

**THE LEICESTER MERCURY**  
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(page 16)

**Author Refuses To Try His Magic In Court**

**COUNSEL THREATENS TO PRONOUNCE  
HIM AN IMPOSTER**

**Days Recalled When 'Merely To Look At  
A Girl Across The Street Was An Offence'**

**GERMAN PROPAGANDA EXPLAINED**



**MR. CROWLEY.**

Mr. Aleister Crowley was invited to try his magic in court when the hearing of his libel action was resumed to-day, in the King's Bench Division. He declined, and Mr. Justice Swift remarked, "We cannot turn this court into a temple."

Mr. Crowley, who is an author, claims damages against Miss Nina Hamnett, authoress of a book entitled "Laughing Torso," Messrs. Constable and Company, Ltd., the publishers, and Messrs. Charles Whittingham and Briggs, the printers. He complains that the book imputed that he practised "black magic." The defence is a plea of justification.

Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), resumed his cross-examination to-day. "You said yesterday," said Mr. O'Connor, "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). I am sure he will not object."

"I would not attack anyone," replied 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 to the plaintiff, "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 imposter?"

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

Counsel then dealt with the ritual observed in the ceremonies at the villa at Cefalue [*sic*], Sicily.

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.

### **A Village Girl**

Mr. Eddy next asked the plaintiff about a passage in his "Confessions" (concerning which he had been cross-examined) and said the passage referred to a village girl, and showed that Mr. Crowley "went roaming with her amid the heather."

"How old were you," asked Mr. Eddy.

"I was a boy of fifteen or sixteen," replied Mr. Crowley.

"Roaming the heather with anyone is a terrible offence in itself in the surroundings in which I was brought up," he added. "Merely to look at a girl across the street was considered an offense and dealt with in the most severe way."

Mr. Crowley's family were Plymouth Brethren.

Mr. Crowley agreed that he had studied black magic, though only as a student.

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

Mr. Eddy: Have you at any time practised black magic—No.

What is the object of the magic you believe in?—My particular branch is the raising of humanity to high spiritual development.

### **GERMAN PROPAGANDA**

Mr. Eddy asked Mr. Crowley why he indulged in German propaganda in America during the war.

Mr. Crowley: In order to destroy it. I reported my activities to the chief of our organization, Captain (later Commodore) Guy Gaunt and was in communication with the Hon. Everard Fielding. I came back immediately after the war and if I had been a traitor I should have been shot—and a good job, too.

Carl [*sic*] Germer, a German merchant, living in England, said that many people in Germany admired Mr. Crowley very highly. He had seen Mr. Crowley invoke the spirit of magnanimity.

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

The case for Mr. Crowley was concluded.

Mr. Malcolm Hilbery (for the printers and publishers) said the question for the jury was whether the passages in "Laughing Torso," of which complaint was made, would be read by any reasonable person as worsening the character of Mr. Crowley.

### **Mr. Crowley's Reputation**

What right had a man who had for years been professing contempt for the standards or ordinary decency, to complain of injury to a reputation which he had written about himself as being that of the worst man in the world?