

ARTHUR MACHEN:

*Weaver of Fantasy*



ARTHUR MACHEN  
*After the Hoppe photograph*

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MACHEN

*Weaver of Fantasy*

WILLIAM FRANCIS GEKLE

MILLBROOK, N. Y.  
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## ERRATA

Page 95, line 15:

*read 'C. ■ Thompson' for 'Harold Shaylor'*

Page 175, line 22:

*read 'so' instead of 'no conceived'*

Page 194, line 8:

*read 'Johnsonian' instead of 'Johnstonian'*

VERNE

## PREFACE

IT was, I suppose, during the closing months of the First World War that an urbane and witty gentleman, writing in the Confederate city of Richmond, set down these words in the course of one of his interminable, and witty and urbane, monologues: "I wonder if you are familiar with that uncanny genius whom the London directory prosaically lists as Arthur Machen?"

Since there was no reply, as indeed none was expected, the amiable Charteris chatted on about Arthur Machen and, oddly enough, Robert W. Chambers, for some moments, and then he concluded with this statement . . . "But here in a secluded library is no place to speak of the thirty years' neglect that has been accorded Mr. Arthur Machen; it is the sort of crime that ought to be discussed in the Biblical manner, from the house-top. . . ."

That thirty years' neglect has almost doubled—and indeed one might say with perfect truth that Arthur Machen has suffered a lifetime of neglect, *and*, in perfect truth, it must be added that the loss has been the world's which so blindly accorded neglect to the uncanny genius of Arthur Machen.

This is the sort of crime, as Mr. James Branch Cabell suggested back in 1918, that ought to be discussed in the Biblical manner—and it is my intention to do so.

At this point there will be voices raised in protest . . . dim voices trained to the librarian's whisper, voices that echo in the vaults of university libraries and in the reading rooms

of Memorial Collections. There will be other voices—the amiable, all-inclusive voice of the anthologist and the rasping roar of the reprint editor. There will be the excited exclamations of the cultists and the happy burblings of the bibliographers as they pounce upon another Machen item. And of course we may expect to hear the calm and cultured tones of the collectors, the excavators and the discoverers, who have pointed with smug satisfaction to their rows of faded bindings and their “obscure little pamphlets.” As for the horror boys, happy with their harpies and hieroglyphs and wild hallucinations, they will probably croak and sibilate in unholy glee and rush down to start their presses—reprinting madly all they can find of the magical tales of that wonderful Welshman, Arthur Machen.

It will appear that I anticipate a renewed interest in the works of Arthur Machen. I do. It may even become apparent that I expect the publication of this book to work the miracle—to right the wrong of sixty years of neglect. I do. Nor is this to be attributed to egotism, nor to a vast respect for my powers of persuasion. A number of literary men, of small stature and great, have written well and passionately of Arthur Machen, only to have their effusions produce a magnificent calm. It is simply that there are signs and portents (of which more anon) that the time is now. And then of course there is always the bare hope that my admiration for Arthur Machen and my enthusiasm for his work may be contagious enough to result in another Arthurian revival. That would be an event to rival a genuine miracle at Glastonbury itself.

I spoke of the voices that will be raised in praise and recognition of Arthur Machen. It may occur to some that there was bitterness in what I said, and in the way I spoke of collectors and cultists, and of bibliographers and biblio-

philes, and of anthologists and of the zealots of the pulp press. I daresay it is true that I am inclined to be bitter over the neglect accorded Arthur Machen. Of course the blame for that neglect cannot be fixed or fastened—but it must rest somewhere between the publishers of limited editions and the reprinters of almost unlimited editions, between the alpha and the omega, and the buying and reading public. That covers a lot of territory. One cannot indict the publishing world from top, literally, to bottom, literally. One cannot indict, to paraphrase a much quoted statement of Edmund Burke's, an entire reading public. One can, to make a concrete proposal, attempt to do something about it.

The interest shown in the prospectus announcing this book has been gratifying, but it does not, to my mind at least, dismiss the charge of neglect. It merely indicates that there are others who bear witness to the crime and who wish to see justice done.

The book has been announced as a critical survey—and it will be that. Many of the stories, written in that decade of the delicate decadents, will be re-examined and re-evaluated. Mr. Machen will sometimes be spoken of as a "Gothick novelist"—a thing he has said he is not. The stories of the "Great War," as he called it, are seen in a new perspective, as anyone must know who has re-read them, especially *The Terror*, in the past few years.

Many of Machen's articles and essays, and such works as *Hieroglyphics* and *Doctor Stiggins*, offer food for thought to those who may think, for example, that Mr. James Farrell has settled literary criteria, once and for all, in his book, of a few years ago, *The League of Frightened Philistines*.

This book is, then, the result of some twenty years preparation; at least half of them spent in planning to "do some-



thing about it." The book has grown slowly, with many interruptions before, during and since the war. The opening chapter or Prologue, called "Conversation Piece," was written a dozen or so years ago. It was scheduled for publication in one of the ephemeral magazines of the day. This particular one proved to be more ephemeral than most . . . to paraphrase a rather famous line, "it sank from sight before it was set." However, the piece is here presented as it was written some twelve years back. I believe now, as I did then, that there was need for a book about Arthur Machen. I hope this book will fill that need.

At least one chapter, the ninth, may seem to some a phillipic, a potpourri of purely personal preferences and prejudices, having little to do with Arthur Machen and his works. Needless to say, I believe it extremely relevant.

—W.F.G.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I cannot recall whether it was James Branch Cabell or Vincent Starrett who first directed me to the works of Arthur Machen. I am deeply grateful to both, not only for this, but for their encouraging letters concerning my book.

To Montgomery Evans and Paul Jordan-Smith for their enthusiasm and interest, their intimate sketches of Machen, and for facts not available elsewhere. To Carl Van Vechten and Robert Hillyer for their articles on Machen, parts of which are quoted herein.

To Joseph Kelly Vodrey and Paul Seybolt for their informative and helpful letters, and to Nathan Van Patten whose bibliographical labors lightened my own. To Meyer Berger for his notes on the Mons affair, and to *Harper's Bazaar* for permission to quote from them. To the late Alfred Goldsmith and his delightful reminiscences of Machen. To all of these I am deeply grateful.

To Alfred A. Knopf for permission to quote from the Machen books bearing the Borzoi imprint, and for having published them in the first place. To Robert McBride & Co. for permission to quote from *The Terror*, and to Dodd, Mead & Co. for permission to quote from *More Authors and I*.

To Hilary Machen for his courtesy in handling my proofs at Amersham and, finally, to Arthur Machen for the 'plenary blessing' he gave this book.

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### THE MACHENS IN LONDON

*A photograph taken in London in 1937,  
Courtesy of Mr. Montgomery Evans*

facing page 178

## Prologue

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### CONVERSATION PIECE

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"And what," asked the younger man, "are they?" He pointed to a long row of books plainly bound in yellow with faded blue and almost indecipherable titles. The Host felt a warmer glow than the brandy alone could have produced. "They are," he said reverently, "my Machens."

"Your whats?" asked the younger man absently. He had caught sight of a promising looking volume, enticingly entitled *Aphrodite*, on a lower shelf. The Host intercepted the glance, recognized the symptoms of failing interest and, with skill born of experience, drew his chair before the *Aphrodite* and pulled out a lapfull of the yellow books.

The younger man, not too obviously disappointed, concentrated on his small globular glass of *Asbach Uralt*. "Who," he asked in tones that matched his look, "is Machen?"

"Arthur Machen," began the Host in a voice that matched *his* look, "he is the . . . he's, well . . . look!" He gestured to the shelves. "Fifteen books, and there are more, and you've never even heard of him. Fifteen of the most wonderful books in the English language, and you ask who he is!"

"Well," said the young man with pardonable irritation, "just who is he?"

