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BEAST "666."

One of the most amusing and amazing cases heard in a British court for many years is now in progress in the King's Bench Division. Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, is suing Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of that famous book "Laughing Torso," for alleged libel, claiming that passages in the book impute that he has practiced "Black Magic." The defence is a plea of justification.

At the material time, Mr. Crowley had a mountain-side villa at Cefalu, Sicily, which was known as the "Abbey of Thelema," and he has admitted in court that he was subsequently expelled from Italy by Signor Mussolini, was refused admission to France, and was described in certain papers as a "monster of wickedness." He admits also that Horatio Bottomley branded him as a dirty, degenerate cannibal, and that he himself assumed the names of "Beast 666" and "The Master Theriun" (the "Great Wild Beast"). Further, he claims that he had the distinguishing marks of a Buddha at birth, and that he is a "master magician."

As you will realize when it is stated that the hearing has now lasted for four days, it is impossible to summarise the evidence here, even briefly, but you will be interested to hear, I am sure, that Mr. Crowley says that, by invoking the "God of Silence," he has been able to "get to the stage where his reflection began to flicker like the images of one of the old-fashioned cinemas," and although he "never disappeared completely," he was "able to walk out of the house in a scarlet robe and golden crown without attracting any attention." At another stage in his cross examination, Mr. Crowley stated that, although he did not approve of it at all, he believed that "for nearly all magical purposes, human sacrifice is best," but he hotly denied that during one "magic circle" ceremony at Cefalu a black cat was killed and the cat's blood drunk by his admiring pupils.

During ritualistic services in the "temple" of this villa, Mr. Crowley, modestly admitted, he circumambulated the room us-

ing a "sort of three-fold step which resembled a waltz, at the pace of a tiger stalking a deer."

Magic Defined

Asked, as he was about to leave the witness box, what was "the shortest and, at the same time, most comprehensive definition of magic which he knew." Mr. Crowley told Mr. Justice Swift that "Magic is the science of the 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."