

**THE YORKSHIRE EVENING POST  
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**"BLACK MAGIC" LIBEL ACTION  
STOPPED BY THE JURY.**

**UNANIMOUS VERDICT FOR ALL DEFENDANTS.**

**Scathing Comment by Mr. Justice Swift.**

**AUTHOR'S "BLASPHEMOUS  
AND ABOMINABLE STUFF."**

The "Black Magic" libel action came to a sudden end this afternoon, when the jury stopped the case and gave a verdict for all the defendants.

The plaintiff, Mr. Aleister Crowley, an author, who founded a community interested in magic in a villa in Sicily, sued Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso." He complained that the book imputed that he had practised black magic, which he said was a libel. Constable and Co., Ltd., publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, printers, were joined as defendants.

This was the fourth day of the action, which has been heard by Mr. Justice Swift and a special jury in the King's Bench Division.

"Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by a man describing himself as the greatest living poet," said the Judge to the jury.

**WITNESS CALLED THE "TIGER WOMAN."**

The defence was a plea of justification.

Mr. Crowley denied that he practised black magic at a villa which he occupied at Cefalu, Sicily, and which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema." He admitted that he called himself "Beast 666," after the title of a beast referred to in the Book of Revelation. Miss Hamnett was once a student of his, but he

denied he supplied to her the information on which her book was based.

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalu villa, stated yesterday that on one occasion a cat was sacrificed in the course of a magical ceremony. Her husband then drank a cup of the cat's blood.

Mr. Crowley had declared in evidence that there never had been any sacrifice of any animal in the ceremony, or any drinking of blood.

Mr. J. P. Eddy (for Mr. Crowley), resumed his cross-examination of Mrs. Sedgwick to-day, asked, "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday would your life be fairly described as drink, drugs and immorality?"

"No," replied Mrs. Sedgwick, who added she had not drugged herself for years.

She took cocaine when she was 18, but not after she was 25. She was not then living a very fast life in London. When she married Loveday he was not in a poor state of health. He had been very ill months before, but he got quite fit.



Mrs. Sedgwick

She was then a model, and sat to keep both of them. They were living in a furnished backroom, and she earned 1 a day. She sat every day until they went to Italy.

### **"Summons from the Mystic."**

One morning a communication came from Mr. Crowley summoning her husband to Cefalu. She did not see the com-

munication. In her book she had said "It was an invitation—or rather a summons—from the mystic to out to him in Cefalu.

Her husband did not tell her Mr. Crowley wanted to give them both a change in Sicily, and to enable them to live a clean life there.

Mr. Eddy: Nothing of that sort?

Mrs. Sedgwick: No.

This was not an attempt to rescue you and your husband from the life you were leading?—No, nothing of that sort.

You know that after your arrival in Sicily articles about Mr./Crowley appeared?—Yes.

Did you supply the information?—No.

Have you not supplied information to the "Sunday Express?"—Yes.

Have you been paid for it?—Yes.

When did you supply that information?—On the day I arrived in England from Sicily.

What were you paid for it?—I can't remember. It was a long time ago.

While you were in Cefalu, there was no other visitor at the house other than you and your husband?—Not living there, except the people at the Abbey.

No journalist came to Cefalu to see what the facts really were?—I didn't see anybody.

### **A Wrong Statement.**

Mrs. Sedgwick said that a clergyman's wife and daughter visited the Abbey.

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that yesterday she had said that when she and her husband (Mr. Loveday) arrived a woman named Leah answered the door.

Mr. Eddy read from Mrs. Sedgwick's book, a passage which ran:

Raoul rapped on the door. We waited a few moments. The door was flung open. There stood the mystic in all the glory of his ceremonial robes. He had evidently prepared for our arrival.

Mrs. Sedgwick said she had mixed this up with the clergyman's wife, she was wrong in that respect.

Witness agreed that after her arrival from Sicily in England she went to the offices of a Sunday newspaper.

Counsel said he was suggesting that witness was the source of all those stories about "the worst man in the world."

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that the story headed, "Young Wife's Story of Crowley's Abbey" was the information for which she was paid. She did not write the story, neither did she write the book, "Tiger Woman."

### **Doors Opened by "Scarlet Woman."**

Counsel read from the article in the newspaper: "We knocked at the door and it was opened by a woman whom we were to know as Jane."

"Which of the stories is right?" he asked.

Mrs. Sedgwick: Well, the journalist did it. The woman Leah—the Scarlet Woman—opened the door.

Mr. Eddy put to Mrs. Sedgwick a statement in "Tiger Woman" that "When she and her husband arrived at Cefalu they slept on a mattress on the floor."

Yesterday (observed counsel) you said you were told to sleep by yourself.

Mrs. Sedgwick: Yes, that is right. My husband and I did not sleep together.

Mr. Eddy quoted the article which read, "No beds were ready for us, so Jane gave up her room to us and spent the night in the temple."

Witness said the journalist must have written that, and she persisted that she slept by herself.

Mrs. Sedgwick said there were two mattresses in the room and her husband slept on one.

"Rightly or wrongly," interposed Mr. Justice Swift, "the witness is obviously trying to draw a distinction between sleeping with a person and sleeping in the same room."

Witness persisted that drugs were kept in Crowley's desk, which was unlocked, and were available to the people there.

### **Alleged Sacrifice of Cat.**

Cross-examined on her evidence regarding the "terrible sacrifice of a cat," witness said everything about the cat was true.