The Host settled back in his chair, fighting hard for

composure and coherence. "Arthur Machen," he began again, and with every evidence of a strong determination to speak calmly, "is the man who has written more fine things than any dozen living authors you may care to mention. That may strike you as a rather broad and rash statement, but I am in a mood to shoot the works. And there are others, Highly Connected and Well Thought Of Persons, who have indicated much the same opinion. Arthur Machen has been appreciated by some of our best known composers of 'literary appreciations.' Unfortunately, this sort of praising is often akin to, and almost as effective as, burying. To the popular mind, a writer who has been appreciated by a duly accredited appreciator is a pet of the pedants, a delight of the dilettantes and nothing more. And, indeed, the titles found on some of the books containing these little essays in literary appreciation are often suggestive of archeological exploration rather than of due honor to a living author. I have in mind, specifically, two books whose titles seem to connote research into a particularly distant past. *Buried Caesars* and *Excavations*, those two books you see there; they would tell you in a much more literary style, and with considerable technical flourish, just who and what Arthur Machen was and is. But I am not minded to ask you to read them at present.

"I think," resumed the Host generously gesturing toward the decanter and his friend's glass, "that the time has come for a new and revised estimate of Arthur Machen. Would that I had the time, talent and/or the temerity to undertake the task! Let us, meanwhile, acknowledge but pass by these appreciators of Machen, at least for the mo-

ment. He has attracted the attention and been subject to the discussion of Vincent Starrett, Carl Van Vechten, James Branch Cabell and others. He has even attracted the notice of such literary titans as Tiffany Thayer and Burton Rascoe. He has been crowned by that arbiter elegantiarum of American manners, morals and mentality, Walter Winchell, who once described Arthur Machen as 'tops among the literati.' This last, I fear, is not a critical estimate per se, but an indication of a vogue in certain quarters.

"Despite the fact that Mr. Machen has been 'discovered' by at least two of our most indefatigable bolster-uppers of literary reputations and revealers-of-lights-under-baskets; despite his having been exhumed and placed on exhibition upon a platform built for two, Machen remains yet to be properly appreciated and honored by a wider public. Perhaps he never will be, and perhaps it is best so. Machen once wrote that if a great book is really popular it is sure to owe its popularity to entirely wrong reasons. And I, for one, tremble to think of what Hollywood might do to Machen." The Host paused briefly for replenishment.

"Far too often these appreciations have degenerated into what I have in my more bitter moments mentally called *Match-Machen*. An execrable pun, I grant you, but concerning a matter that is, to my mind, as offensive. I refer to the practice of certain appreciators who, in the execution of their self-appointed duties find it, for some reason or other, necessary to devise improbable geneologies to demonstrate their own wide literary knowledge and their conception of the subject of their labors. We find, for example, *Mr. X* in the act of appreciating a book by *Mr. Y*.

"How does he go about it? Why, he merely tells you that *Mr. Y* is the literary son of *A* out of *B*, whose maternal grandmother was *C*, and whose second-cousin is *D*. Another trick is to pretend that *Mr. Y's* work is a play . . . with music by *R*, scenery by *S*, costumes by *T* and lyrics by *W*. In short, you come away without the slightest notion about *Mr. Y*. But you have learned that *Mr. X* knows a great deal, apparently, about the doings of *Messrs. A, B, C, D, R, S, T and W*. Do you follow me?"

"But slightly," confessed the younger man with that candor born of brandy.

"I will try to make myself clear," said the Host selecting a volume from the shelves.

"Here we have an essay about a man called, let us say Blank. The author of this little essay will tell you that a passage of Blank's prose suggests one of the more poignant episodes out of de Maupassant, set to music by Tchaikowski against a background of Gaugain's Tahitian belles. Have you any *idée* what Blank's prose is like?"

"No," said the young man morosely.

"Good! Listen then to this. It is Vincent Starrett on Machen: 'Joris Karl Huysmans, in a thoroughly good translation, perhaps remotely suggests Machen, both are debtors to Baudelaire.' Now, does that tell you anything about Machen?"

"No, it does not!" said the young man. "But then, neither have you!"

"Quite true," nodded the Host affably. "I am often carried away. But we have ably demonstrated my contention." The younger man looked decidedly restless. "Um!"



"Know then," said the Host, relishing the sound of his voice, "that Arthur Machen, born in 1863, the son of a Welsh clergyman, first swam into the public ken early in the last decade of the last century—a fact which the public largely failed to appreciate until some years later. His earlier works were translations of the *Heptameron*, the *Memoirs of Casanova*, and several other large and, I should think, rather dull old works. But the most important were two remarkably unique books called *The Anatomy of Tobacco* and *The Chronicle of Clemency*.

"Most of Machen's best work was written before 1901—and in that year he temporarily deserted literature for the stage. Machen's most productive period then, from 1890 to 1901, affords a curious and striking contrast with what was assumed to be the important literature and the important literary group of the time. The 1890's in England were celebrated, although few people grow festive about it now, for the Yellow Book Boys, that delightful coterie of delicate decadants who glorified the carnation and the pansy. But after the maddest music had died away, and the reddest wine had been drunk, Cynara and Dorian fluttered to the shelves and Oscar and Hubert and Adelbert retired into a certain pastel-shaded obscurity from which they emerge from time to time as a new volume of memoirs is published. The period still commands a certain amount of academic attention—and yet the best books of that period were written not by these 'Men of the Nineties,' but by Arthur Machen. A chap named Muddiman, whose book you see there, wrote his history of these fellows and mentions Machen but briefly: 'Arthur Machen, in those days, belonged to the short story

writers with Hubert Crackanthorpe, who was the great imaginative prose writer of the group.' Alas, poor Hubert! Who knows him now! Holbrook Jackson and Richard Le Gallienne ignore Machen completely. And perhaps rightly so. Machen was not of the group, nor of the period. But here I wish to digress briefly. . . .

"These delicate contemporaries of Machen derived from the French Symbolistes, who derived from Mallarme and Baudelaire, both of whom were admittedly influenced by Poe. It has been said that Machen was also influenced by Poe. The difference, if you will credit me, is that Poe's influence, in as far as it exists, came to Machen direct. When it came to the others of the group it had been filtered through Gallic gravel and Symbolistic sand.

"So much for Machen's literary history. No one could possibly tell it better than he has in *Things Near and Far* and *Far Off Things*—his two autobiographical collections. Nor is any literary history as simply told. It is not one of your tremendous collections of anecdotes concerning 'literary figures of the day.' It is the story of a lonely man who wanted, more than anything else, to write. And then—you must read Machen. All of him. I know of no other writer whose entire output can be so heartily recommended.

"You will realize, as you read, that when people use such names as Poe, Stevenson, Blackwood, and Henry James, they are but vaguely gesturing in the general direction of Machen's own weird landscape. It is a land as strange as the misty mid-region of Weir where lies the dank tarn of Auber, the measureless caverns where runs the sacred river Alph. But it is like none of these. The young man of Gwent has

created his own landscape, a strange country spread out under a sky that glows as if great furnace doors had been opened, bordered by tall grey mountains, traversed by streams that coil their esses through silent woods. It is my fancy to think I have a picture of that country, painted by another genius. You see that Van Gogh hanging there?" The Host indicated a large framed print of writhing cypresses under a swirling sky. "On quiet November nights I sit here and look into it, half expecting to see young Meyrick or Lucian Taylor come down the hillside.

"It is curious to go over some of these former estimates of Arthur Machen. One first reads them through in a fine enthusiasm at finding someone else who has read Machen and found him good. But even those who praise him the most, fail to express, or even to hint at the 'quiddity' of Machen. They seem to find him so far beyond their powers to praise that they often resort to picayunish criticism. Thus we find Vincent Starrett mildly complaining about an absence of cloud descriptions in Machen. Or about a lack of humor. True, you'll find no Maxfield Parrish sky castles, no James Gould Fletcher touches, no rotogravure alto-cirrus formations. But if ever a man could imply clouds without using the very word, Machen can. And although Machen has not yet introduced a pair of jolly grave-diggers to coax us back into our seats or cajole us into combing back our bristling hair, you will find he has humor.

