoke spirits?—Yes, the spirit of magnanimity.

How do you know it was the spirit of magnanimity?—I suppose you have to be sensitive in order to perceive.

Mr. Justice Swift: Can you point to any difference between the spirit of magnanimity and the spirit of hospitality?—I think that is very easy.

You are sure it was the spirit of magnanimity which came and not the spirit of hospitality?—I believe so.

Mr. O'Connor: Where did it come from?—Probably from heaven; I don't know.

“ARCHPIECE OF IMPOSTURE”

Mr. O'Connor: I look upon this as an archpiece of imposture. Where did it go to after the visit?—I don't know.

“I have seen him invoking the sun,” said Mr. Germer later.

“I hope the invocation was on a very foggy day,” commented Mr. O'Connor. “What did he say to the sun and to what effect?”—I don't remember the words.

What was the result of the invocation?—Nothing.

That does not help very much. He didn't make progress in invoking in your time.

I should like to learn a little black magic. Tell me how I can?—I cannot instruct you on it.

This concluded Mr. Crowley's case.

VISIT TO THE VILLA

Mrs. Betty May Sedgewick, formerly the wife of the late Frederick Charles Loveday (who had been referred to in the case as Raoul Loveday) was the first witness for the defence, and she told how they went to Mr. Crowley's villa at Cefalu in 1922.

Mr. Crowley greeted them by saying, "Do what thou wilt shall be the will of the law," and her husband (whose association with Mr. Crowley she strongly disapproved) answered: "Love is the law, love under will."

Mr. Crowley said to her: "Will you say it?" and she replied, "I will not."

Mr. Crowley then said: "You cannot come into the abbey unless you conform to the rules." She had eventually to make the reply, and was admitted.

Describing part of the villa, Mrs. Sedgewick said there were five triangular boxes, painted in various colours, on the floor. On the floor also was a large red circle, in the centre of which was a pentagram. In the centre of the pentagram was an altar.

In one corner was a brazier and a bench—an old-fashioned looking chair. There were many figures on the walls.

SUN "ADORATION"

"They were extremely improper paintings," said Mrs. Sedgewick.

Asked about ceremonies at the villa, Mrs. Sedgewick said there was one big ceremony and that was for money. It lasted for about twenty-four hours. There had to be a lot of money for the abbey.

"About half-past five in the morning," she continued, "the household was aroused by the banging of a tom-tom and had to go out and face the sun. It was called "adoration." In the afternoon the children had to stand and put their hands up to the sun.

"The evening ceremony was the great thing of the day. It was called "Going in to Pentagram." The women sat on boxes round the circle.

Mr. Crowley was the head of the ceremony and wore a robe of bright colours with a cowl. A scarlet-robed woman named Leah took part in the ceremony. She was the spiritual wife of Mr. Crowley.

INCENSE BURNED

In one corner was a chair in which Crowley sat in front of a brazier in which incense was burned.

On Friday there was a special ceremony which was longer. The scarlet-woman then wore a jewelled snake. On Friday's there was a special invocation to Pan.

"There was an enormous painting in the room," said Mrs. Sedgewick. "It was terrible."

She added there were places where one could get various things in the way of drugs. There was hasheesh, but in liquid form, and it could not be smoked.

There was a rule at the abbey about the word "I." Raoul was given a razor and told that if he used the word he must cut himself in order to remember.

When counsel asked Mrs. Sedgewick if she saw any sacrifice, she replied: "I saw a terrible sacrifice—the sacrifice of a cat. It was in the temple inside the circle and on the altar."

In cross-examination Mrs. Sedgewick said she had been married four times and divorced three times. She had written an autobiography called "Tiger Woman." She was not ashamed of anything in the book.

The hearing was adjourned till today.