

**THE LEICESTER MERCURY
LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND
13 APRIL 1934
(pages 1 & 6)**

**'BLACK MAGIC' LIBEL SUIT FAILS
VERDICT FOR ALL THE DEFENDANTS
WITH COSTS**

**Judge On 'Horrible, Blasphemous,
Abominable Stuff' By Poet**

'TIGER WOMAN'S' STORY

Drama of Letters In Mr. Crowley's Possession



**Mr. Aleister Crowley, the plaintiff
In the "Black Magic" libel action
In the regalia of a magical character.**

A verdict for the defendants, with costs, was returned to-day by the jury which heard Mr. Aleister Crowley's libel action against Miss Nina Hamnett, and the publishers and printers of her book "Laughing Torso."

Mr. Crowley, who is an author, had complained that the book imputed that he practiced "black magic" and the defence was a plea of justification.

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

"I have been over 40 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 learnt in this case that we can always learn something if we live long enough."

He asked the jury if they were still of the same opinion as they had intimated earlier.

Judgment was entered for all the defendants with costs.

Mr. Justice Swift said that there was no reflection upon the solicitor for the publishers and printers.

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 that 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.

Drugs Denial

Mrs. Betty Sedgwick, whose former husband, Raoul Loveday, died at the Cefalu villa in Sicily, was cross-examined when the hearing was resumed to-day.

Mrs. Sedgwick 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 in his evidence has declared 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), resuming his cross-examination of Mrs. Sedgwick to-day, asked: "Immediately before your marriage to Raoul Loveday would your life be fairly described as drinking, drugs and immorality?"

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

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that on the day of her arrival in England from Sicily she supplied information to a Sunday newspaper.

"I am suggesting," remarked Mr. Eddy, "that you are the source of all these stories about 'the worst man in the world.' "

Asked if there was a word of truth in her evidence about the "terrible sacrifice of a cat," she replied, "Absolutely true—everything about the cat is true."

Mr. Eddy: Are many of the cats in Sicily wild and destructive animals?—I only knew two, and they were very charming cats.

Mr. Eddy suggested that the shooting of a wild cat by Mr. Crowley was the basis for her story.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No, no.

She was turned out of the Abbey a few days before her husband's death.

Mr. Eddy: What was he suffering from?

Mrs. Sedgwick: I have no idea. I thought it was laudanum poisoning.

Told Scotland Yard

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

"That is true," Mrs. Sedgwick explained. "After he drank the cat's book he was ill and Mr. Crowley gave him laudanum, a lot of it as medicine. I told Scotland Yard I thought it was laudanum poisoning at the time."

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.

Mrs. Sedgwick said she slapped her fourth husband's mother because she annoyed her.

Raoul was her third husband.

That fourth husband had a very serious illness, didn't he?—The fourth? I don't think so.

Mr. Eddy quoted from "Tiger Woman" (Mrs. Sedgwick's book). The fourth husband's mother as saying: "You foul, wicked woman. You are killing my son."

False Teeth, Indeed

Mr. Eddy quoted from the book a passage describing how she aroused the resentment of a man's female companion by sitting at the same table. The passage continued.

"She became insulting. My nostrils dilated as they do when I am angry. At last she got up and danced with the man. As they passed by, she looked backwards, at me, and said, "She is a pretty little thing, but it is a pity she has false teeth."

"I jumped up and slapped her as hard as I could on the face. Waiters immediately bundled us upstairs into the street, fighting all the time.

"I meant paying dearly for that insult. False teeth, indeed. I plunged my fingers into her hair, and pulled hard. The result was not what I had expected. I found myself lying in the gutter and clutched in my right hand—I could hardly believe my eyes—was a chestnut wig."

"You have got a very violent nature?" asked Mr. Eddy.

Mrs. Sedgwick: No.

'Stolen' Letters

Mrs. Sedgwick agreed that she was known as "Bumbletoff," and had received letters signed "Poodlediff" from an old friend of hers.

After questions about other letters, Mr. Eddy asked, "Did you ever authorise anyone to extract those letters from your case and give them to Mr. Crowley?"—No.

Mr. Justice Swift: Are these produced by Mr. Crowley?—Yes.

Do you know how Mr. Crowley got possession of your letters?—I can't imagine how he got them.

Mrs. Sedgwick declared that all the contents of her case were stolen.

Mr. Justice Swift: Where were they stolen from?—From my cottage or from the hotel when I was in London. I always took my case about with me everywhere.

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

Mr. Justice Swift: He clearly has no right to have it. Whoever has possession of those letters is in possession, according to this lady's evidence, of stolen property. They have no right to have it. Merely asking somebody whom you suspect of being in possession of stolen property to produce it doesn't give you the right to give secondary evidence of the document if that person doesn't produce it.

Mr. Hilbery: The witness says she has been permanently deprived of the possession of the letters against her will.

Copies Kept by Court

Mr. Justice Swift: I don't see why we should not use the good old English word "stolen," if the facts warrant it. We shall never know in this case how, because we shall have no opportunity of finding out, but it would be very interesting to know how Mr. Crowley came to be in possession of these letters.

When some of the copies of the missing letters were produced and referred to, Mr. Justice Swift agreed with Mr. Hilbery that they should remain in the custody of the court. He instructed the Associate of the Court to keep them until the case was over.

"Then remind me to discuss them again, please," he added.

'Money Explains'

Mr. Hilbery said this was all his evidence. He wished however to refute any suggestion that the solicitors instructing him had been a party to purchasing any evidence.

Mr. Eddy: My suggestion was, is, and will be that money explains the presence of Miss Betty May (Mrs. Sedgwick) in the witness-box. I do not make any sort of imputation upon the solicitors.

Mr. Justice Swift: Does not money play a very important part in producing in the witness-box most witnesses who have no interest whatever in the case?—They all expect to get their expenses.

Mr. Eddy: I am not prepared for a single moment to assume that the money paid this woman really represented expenses. My position is that she was, in fact, demanding money and getting it.

Arch Humbug

It was indicated that the solicitor would be called later.

Mr. Martin O'Connor (for Miss Hamnett), referring to Mr. Crowley's refusal to accept his challenges to try his magic in court, said it was appalling that, "In this enlightened age a court should be investigating magic which is arch-humbug practised by arch-rogues to rob weak-minded people.

"I hope this action," he added, "will end for all time the activities of this hypocritical rascal."

Later, seeing two jurymen talking together, 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."

Mr. Justice Swift: 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.