"There does exist, however, a problem in classifying Machen—it seems to exist only a necessary evil. Essentially, I suppose, Machen is what might be called a Gothic novelist. He has been linked so often with the recognized practitioners

of the Gothic style and tradition. You'll find no ivy-covered ruins, no deserted abbeys, no ravens, no baying mastiffs, not even a sinister monk—and we must rule out those jolly toss-pots, the monks of Abergavenny. I daresay Machen would prefer to be known as a Silurist. His ruins are those of an older time, older even than the ruins of the golden city of the Roman legions.

“Vincent Starrett calls Machen the Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin—making him sound rather like a Messalinaen Lady Novelist. Mr. Van Vechten too, at least in his decadant novel *Peter Whiffle*, siezes upon Mr. Machen from much the same viewpoint, and makes Machen an asset in the character of his precious Peter. And all too frequently, in discussing Machen, the spirit of Baudelaire raises its ugly head. Novelist of Sin, forsooth! ‘Evil, be thou my good!’ What rot! And there are those, apparently, who would classify some of Machen’s tales as ‘erotica.’ Baudelaire, bosh! As well point out the resemblance between a lane in Gwent and a lupanar in Paris! No—Machen is neither a Gothic novelist nor a writer of delectable indelicacies. Machen’s tag must be sought for in hieroglyphics of his own devising.

“The ‘quiddity’ of Machen, the one quality that pervades all his work, is that of ‘ecstasy.’ It is not the ecstasy of the lyric lady-novelist. Mr. Starrett seems to think it is a technical device, since he finds it is ‘due in no small degree to his beautiful English style.’ Mr. Machen’s own idea of this quality is that it is ‘a removal from the common life.’ And that brings me to *Hieroglyphics*, a book that should be a text-book in all our Universities. But perhaps not—no, surely not. Because in this book of Machen’s you will find

set forth, once and for all, the difference between reading matter and fine literature. And such a book cannot fail to make enemies, nor to create false ideas even among its friends. Mr. Starrett says: 'It is Arthur Machen's theory of literature and life, brilliantly expounded by that cyclical mode of discoursing that was affected by Coleridge. In it he suggests the admirable doctrine of James Branch Cabell that fine literature must be, in effect, an allegory and not the careful history of particular person.' Mr. Cabell, who is, according to Mr. Starrett, Machen's literary son, set forth his literary credo in *Beyond Life* some seventeen years after the publication of *Hieroglyphics*. In it, Mr. Cabell expresses admirably, and with his famed urbanity, many of the truths he learned at his father's knee. One is as pleased with Cabell's literary progenitor as with his prose.

"Just one more quotation. It is my favorite quotation to end quotations about literary credos or the mechanics of creation. Mr. Machen, in *The Three Impostors* says: '. . . I will give you the task of a literary man in a phrase. He has got to do simply this—to invent a wonderful story, and to tell it in a wonderful manner.'

"In his novels, *The Three Impostors*, *The Hill of Dreams*, *The Secret Glory*, *The Terror*, *The Great Return*, and in many of his shorter stories: *The Great God Pan*, *The White People*, in all his creative work, Machen has shown himself the master of his own precept. In *Hieroglyphics* Machen noted the difference between reading matter that related facts about a character or a group of characters, and fine literature that symbolizes certain eternal and essential elements in human nature by means of incidents. You will

find, then, that these wonderful stories are not merely startlingly original conceptions of heroes and heroines taking part in unusual events. That many of these plots and inventions are uncanny and fantastic does not place them in the 'thriller' class—having nothing more to say than the latest detective story. It would be absurd to think of *The Great God Pan*, for example, as merely a story about the discovery that Pan is not dead, or that Priapic cults may still flourish. No, it's not so simple as that. There are other elements present, and chiefest of these is that quality of ecstasy. There are symbols and representations of a higher order, no cheap mysticism, no spiritualistic clap-trap. And finally there is in these stories an element of something that prompts belief.

"*The Great God Pan* is a story much more improbable, more fantastic than *Frankenstein* or *The Strange Case of M. Valdemar*. And it is not a mere pseudo-scientific story—it is believable. You do not believe that? Yet Machen wrote a story more fantastic still. A story with no possible explanation, scientific or otherwise, in short, nothing less than miraculous vision could have explained it. And that story was, and still is, widely accepted as true. The tale of the *Bowmen* at Mons, a simply written story, no flourishes, no elaborate atmosphere; yet with that quality of ecstasy, that quiddity of Machenism, has won belief. Quite recently, in a shop, I came across a volume that was an anthology of Myths, mysteries, visions and the like, and in it appeared the story of the *Bowmen*. It was not Machen's story, however, and there was no mention whatever of Arthur Machen. It had been set down as an authentic legend, documented and sworn to by this one and that one who claimed to have been there. I daresay it

will, in time, join such distinguished company as the Walls of Jericho and Joshua's obedient sun.

"Yes, you must read Machen. All of him. It has been implied that there is a sameness about Machen's work. But do not imagine that you will read the same story, told and retold. You will come to realize that there is in Machen a definite pattern. He has said that most men, as well as writers, are men of one idea. And most writers create tales that are variations on one theme, that a common pattern, like the pattern of an Eastern carpet, runs through them all. And Machen's pattern? You will see, when you read him, that literature 'began with charms, incantations, spells, songs of mystery, chants of religious ecstasy, the Bacchic chorus, the Rune, the Mass.' And Machen has taken as his symbol and pattern the devices and signs of ecstasy, of the removal from the common life. The dance—the maze—the spiral—the wheel—the vine, and wine, these are the outward signs of ecstasy, the patterns of Machen.

"One book in particular you must read—*The Hill of Dreams*, without a doubt one of the finest novels ever written. From the first grand sentence a spell is laid upon you. It has never failed to thrill me—it is like the master theme of a symphony—it is as magical as the opening notes of the *Good Friday* music in *Parsifal*. But there—I have fallen into the ways of those whom I have derided. And I have kept you quite later than I intended."

The Host rose, stretched, and poured out a brace of nightcaps. The younger man, who had listened patiently to this lengthy monologue, gratefully accepted his brandy, sipped rather too avidly, for listening is also a thirsty busi-

ness, and said, "Why do you suppose Arthur Machen is so little known? I mean, he sounds marvelous—but, after all, people can't help it if they don't know about him."

"That," responded the Host sadly, "is one of the Mysteries of Mysteries. Perhaps Machen writes too 'circumvolantly' as Cabell says, for our critics. Or perhaps, as Van Vechten says, 'one only takes from a work of art what one brings to it—and how few readers can bring to Machen the requisite qualities.' Perhaps our critics are more apt to be impressed by clever young men who go about swimming classical streams, fishing for tarpon, or fighting in the fashionable war of the moment. The general public, unfortunately, knows Machen, if at all, through the inclusion of several of his stories in anthologies of mystery and horror stories. Which is about on a par with using Shelley's *Indian Serenade* as a filler in a pulp confession magazine.

"A short time ago in London there was a dinner party in celebration of the seventy-fifth birthday of a writer. The guest of honor made the customary speech—but it was such a speech as has seldom been heard from a feted author. It was tragic, it could have been, and should have been, bitter—but all was gently said. After toiling in the fields of literature for over forty-two years, after having produced eighteen volumes of rare quality, he had earned but £635. That man was Arthur Machen."

"He is still living?" asked the young man.

"Yes," replied the Host gravely. "I should like to make a pilgrimage to his home. But you must go. Take these with you. Read them. I fear I have told you little about Arthur Machen. Nor am I the only one has confessed such a feeling



of inadequacy to cope with Machen. But I find comfort in what a very capable writer once said of another remarkable writer of Gothic Tales. It will be, I promise you, my final quotation of the evening. Dorothy Canfield once wrote, in a preface to *Seven Gothic Tales*: 'The person who has set his teeth into a kind of fruit new to him is usually as eager as he is unable to tell you how it tastes. It is not enough for him to be munching away on it with relish. No, he must twist his tongue trying to get its strange new flavor into words, which never yet had any power to capture colors or tastes.' And now, mind the step going out. It's rather darkish."