Mr. Eddy suggested that wild cats were a pest in Sicily, and if there was any foundation for witness's story it could only relate to the destruction of one of those animals, and had no reference to any sacrifice at all.

Counsel suggested that witness's statement about the sacrifice of a cat and her husband, a man of refinement, drinking the blood of a cat was pure fiction.

Witness declared every word was true.

Mrs. Sedgwick said she didn't understand anything about the ceremonies at the abbey. There was a table or an altar in the temple, and it was under that that the cat ran. It ran over the circle and tried to make for a bedroom, she added, but it was cut so badly that it didn't know what to do, or where to go.

Witness said she was living in the house from November, 1922 to March 1923. She was turned out a few days before her husband's death. The children at the abbey had to fend for themselves.

### **Husband Taken Ill.**

Witness said she thought her husband was suffering from laudanum poisoning.

Mr. Eddy pointed out that in her book, Mrs. Sedgwick had said he was suffering from enteric.

Witness agreed, and explained that after her husband drank the cat's blood he was violently ill and sick, and Mr. Crowley gave him a lot of laudanum as medicine. She told Scotland Yard she thought it was laudanum poisoning.

Counsel: Did you tell Scotland Yard what you did to the undergraduate in Paris?—I told you before that that is not true. It is absurd.

Witness denied she was utterly reckless as to what stories were communicated to the public as representing the facts. She gave facts for the newspaper and magazine articles. Journalists worked round them and got their data a little wrong. There were no wild statements in the original articles. They were true.

The statements about the undergraduate at Cambridge was not true, but she allowed it to be reproduced in the book as it did not seem to matter much, and made the book a little more exciting.

### **A "Terrific Scene."**

Mr. Eddy referred to a passage in the book in which Mrs. Sedgwick is alleged to have said:

He (Mr. Crowley) ordered me to go, and there was a terrific scene. I should have said before that there were several loaded revolvers which used to lie about the abbey. They were very necessary, for we never knew when brigands might attack us. I seized a revolver and fired it wildly at the mystic. It went

wide of the mark and he laughed heartily. Then I rushed at him but couldn't get a grip of his shaven head. He picked me up in his arms and flung me bodily from the front door,

Mrs. Sedgwick said she saw no brigands, but was told they were about. When dogs came near, Mr. Crowley shot at them.

## **THE "TIGER WOMAN."**

### **Why Witness Adopted the Name.**

Raoul was her third husband, said Mrs. Sedgwick, who denied that before marrying the fourth time she was leading an immoral life. She was a model, which had been her work all her life.

Mr. Eddy read a passage from "Tiger Woman," in which it related the fourth husband's mother as saying, "Oh, you foul, wicked woman, you are killing my son." Witness said her husband was ill, but not seriously.

Mr. Eddy (reading again from the book) "I felt this was the last straw, and on an earlier occasion I had restrained from attacking her with violence."

Mrs. Sedgwick said her mother-in-law was interfering so much.

Mr. Eddy. Are you "Tiger Woman?—Yes.

Why?—Because I am rather feline in looks. I thought perhaps it was rather a good name for me.

She denied that she was of a violent nature, but agreed she had slapped her mother-in-law and had been turned out of a ballroom for attacking another woman.

It was not true (she said) that she was a "bought" witness. She was known by many people as "Bumble Toff" and an old friend of hers was called "Poddle Diff."

She never authorized anyone to extract letters from her case and give them to Mr. Crowley. The contents of the case were stolen.

### **No Right to Letter.**

Mr. Malcom Hilbery, K.C., called on Mr. Eddy to produce a letter of February 24, 1933, from defendant's solicitors to Mrs. Sedgwick.

Mr. Justice Swift \_\_\_\_ Mr. Eddy clearly had possession \_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ the missing letters were produced Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilbery that they should remain in the custody of the Court.

### **"Arch-Humbug" and "Arch-Rogues."**

Mr. O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett) said it was appalling that a court should be investigating magic which was arch-humbug practised by arch-roguers to rob weak-minded people. He hoped the action would end the activities of this hypocritical rascal.

Seeing two jurymen talking, Mr. Justice Swift stopped Mr. O'Connor in his address.

One of them said, "The jury wish to know whether this is a correct time for us to intervene."

The Judge: You cannot stop the case as against the defendants. You may stop it against the plaintiff when Mr. Eddy has said everything he wants to say.

Mr. Eddy finally addressed the jury for Mr. Crowley.



Mr. Justice Swift

### **"Horrible and Blasphemous."**

Mr. Justice Swift, directing the jury, said, "Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that produced by a man describing himself as the greatest living poet.

"I have been over forty years engaged in the administration of the law in one capacity or another. I thought that I knew of

every conceivable form of wickedness. I thought that everything which was vicious and bad had been produced at one time or another before me.

"I have learned in this case that we can always learn something more if we live long enough."

The foreman said the jury unanimously found for all the defendants.

Judgment was entered for all the defendants with costs.

### **Judge and Summing-up.**

When Mr. Eddy asked for a stay of execution, and referred to the summing-up, Mr. Justice Swift remarked: "I thought I had followed the instructions of Lord Justice Scrutton. I still think I did, but you can go and point out to him that I did not. Some day another jury will reinvestigate this matter."

The Judge refused a stay of execution.

As to the documents in his custody, he told the defence, "We will keep the letters in court, and we shall certainly have them in proper custody if you take them to another court."