

**THE TRUTH  
BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA  
3 JUNE 1934  
(page 12)**

**Staggering revelations by "High Priest" of  
BLACK MAGIC.**

**Grim Tales of Mystic Rites.**



**ABOVE: Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of the book "The Laughing Torso," was given the verdict in the famous "Black Magic" case in which Aleister Crowley sued her for libel. The jury stopped the case after the judge had addressed them.**

Sinister and appalling secrets of so-called magic—black and white—were revealed during the hearing of a case that has stirred the British public, the jury and even the judge himself in the King's Bench. As the case unfolded there were told strange stories of weird ceremonies and mystic rites, of blood sacrifices and exotic ceremonies, of a mysterious "Beast 666" and of a "poet magician," Aleister Crowley, who "made a sonnet of unspeakable things." "I have engaged for forty years in the administration of the law in one capacity or another," said the

veteran judge, Mr. Justice Swift, "and I thought that I knew every conceivable form of wickedness. I have learned in this case that you can always learn something more if you live long enough. Never have I heard such dreadful, horrible, blasphemous, abominable stuff as that which has been produced by this man (Crowley), who describes himself as the greatest living poet."

The case was brought by Mr. Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley of Carlos Place, Grosvenor Square, against Miss Nina Hamnett, the writer of a book called "Laughing Torso," in which Mr. Crowley alleged he had been libelled.

Miss Hamnett, a well-known artist and a popular figure in "Bohemian London," put forward as her defence a denial that the words complained of were defamatory and further stated that they were true in substance and fact.

According to Mr. J. P. Eddy, who appeared for Mr. Crowley, this book "Laughing Torso," purported to be an account of Miss Hamnett's own life with a number of intimate sketches of friends and acquaintances introduced.

It was stated in one passage that Mr. Crowley "had a temple called the Temple of Thelema at Cefalu in Sicily) where he was supposed to practice black magic.

"One day 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."

Mr. Crowley stated in evidence that as a youth he had "rebelled against the general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren." He had been educated at Cambridge and had inherited a fortune of between £30,000 and £40,000.

He admitted that he had assumed the titles, "Beast 666" and "The Master Therion" ("The Great Wild Beast.").

"666 is the number of the Sun," he said, "and you can call me little sunshine."

He admitted that he had made a sonnet of unspeakable things, but he had not advocated unrestricted sexual freedom though he had protested the sexual oppression that existed in England.

He agreed that in his "Confessions" he had stated that once in Mexico he walked down the street in a scarlet robe and wearing a jewelled crown without anybody seeing him. This was due to his magic.

Then came a dramatic passage of cross-examination.

"As a part of your magic you do believe in a practice of blood sacrifice?" asked counsel.

"I believe in its efficacy" was the reply.

"If you believe in its efficacy, you would believe in it being practised, and you would say it could be practised without impropriety?"

"I do not approve of it at all."

"You say in your book of magic, 'For nearly all purposes human sacrifice is the best'?"

"Yes, it is."

Mr. Justice Swift: "Do you say that you don't approve it?"

Crowley: Yes.

Asked about the ritual of the magic circle, the poet-magician said he spoke what might be described as intoning words, and used a sort of three-fold step which resembled the waltz. He went round the circle at the pace of a tiger stalking a deer.

### **No Hasheesh.**

Describing the life of the inmates of his villa at Cefalu, he stated that razor or knife cuts they made on themselves when they stumbled into a forbidden word were not gashes, but minute cuts. "You can see marks of them on my own arm," he said dramatically.

There was no hasheesh at the villa, but there was opium and strychnine. He would not advise their use except under skilled supervision and in a very limited extent. He himself was skilled to administer hasheesh. "I can get the desired results in ten minutes," he said.

Dealing with the alleged ritual of the ceremonies carried out in the Sicilian villa, counsel elicited a denial from Mr. Crowley that a cat was sacrificed and some of its blood was drunk by a person taking part.

Startling evidence was given by the first witness for the defense, Mrs. Betty May Sedgwick, formerly the wife of Frederick Charles Loveday, who had been referred to as Raoul.

At the end of 1922, she said she and her husband went to Sicily. They arrived at Mr. Crowley's villa in Cefalu after dark, and when he came to the door he said, "Do what thou wilt shall be the will of the law."

Raoul answered, "Love is the law, Lover under Will."

"Then Mr. Crowley asked me 'Will you say it?' and I replied 'I will not.' Crowley then said 'You cannot come into the Abbey

until you conform to the rules. This is the first rule of the Abbey.

"I had to make the reply before I was admitted," added Mrs. Sedgwick.

"There was a sort of hysterical business," continued Mrs. Sedgwick. "They called on gods with strange invocations and there was an enormous painting in the room. It was terrible."

Asked by counsel whether she meant it was indecent, she replied: "Most." I saw a very big sacrifice, she continued—the sacrifice of a cat in the temple, within the circle and on the altar. The cat had wandered into the temple, where animals were forbidden, and had scratched Mr. Crowley. He declared it would be sacrificed within three days.

"On the day of the sacrifice everyone was excited. Mr. Crowley had a knife with a long handle. The cat was taken out of a bag and cried piteously. My husband was supposed to kill it, but the knife was blunt and the cat got out of the circle which was bad for magical work.

### **Fearful Rite.**

"They had to start all over again, the cat having such a gash in its neck that they could have killed it very quickly.

"When finally they did kill it, my husband had to drink a cup of the animal's blood."

It was intimated by the foreman of the jury that they had heard quite enough evidence, and Mr. Justice Swift then explained to the jury exactly what rights they could exercise in the circumstances.

The jury consulted among themselves and after a few minutes discussion the foreman asked if they might retire.

Mr. Justice Swift: "No, I don't think so. If there is any doubt about the matter the case must go on."

After a further brief consultation of the jury, the foreman announced that they were unanimous in returning a verdict for the defendants (Miss Hamnett and the publishers and printers). His Lordship entered judgment accordingly with costs, and refused to allow a stay of execution.