# Chapter One

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## FAR OFF THINGS

---

### 1

One might devote a great amount of time and give a great deal of thought to the opening paragraph of a book about Arthur Machen. It is not merely that one is faced with the usual problem of where to begin: in Caerleon or London, in Richmond, Virginia or Newark, New Jersey or, for that matter, wherever one first heard of or first read Arthur Machen. Nor is it simply a matter of how to begin: with a quotation—there are a number of very appropriate quotations—or with a review of a controversy raging in the London newspapers in 1915, or with a few paragraphs taken from *Peter Whiffle*, a rather outré novel published in New York some years ago. Nor is it even a matter of when to begin: with the Nineties, the Twenties, or only yesterday. The problem is one of selection, for one might pick up the line of the legend of Arthur Machen anywhere along the course of the last three quarters of a century. More than that, it is also a matter of the personal history of almost anyone who might attempt the task.

Most people will remember, I think, when it was and how it was, they first became acquainted with the work of Machen. And in most cases, I believe, it will be a rather

strong and vivid memory. Whether one was introduced to Machen by Cabell or Starrett or Van Vechten, or made the discovery for one's self becomes a matter of some importance, at least to those who have come to know Machen and who regard him, as I do, as one of the greatest living writers in English literature. Yet it might seem that these personal recollections and this high regard however deeply felt, are not quite reason enough for a book about such a man, nor significant enough to serve as an introduction to such a book.

Of course there are facts and figures. Many a book gets under way with an impressive array of figures, or with the clever juxtaposition of two facts which, by their very contrast, seem to promise an unrelenting interest and an unremitting grasp upon the reader, or it may start out with a simple statement of fact. Such figures as, for example, these: Arthur Machen's works have appeared in anthologies which run to fabulous numbers of copies, and one of his stories has been published in an edition limited to two copies. Or a juxtaposition of facts, as for example: Arthur Machen has been praised by Oscar Wilde, the arbiter elegantiarum of the 1890's, and by Walter Winchell, equally arbiter elegantiarum of the 1930's.

Or a simple statement of fact, supplied, stiffly and on crackly paper by the British Ministry of Information: "Arthur Machen, the Welsh novelist, was born in Caerleon-on-Usk in 1863." His Majesty's Ministry or representative thereof, concludes with the intelligence that further information may be found in a certain book which may be obtained from a certain publisher.

Be it said, then, and to the everlasting glory of His

Majesty's Ministry of Information, that Arthur Machen *was* born at Caerleon-on-Usk. And in the year 1863. A long time back.

## 2

Somerset Maugham once wrote something about the unhappy accidents of birth that often place a man amid scenes that must seem forever strange, and among men who must seem forever strangers. When such a person, after years of painful adolescence, dramatic conflict, moving tragedy and innumerable vicissitudes, finally arrives by some happy accident at some other spot upon this planet he feels, in the words of more than one sympathetic novelist, that he has "come home." And then, presumably, the conflict and the tragedy and the vicissitudes begin all over again. In actual life writers, and artists of other sorts, are particularly susceptible to this form of cosmic accident—or at least many of them prefer to think so. It is, somehow, heartening to meet one who was pleased with the place of his birth.

"I shall always," wrote Arthur Machen, "esteem it as the greatest piece of fortune that has fallen to me, that I was born in that noble, fallen Caerleon-on-Usk, in the heart of Gwent. . . . For the older I grow the more firmly am I convinced that anything which I may have accomplished in literature is due to the fact that when my eyes were first opened in earliest childhood they saw before them the vision of an enchanted land."

There is no doubt that the simple fact that Arthur Machen was born in Caerleon-on-Usk has had a tremendous influence upon his style, his thinking, his writing, his philosophy and his life.

Caerleon-on-Usk, lying within the fabled land of Gwent and close to the Welsh border, would have fascinated Arthur Machen even if he had not been born there—just as it must fascinate everyone who has ever read Machen and anyone who ever will read him. "Little, white Caerleon," he calls it, an island in the green meadows by the river, was once the headquarters of the Second Augustan Legion, one of the farthest outposts of the sprawling Roman Empire. The Romans originally called it *Isa Silurum*, evidently for its situation on the river Usk. Later Latin writers called it *Urbs Legionem*, a translation of the Welsh *Caer-Leon*.

Caerleon knew the hardened legionnaires, the men who crossed the Channel other conquerors failed to cross. It knew the tread of men who followed the eagles, and it knew the patricians who came with the *Pax Romana* in the wake of the legions. Caerleon knew also the gallant companions of the Round Table, for it was, in those times, a seat of Arthur the King, and many a summons brought the knightly riders within its walls and many a quest sent them off across the meadows where the river wound in great esses toward the dark forests hanging along the mountainside. Nennius places the scene of at least one of Arthur's battles at Cairlion. As for Gwent, it is now called Monmouthshire, but in those days it formed the eastern division of the kingdom of South Wales, and some identify it as one of the three divisions of *Essyllwg*, the country of the Silures. Caerleon itself is the very stuff of legend, and yet it exists today, as it did in the middle nineteenth century, a small and sleepy town not far from the equally legendary Severn.

In this place and in the year 1863, Arthur Machen was

born—the son of a clergyman who had the poor “living” of Llanddewi Rectory. His father was John Edward Jones, who afterwards added his wife’s surname to his own, so that his son’s full signature became Arthur Llewelyn Jones Machen. Daniel Jones, Machen’s grandfather, was Vicar of Caerleon-on-Usk and his great grandfather was David Jones, Curate of St. Fagans, Glamorgan. It is not the present writer’s intention to compose a biography, “fictionized” or otherwise, of Arthur Machen. There will be none of your happy little phrases about what the “little Arthur” did, or what the “young Machen” or the “boy Machen” thought. Nor will the reader be asked to “imagine the young Arthur growing up amid the storied stones of Caerleon,” or to believe that “undoubtedly the young Arthur was influenced by the wild Welsh countryside,” or even to “assume that the boy Machen made many trips to the legendary shrines in and about Caerleon.”

Such a biography may one day be written, but one cannot refrain from hoping that it will not be. Machen has written his own biography in at least three of his books, and perhaps in all of them. The two frankly autobiographical books, *Far Off Things* and *Things Near and Far* tell most of the facts of his early life . . . and they tell them with more meaning than even the most skilled and sympathetic biographer could. His novel, *The Hill of Dreams*, does more with the material suggested in these notes of a lifetime than the most gifted novelist of our day could attempt. The story of Lucian Taylor and his adventures, mental and physical, mystical and spiritual, in the invented town of Caermaen, is the story of Arthur Machen, beautifully told as no one else could tell it. To these books the reader is referred and, fair

warning, he will be referred to them again and again!

To be sure, Machen *did* make those little trips about the legendary town in which he lived; he *was* inspired by the storied stones of Caerleon and he *was* influenced by the wild Welsh countryside. He was an only child and he lived in that solitude which is so often the lot of an only child. He often accompanied his father on his 'parish calls' and thus he came to know every farm and every lane, every hill and every valley in the heart of Gwent along the roads that led from the rectory at Llanddewi.

When he was eleven he went away to school, passing each term as a sort of "interlude among strangers" until he could come home again to Caerleon. Was he happy or unhappy at school? Was he fond of games or of mooning about—the two alternatives, apparently, of English public school life? That story is told in *The Hill of Dreams* and again in *The Secret Glory*. Machen's schooldays were the schooldays of Lucian Taylor and Ambrose Meyrick . . . to their stories we must again refer the reader. For conjecture and invention are beyond the scope of this study and Arthur Machen is seventeen when he really enters into our particular field.

