

**THE EVENING CHRONICLE  
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**ALLEGED "BLACK MAGIC" IMPUTATION IN  
BOOK  
WOMAN WRITER SUED BY AUTHOR  
REMARKABLE STATEMENTS IN LIBEL ACTION  
STORY OF BABY AND GOAT  
"ROOM OF NIGHTMARES" IN OLD FARMHOUSE**

Remarkable statements were made in the King's Bench Division to-day when Mr. Aleister Crowley, the author, brought a libel action against Miss Nina Hamnett, the authoress, alleging that she imputed in a book that he practiced "black magic."

During the hearing it was stated that Mr. Crowley had been interested in magic for many years, and that he had always fought against "black magic."

**JUSTIFICATION PLEA**

The book concerned in the action was "laughing Torso." Other defendants besides Miss Hamnett were Messrs. Constable and Company, Limited, publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Biggs, printers. The defence was a plea of justification.

Opening the case for Mr. Crowley, Mr. Eddy said the plaintiff was brought up in the strict environment of the Plymouth Brethren sect.

He inherited a large fortune, and for many years he had been interested in magic, and had always fought against Black Magic.

**STARTED COMMUNITY**

Two forms of magic to which Mr. Eddy referred were white magic and black magic, the former, he said, being on the side

of the angels and the latter on the side of the devil and all his works. The magic in which Mr. Crowley believed was that which stressed the will.

In 1920 he started a little community in Cefalu (Sicily) for the purpose of studying that form of magic. It was an old farmhouse, and Mr. Crowley's bedroom was described as "the room of nightmares" because of the fantastic frescoes on the walls. But that had nothing to do with black magic.

## **"TEMPLE OF THELEMA"**

### **Plaintiff Describes His Villa on Hillside**

A passage in the book, said Counsel, stated that Mr. Crowley had a temple called "Temple of Thelema" at Cefalu, where he was supposed to practise black magic.

One day, the passage continued, "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, counsel added, denied the suggestion that he supplied the information to Miss Hamnett, who was at one time a student of his.

Giving evidence, Mr. Crowley said that when he was young he rebelled against the "general atmosphere of the Plymouth Brethren."

"The villa which I took at Cefalu," continued Mr. Crowley, "was situated on a hillside. It was an old farmhouse. There was a large room between 30 and 35 feet square out of which led other rooms.

## **FANTASTIC GARGOYLES**

"I decorated it with frescoes similar to religious paintings in the Notre Dame. There were fantastic gargoyles and people said they looked like nightmares."

Mr. Eddy: Is the murder of children associated with black magic?—It is most common. Alleged black magicians have been condemned to death. I say black magic is malignant. It is evil in its purpose, or means, or both.

Did you ever practice black magic at Cefalu?—No.

Is it true that men shaved their heads, leaving a symbolic curl in front, and that the women dyed their hair red for six months and then black for the rest of the year?—It is not correct.

Mr. Crowley denied that he told Miss Hamnett the things of which he complained in the book. No baby mysteriously disappeared. A goat was kept for milking purposes, but the inhabitants were not frightened of it.

### **"WORST MAN IN WORLD"**

Cross-examined by Mr. Malcolm Hilberry, K.C. (for the publishers and printers) Mr. Crowley said he was asking for damages because his reputation had suffered.

Counsel: For many years you have been publicly denounced as the worst man in the world?—Only by the lowest kind of newspaper.

Did any paper call you the monster of wickedness?—I don't remember which papers.