For in his seventeenth year Arthur Machen went up to London. There was a very practical purpose behind this first visit to London—he was to come up before the examiners for entrance into the Royal College of Surgeons. Whether or not the actual purpose of this visit was of great importance to Machen is one of the conjectural matters upon which we shall not speculate. The matter had been arranged and decided by family and friends—it was the necessary preliminary

to a career in medicine or in surgery. Machen prepared for it by walking some three or four miles several times a week to the Pontypool Road Station to obtain copies of the London papers. These he studied with great care, devoting special attention to the theatrical pages. Not that he had ever given any particular thought to the stage or to the theater, or that he was, in the phrase of today, "stage-struck"; it was simply that the theater was typical of what London was, and of what Caerleon was not. At any rate, on a day in June 1880, he went up to London with his father. And thus began *The London Adventure*.

## 3

The examiners found something Machen already knew—he had no head for figures, either arithmetical or anatomical. And apparently Machen had not the interest or the ability to acquire, within a period of time agreeable to the examiners, a proficiency in either. It must not be assumed, however, that Arthur Machen had already decided upon a career in letters, to be pursued amid the pleasures of London. He had not. Years later Machen wrote that he had no idea, when first he went to London, of a career in literature. Indeed, he had *never* thought of it as a career, but as a destiny.

However, he had not been in London a month before he began to write. There is nothing particularly prophetic about this, nor anything especially startling. Most young men, at one time or another, try to write. And usually their creative efforts are turned in the direction of the epic, the heroic, the classic. A young man, trying to write, almost never permits himself to indulge in a fancy for the light



essay, the brief episode. It is epic or it is nothing, usually the latter. Doubtless the Freucians have an explanation for this. It would be, one supposes, a very long and very complicated explanation.

Machen had his own explanation—for his own case. He attributes it to his Celtic blood. Not that Machen thought the Celt, or the Welsh Celt at any rate, had contributed much to the world's literature. Indeed, Machen had advanced the idea that "all impartial judges will allow that if Welsh literature were annihilated . . . the loss to the world's grand roll of masterpieces would be insignificant." Yet he concedes a certain literary feeling that does not exist in the Anglo-Saxon . . . an appreciative rather than creative faculty, lacking, perhaps, in the critical spirit but still, a delight in the noble phrase . . . the music of words. And so—Machen tried, as a young man will, to write.

He wrote verses, of course. "Every literary career," says Machen, "which is to be concerned with the imaginative side of literature begins with the writing of verses." So Machen confirms, some sixty years before it was conceived, the opinion expressed above. He had written verses before, while still at the Hereford Cathedral School. They were concerned somewhat with matters derived from the *Mabinogion* and were probably composed in the heroic manner. This set of verses was, as is the custom, rejected.

He filled notebooks with "horrible rubbish—rubbish that had rhymes to it." Much of what he wrote was greatly influenced by Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise*. "Influenced" seems a mild sort of word to set alongside Machen's own "cataclysmic." At any rate, writing what he describes vari-

ously as rubbish and drivel, Machen tried, at the same time, to pass his examinations for the Royal College of Surgeons. His examiners now arrived at their decision regarding Machen's arithmetical ability and the career as a surgeon came to a close. Machen returned to Caerleon and the writing continued, mostly, of course, after the family had retired for the night.

## 4

A printer named Jones, who lived in the cathedral town of Hereford, one day received in the post a manuscript accompanied by a request to print one hundred copies of the poem. It was a poem. The title of the poem, *Eleusinia*, probably conveyed nothing to Mr. Jones, stationer, bookseller and printer of Hereford. As he struggled with the text, written in a large sprawling hand on both sides of ordinary letter paper, Mr. Jones might have wondered what our young people were coming to. Certainly the subject matter of the poem was vastly different from the Bibles, Prayer Books and Pitman's Shorthand Manuals with which his shelves were stocked.

Fortunately for Mr. Jones, the poet pretended no knowledge of book-making. He specified no typographical niceties, he pleaded for no ornaments, he indicated no preference in paper or in binding. His one modest request, that the Greek phrase *Oudeis Muomenos Odureta* to appear on the title page, be set in Greek type, was withdrawn when Mr. Jones wrote him that Greek type would be extra. And so the phrase appeared in English, and with a typographical error, at no extra charge.

Mr. Jones presumably knew the young poet—remem-

bered him as a purchaser of letter paper and note books. The Llanddewi Rectory address was, in a way, reassuring. His bill would probably be paid, but Mr Jones must have thought the usual thoughts about "minister's sons." As for the poet—he preferred anonymity, the comparative anonymity of "By a Former Member of the H.C.S." For when a sixteen page pamphlet bearing the title *Eleusinia* and concerning itself with the Eleusian Mysteries, is published by a Former Member of the Hereford Cathedral School it must be admitted that such anonymity is, at best, comparative. Generations of readers of novels about English public schools will realize that every other former member of the H.C.S. would know at once that the book could have been written by none other than "old Machen."

Of course the edition of one hundred copies guaranteed that the anonymity would still remain comparative—especially since it seemed unlikely that the former membership of the H.C.S. at large would be interested enough in poetry to purchase sixteen pages of it . . . and without wrappers! It is not known, exactly, what happened to ninety-nine copies of *Eleusinia*. Henry Danielson in his *Arthur Machen: A Bibliography* (1923) says that his collation was taken from what is probably the only copy extant.

The text of this first work of Arthur Machen is, naturally, as little known to the general reader as a transcription of the Rosetta Stone . . . and so it is likely to remain. What is it about? Machen says of it, "this is a horrible production." He wrote it, he adds, by turning an encyclopedia article on *Eleusis* into verse, "some of it blank, some of it rhymed, all of it bad." This is Machen's estimate of it in the notes he

wrote for Danielson's *Bibliography*. Nathan Van Patten lists, *Beneath the Barley. A Note on the Origins of Eleusinia* (1931). Whether this explains the poem or the mysteries is known only to those who have seen one of the twenty-five copies that were printed. However, in a letter written in 1945, Machen says: "It is less than nothing, but perhaps it might have suggested the entertaining question—'Here is a boy of seventeen who is interested in the Eleusian Mysteries: what the devil will happen to him?'" "

Well, Machen's poem was published, and whatever he may have thought of it in 1923 or in 1945, his relations, in 1884, thought well enough of it to decide that journalism was the career for Arthur. It is amazing, in a way, that a pleasant little group in a country rectory should decide over a little pamphlet written "about" the pagan rites at Eleusis, that their youthful relative was destined for a career in journalism. Of course, relatives are proud of one's books and equally proud of one's pamphlets, even if they do not read them. And so, perhaps, the rector and his family never bothered too much about the contents of the rarest Machen item of them all. Doubtless more than one of the ninety-nine copies slowly disintegrates in a Welsh garret to this very day.

## 5

In the summer of 1881 Machen was back in London in quest of a career. This one too, although it had nothing to do with figures, did not quite come off. For some time he had thought about journalism as his relatives advised, but he did not actually follow their advice until some years later. Meanwhile, he lived in an old red-brick Georgian house in

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Turnham Green where he wrote furiously in one manner or another. That Celtic appreciation of the fine phrase and the glorious sound of words was strong within him, for almost everything he read struck a responsive chord, and he would begin at once to compose an epic in the manner of the author or the book he was currently reading.

Thus there was a long heroic poem in the manner of William Morris, whose *Earthly Paradise* he had just purchased with his tea and tobacco money. Then there were innumerable verses in the manner of Robert Herrick. Now and then there would be a strong Swinburnian resurgence. And while all this furious creation was going on he worked in what was called the "editorial" department of a publishing house.

There are many tasks a literary man might do in serving his apprenticeship and Machen did most of them—or most of the ones current in the 'Eighties. He had assisted in the "grangerizing" of many old and odd volumes and he had composed "Shakespearean" calendars, selecting appropriate quotations from "The Bard" for each of the three hundred and sixty-five days. These and other more or less literary matters occupied his days and earned for him the sum of about a pound a week. At Turnham Green he wrote feverishly and planned prodigiously and read ravenously . . . and almost every book he came upon set him off on another venture of his own.

There are some writers, and there are certain casts of mind, requiring exercises of this sort. It is rather odd that these should turn out to be the more imaginative writers after all. Yet it does seem that they have to work out for

themselves theories of composition and devote much of their time and talent and energy to perfecting the technicalities of the trade of writing. Poe, of course, comes to mind, and Coleridge and Hawthorne. They first developed theories, seemingly so rigid. They devised formulae, seemingly so mechanical. And then they created tales and poems, not from their observations and experience, based not on facts, but on fancy. And they composed them, apparently, with little regard for the formulae and systems of their own devising. They seem to leap from the frankly imitative to the fearlessly imaginative, without ever taking any of the intermediate steps they themselves had postulated, or calling into use any of the technical and mechanical aids with which they had practiced their trade.

Machen in 1881 might recognize and respond to a pattern or formula in Swinburne, in Burton, in Morris, in Herrick, in Stevenson, in Balzac, in Rabelais. This is not to imply that Machen merely developed a style "in the manner of Swinburne," or of Stevenson or of any of them. To each of these he brought something of Machen—and as he learned his craft, the technical tricks, the automatic alliterations and the polished phrasing were fused into something, a way of writing, no one else has ever had, no one but Arthur Machen.

Meanwhile Machen discovered that he disliked his labours at the publishing house in Chandos Street. The business of composing cultural calendars to be hung in London kitchens and country parlours did not interest him, nor did he see why it should interest anyone. He therefore resigned his position—and in the face of a raise to twenty-four shillings a week! He then became, of all things, tutor to a

group of children, teaching them, of all things, mathematics! His head for figures seems to have improved considerably for, on going over the Euclid he was supposed to pass along to his charges, he found that it did make sense of a sort.

He had moved from Turnham Green to Clarendon Road—a street destined to become, one day, as well known as Baker Street, Cheyne Row and many another London street of literary fame. Machen was already existing on that famous and fantastic diet of “green tea, stale bread and great quantities of tobacco.” Fortunately, at first, his tutorial position entitled him to dinner with his pupils. Later his pupils changed, and with them his menu. The noon hour was spent in wandering about Turnham Green or Holland Park, with a pause for biscuit and beer at a convenient tavern.

These wanderings became a habit, and through the spring of 1883 Machen went further afield into the green suburbs to the north and west of the city. It was on these lonely outings that he first began to formulate one of his literary theories—that “in literature no imaginative effects are achieved through logical predetermination.” Now this theory—so demonstrably true in his own case—was arrived at by no logical predetermination but by sheer pedestrianism. It came about on these solitary walks when, as so often happened, the roads that led so invitingly to green and open country plunged suddenly into a row of horribly new brick houses or, more startling still, a vast and sprawling cemetery.

To the countryman, whose ideal landscape proceeds logically from valley to hill, from stream to pond, from cross-roads to village, from fence to house and stile to pasture,

these monstrous outcroppings of civilization, these sudden and terrible interruptions of what was and should have continued to be a pleasant prospect, are more horrible even than a factory belching smoke from seven stacks.

And so these pleasant saunters that so often ended before a hideous row of red-brick houses, the quiet lanes that terminated abruptly before a vast pile of bricks and boards, created in Machen the beginnings of that doctrine of the strange and terrifying things that lie so close to the surface of the quiet and the commonplace. The hideous face at the window in a story written years later is but a reflection of the sudden apparition of a raw, new suburb at the end of a quiet lane leading north out of London.

For the present these were but things seen and felt, they sank quietly below the surface and floated deep down in the well of the unconscious. Tutoring and Turnham Green and the twisting roads of Notting Hill were sufficient unto the days. The nights in his small room in Clarendon Road were more urgent—more filled with magic. For here there was not the sudden sight of a street hastily hacked into a hillside, nor the mounds and monuments of a cemetery, but great books and greater magic flowing from the majesty of Gothic cathedrals or the Arthurian romances or the Divine Comedy. He read by night, lighting candles when the gas meter clicked off, and passed for a time into the "Middle Ages, walking in the silvery light with the Masters of the Sentences, with the Angelic Doctor, listening to the high interminable argument of the Schools." Out of these books and studies, and a great deal out of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* came a book that was to be called *The Anatomy of Tobacco*.



The book was sent to a publisher who, as it happened, liked it and who was prepared to publish it, after "certain preliminaries" were attended to. These preliminaries entailed a visit to Caerleon and called for another conference in the parlour at the Rectory. The family and the relations, remembering the pamphlet of a few years ago and encouraged by the news that the new book would contain many times more than sixteen pages, attended to the preliminaries.

In due course, in the year 1884, George Redway of London published *The Anatomy of Tobacco*. And a very handsome book it was, in its cream parchment boards and brick-red lettering on the spine. The author of this study of smoking, "Methodized, Divided, and Considered after a New Fashion" was one "Leolinus Silurensis, Professor of Fumical Philosophy in the University of Brentford," in whom we may recognize our old friend, the former Member of the Hereford Cathedral School.

This is the book Machen calls "The Anatomy of Tankards" in his *Far Off Things*. There you may read the whys and the wherefores of this amazing composition, and the devious means by which Burton and tobacco and divers other curious books entered into its making. So convincing is his account of his investigations and research into the matter of taverns and tankards and such matters that quite a few collectors have spent considerable time, and were prepared to spend considerable sums, to acquire a copy of *The Anatomy of Tankards*. Meanwhile, Machen had quitted the six-by-ten room in the Clarendon Road and returned to Caerleon and a normal diet. Throughout the winter of 1884 he had worked on the proofs of the *Anatomy* and then

upon an assignment from Redway for another book. This was a translation of the *Heptameron* of Marguerite of Navarre. Machen blithely undertook the task, despite his own sworn statement that upon leaving Hereford School he could not have conjugated the simplest, and most popular, of French verbs.

The merrie and delightsome tales of the French Marguerite occupied him through winter and spring in Gwent. Once more he walked in the deep lanes about Caerleon and alternately missed London and revelled in the luxury of not being in Clarendon Road. By the time June came to Caerleon he had sent off the last batch of his translation and Redway had written him and offered him a job. It did not seem too hard a thing to return to Clarendon Road with a job, a real one, in the City. He was to catalogue books—and such books! There were books on Alchemy and Magic, on Mysteries and Ancient Worship, on the occult sciences and Rosicrucians and all sorts of wonderful and baleful and mystic and incredible matters.

Machen became the cataloguer of these curious volumes—and he came very close to being that wonderful phenomena of the twentieth century: a publisher's advertising man! As a matter of fact, Machen did achieve something few, if any, publisher's advertising men have accomplished—either before or since. Two of his catalogues have become highly prized collector's items. They were published in 1887 and 1888 respectively.

Working in a book-filled garret in Catherine Street, Machen produced one catalogue which pops up from time to time in Machen bibliographies: *The Literature of Occult-*

*ism and Archeology*. Then it occurred to him to paraphrase a chapter in *Don Quixote*, the one in which the Curate and the Barber examine the Knight's library. This chapter was written in a manner calculated to entice the wary or unwary book collector into buying the books discussed. The catalogue was issued under the title *A Chapter from the Book Called The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*. The other catalogue, issued in the following year, bore the title *Thesaurus Incantatus, The Enchanted Treasure or, The Spagyric Quest of Beroaldus Cosmopolita*.

It will do little good to look for copies of these catalogues. Vincent Starret, the fortunate possessor of at least one of them, in his collection of Machen's tales, *The Shining Pyramid* (Covici-Fried, Chicago, 1923) has included two pieces called *The Priest and the Barber* and *The Spagyric Quest of Beroaldus Cosmopolita*. These are taken, of course, from the catalogues in question. As to whether you will find the Starret volumes readily available—well, they are worth the search.

Well then, here was Machen in a hot-bed of the occult and the devilish, surrounded by books of all sorts, especially the strange, the weird and the curious. His room in the Clarendon Road held as many books as it could accommodate along with its occupant—the overflow was stacked between the rungs of a ladder on the landing outside. He was busy with note-books once more, and writing furiously as ever—but in despair rather than the fine frenzy and high spirits of a few years before. For now he was deep in Rabelais and Balzac—and these books cast a spell upon him. They were warm, glowing books in which life was full

and rich and lusty—there were great eaters and drinkers and lovers in those days. They offered too great a contrast to the cold, lonely room in Clarendon Road and the diet of tea, tobacco and bread.

Machen was under the spell of a landscape bathed in a warm sun, with ruins standing close to roads, and wine flowing from vineyard to bottle to parched throats all within a few yards of enchanted space. This was a contrast indeed to the deep lanes of Gwent, the lonely ruins that stood in the shade and shadow of great hills and forests, and although Machen had spoken glowingly of the greenish-yellow cider of that land, still, he rather favored, in his mind at least, the wines of Touraine.

By night there was this magic of old books and by day there were the old books of magic, for the garret in Catherine Street was crowded with old and odd books of every sort, a collection that "represented that inclination of the human mind which may be a survival from the rites of the black swamp and the cave." These studies did induce a frame of mind that might tend toward the strange and unusual. Living in this strange mixture of a glowing, gargantuan landscape and the dark labyrinths of the mediaeval mind, Machen tried, and sometimes desperately trièd, to write.

"A man has no business to write," said Machen many years later, "unless he has something in his heart, which, he feels cries out to be expressed." And he had nothing to say—had only the urge to write, the vice of writing for writing's sake—*cacoethes scribendi*—he called it! But then Machen has had time to reconsider his pronouncement of 1923, and

to revise his opinion regarding men who wrote—and why they write.

In a "London Letter" to the *New York Times Book Section*, Herbert W. Horwill wrote, in September 1935: "A curious literary problem is posed by that veteran author, Arthur Machen, in John o' London's *Weekly*. Imagine a man marooned on a desert island, and certain that he would remain there for the rest of his life. Imagine, moreover, that he possessed the literary faculty, and had salvaged pens, ink and paper from the wreck or else had devised home-made substitutes for them. Would such a man write, knowing that whatever he wrote would never be seen by any eye but his own?"

"Mr. Machen tells us that he once heard this question discussed among a group of friends. Some answered yes and some no, and, when pipes were knocked out for the night, the problem was no nearer solution, though, to the best of his recollection, the ayes were in the majority. He voted with them himself, and, after further reflection, he still believes he was right. The hypothetical Crusoe might have no better implements available than quills of parrots' feathers, paper made out of the bark of the guru tree and ink obtained by macerating the root of a certain plant. But, granted his possession of the literary faculty, he would possess also the literary impulse. He would write because he liked writing, apart from whatever fate might be in store for the thing written. The true spring of imaginative literature, Mr. Machen reminds us, is the delight of the creator in creation."

In the desert island of Clarendon Road, all through the summer of 1885, Machen wrote. He wrote because he had to,

because he was under the spell of a master of gargantuan languages, because he was enamoured of the sound of words and because he had an ear for the rich and rolling phrase. And, of course, he wrote because he had the literary impulse. The pound a week he was paid by Redway could not afford him the rich living, the pleasures of Touraine. But then, after despair and after much almost pointless scribbling, he came at last upon the idea for the Great Romance.

It was to be a book in which Rabelais and Gwent were mingled . . . and thus began the "History of the Nine Joyous Journeys . . . in which were contained the amorous inventions and fanciful tales of Master Gervase Perrot, Gent." Machen had prepared for this great undertaking by purchasing his ruled quarto paper, his pen points and his penholders. Quite possibly he envisioned a plaque on the door of his little cell at 23 Clarendon Road, announcing that Here Had the Great Romance been Written! There was, however, this difficulty—the vision of the great romance declined to be more specific. There were no hints as to plot, no guidance as to characters. He began, at any rate, a Prologue, written in a flowing and flowery 17th Century manner.

But now his cataloguing in Catherine Street had come to an end, and with it his pound or thereabouts per week. Nevertheless, he wrote on, even though he knew that his composition of the Great Romance might be abruptly terminated some three or four days in the future. Then, presumably, he would return to Caerleon, in all probability on foot. As it happened, he returned hurriedly by train. Just as he had come to the end of his tea and tobacco and rent money, he had word

that his mother was dying. Aunt Maria thoughtfully sent his fare with the summons.

Later, he returned to the "great romance," writing once more in the familiar room in the rectory where the fire burned and the winds howled down from Twyn Barlwyn and tossed the branches and beat upon the door. He wrote late into the morning, long after his father had knocked out his last pipe and gone upstairs. So passed the winter of 1885. Through the days he walked in the lovely Gwentian hills and looked down upon the white farm houses standing in the midst of encircling trees. At night he worked in that room where he had, as a boy, first read de Quincy and Scott and the other writers who had helped to bring about the "renaissance of wonder." And in the following year he was alone. His father died that spring.

This was the John Edward Jones whose homecoming from Jesus College, Oxford, is described in the opening pages of *Things Near and Far*. Now Machen was more truly alone than ever. His father had been to him a good companion in his earliest rambles about the countryside. It had been his father's hope that Arthur might one day return to Gwent to live, buy a small newspaper and settle down to a quiet career in country journalism.

There were certain inheritances that might help, when they came through. For Machen's father seldom thought of the good these inheritances would do for him in his struggle to make ends meet at Llanddewi Rectory. But now he had gone and then, ironically, the long-lived Scottish relations went too, and the Scottish lawyers began to look through family Bibles for the next of kin.

Through these and other circumstances Machen at length came into money—smallish amounts which, shrewdly invested or even conservatively invested, might have stretched themselves out for a score or more years. This economic policy did not suggest itself or, if it did, was quietly ignored. The simple expedient of living modestly and comfortably, and dipping into a box for coins, when coins were required, seemed much the better plan.

In 1887 Machen returned to London, to live in Bedford Place, and to arrange for the publication of the Great Romance, now called *The Chronicle of Clemendy*. This was accomplished, with perhaps a deeper plunge into the box of coins, and the book was published that year. It was printed at Carbonnek, "for the society of Pantagruelists." And it did, apparently, quite well. The nine joyous journeys and the merry monks of Abergavenny pleased Machen and his fellow Pantagruelists—which, in the year 1888 or 1948, is almost as much as can be asked of any book.



## Chapter Two

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### THE LONDON ADVENTURE

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#### 1

In the late 1880's Arthur Machen had, as he said, "Rabelais on the brain." He had been for some years under the spell of the gargantuan tales and of Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*—and perhaps even more under the spell, literarily if not literally, of the Holy Bottle and the magic of Touraine and whatever it is about the land of France that so beguiles the young of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

It was under the Rabelaisian influence that Machen had written his "great Romance," *The Chronicle of Clemendy*, and made his translation of the *Heptameron*. And finally he had undertaken to translate and publish an even more difficult and bizarre book—*Le Moyen de Parvenir* by Beroalde de Verville.

This book, rather highly prized by collectors of at least two sorts, is incredibly dull. No fault of Machen's certainly, although he might have permitted it to remain untranslated. Still, he was at the stage and of an age when this sort of thing had an appeal. And so he translated and published it in not one, but two editions. There was a large paper edition and an "ordinary" edition—both preceded by a very small

edition (four copies) of a portion of the book under the title *The Way to Attain*.

Now of course every Machen bibliography lists this title, and many a Machenite has wished he might obtain a copy. Actually, it is one of the least important of Machen's works. For this is merely a portion of *Le Moyen de Parvenir*—and very probably not an important part at that. Bibliographers, bibliophiles and bibliomaniacs are at liberty to go quietly mad in their quest for this queer little item. For queer it is—Machen himself cannot quite explain its existence. The four copies were issued in 1889, presumably by the Dryden Press who were to publish the complete work. A dispute over something or other arose and the project was dropped—at least by the Dryden Press. All four copies, apparently, are in the safe-keeping of Danielson, or they were at one time.

The other two editions were privately printed at Carbonek in 1890 under the title of *Fantastic Tales*. There have been other editions, de luxe if not luxurious, for what is sometimes known as "the trade." It may be assumed that the writer holds no very high opinion of this work. But then neither does Machen. He has described the book as being somewhat like a cathedral constructed entirely of gargoyles—as plain a warning as any ever given by an author regarding one of his works.

This fantastic collection of "discourses . . . on Reformation politics . . . many tales, some pointless, a few amusing" while it may provide puzzles, pleasure and profit for bibliophiles, is important only in that it marks the finish of the Rabelaisian influence upon Machen. Not that this influence was ever "Rabelaisian" in the usual sense . . . it was

rather like that of various French poets and novelists of several generations over still other generations of English and American writers. During certain periods our younger writers and "intellectuals" would have Verlain on the brain, or Baudelaire in their bonnets, but eventually they would go back to writing stark novels about Sussex or Sauk Center, or Wales or Wisconsin or the moors of the Missouri.

The extent of this enthusiasm and the depth of this influence may be estimated from the following rhapsody delivered by Ambrose Meyrick in *The Secret Glory*. "Let me celebrate, above all, the little red wine. Not in any mortal vineyard did its father grape ripen; it was not nourished by the warmth of the visible sun, nor were the rains that made it swell common waters from the skies above us. Not even in the Chinonnais, earth sacred though that be, was the press made that caused its juices to be poured into the *cuve*, nor was the humming of its fermentation heard in any of the good cellars of the lower Touraine. But in that region which Keats celebrates when he sings the 'Mermaid Tavern' was this juice engendered—the vineyard lay low down in the south, among the starry plains where is the *Terra Turonensis Celestis*, that unimaginable country which Rabelais beheld in his vision where mighty Gargantua drinks from inexhaustible vats eternally, where Pantagruel is athirst for evermore, though he be satisfied continually. There, in the land of the Crowned Immortal Tospots was that wine of ours vintaged, red with the rays of the Dog-star, made magical by the influence of Venus, fertilised by the happy aspect of Mercury. O rare, super-abundant and most excellent juice, fruit of all fortunate stars, by thee were we translated, exalted into the

fellowship of that Tavern of which the old poet writes:  
*Mihi est propositum in Taberna mori!*"

Well, it was quite a thing while it lasted . . . but the Rabelaisian vein petered out and Machen began to perceive that he was of Caerleon-on-Usk and not a townsman of Tours or a citizen of Chinon, and that the old grey manor-houses and the white farms of Gwent had their beauty and significance, though they were not castles in Touraine.

Meanwhile he was back at his old trade of cataloguing. He had switched employers for, when York Street would yield little more than a pound a week, Leicester Square would give thirty shillings. So back he went to cataloguing ancient books. Not that he was much good at it, nor that he preferred it above all other forms of employment. As a matter of fact he rather disapproved of the whole business and issued what almost amounts to a Manifesto to Collectors: "I don't care two-pence," he wrote, "whether a book is in the first edition or in the tenth; nay, if the tenth is the best edition, I would rather have it . . . the only question being: is the book worth reading or not?"

Nevertheless, cataloguing seems to have been a rather flourishing trade at the time, and a profitable practice—for the publisher at any rate. For this was a remarkably literate era, and publishers pandered profitably to the popular taste . . . they were busily at work discovering rare books, improving some with plates borrowed from others, issuing new and enlarged editions at the drop of a folio, and discovering the pleasures and profits to be derived from making translations—particularly from the French. In the same building occupied by Machen's employers were the offices of Vizatelly,

the publisher who was even then bringing out translations of Zola's works. At about the same time Machen was working there, Havelock Ellis was editing the Mermaid Tavern Series of Elizabethan Dramatists for Vizatelly. Ellis notes in his *Autobiography* that he was paid the sum of three guineas per volume—an amount he considered rather small. This may indeed have been a small amount—but he had a better deal of it than Machen who was asked, at about this time, to do a translation of the memoirs of Casanova.

The manner in which this undertaking came about was rather curious and very casual. One of the Brothers for whom he worked, and whom he does not otherwise identify in *Things Near and Far*, came to him one day with an old volume and asked Machen to translate from the place marked with a slip of paper. Machen set to work and about a year later he completed his translation of the twelve volumes of *Casanova's Memoirs*. The place marked fell in about the fifth volume, and Machen simply translated through to the twelfth; began again at the first and worked through to the place in the fifth volume—which was “where he came in” as one says at the movies.

This monumental work, and the best translation to date of the *Memoirs*, was thrown in, as it were, with the cataloguing at thirty shillings a week. Machen simply remarks that he believes the cost to the firm to have been “strictly moderate.” Much more moderate than the three guineas per volume paid to Ellis for his editing. However, Machen was eventually offered an opportunity of profiting from his work. A few years later when the translation was about to be published, Machen was granted the privilege of

investing a thousand pounds in the venture. One of the Brothers suggested that, as he was now an *interested* party, he might wish to revise the manuscript.

Of course publishing was not quite the same game it is today . . . there were publishers then who were, if not actually unscrupulous, a trifle careless in their accounting and possibly slightly unethical. Vizatelly was prosecuted and jailed as a result of his translations of Zola. Machen has remarked upon the irony of the situation—for even while Vizatelly was in jail, charged with circulating obscene literature, Zola was being well received on his trip through England. When Vizatelly died shortly thereafter the Mermaid Tavern series was taken over by another publisher without so much as a by-your-leave. Ellis' name was removed from the volumes, and that, apparently, settled that. Ellis treated the affair with a silence he knew would not be taken as a sign of contempt. One gathers that publishers in those days were not very thin-skinned. However, in his autobiographical sketches describing these events, Machen offers not the slightest criticism of the Brothers but he did, shortly thereafter, quit the publishing business.

## 2

For almost a decade Machen had been in London, and for most of that time he had been writing. But he had written rather imitatively; he had, as he says, "been wearing costume in literature. The rich, figured English of the earlier 17th Century had a peculiar attraction. . . ." Whether this was unnatural affectation or natural affinity, he wrote in this fashion—essays, verse, tales, epistols dedicatory. He even kept, for many years, a diary written in this manner. *The*

*Anatomy of Tobacco* was an "exercise in the antique," the *Chronicle* tried to be mediaeval, *Le Moyen* was in the ancient mode, the *Heptameron* a mere finger-exercise in the composition of a period piece. At this point Machen decided to write in the modern manner.

In 1890 Machen began to make an approach to journalism. His Welsh relations were probably gratified when his pieces and stories began to appear in the *Globe* and the *St. James Gazette*. He was still a long way from adopting journalism as a profession or career, but he had decided to do some writing in "the modern manner" and the papers seemed to offer an outlet.

Journalism was then, as it is now, a wonderfully agitated world in which editors knew what their readers wanted and were determined to see that they got it—whether they liked it or not. Oddly enough, an editor's staff never seems to have this happy faculty of knowing what the readers want, but they do know what their editors want—and so everyone is mildly unhappy about it excepting the editors—and it is questionable whether an editor is ever really happy, or ever deserves to be.

At any rate Machen wrote, on an average, about as much drivel as the average journalist must, and about as many silly stories as most journalists have to. Of course it was not as bad as it might have been, or as bad as it became later, for, according to Machen, editors in the 1890's presumed a certain standard of education and culture in their readers. This tendency has been overcome, however, and along with certain other technical improvements the press as it existed during Machen's time was much as it is today.

His success at writing for the *Globe* and an acceptance by the *St. James Gazette* started him on short stories. These appeared mostly in the *Gazette* whose rate of payment was commenably higher than the *Globe's*. The connection did not last too long for one of the stories created quite a stir.

Reading it now one wonders at that, and when one remembers a few of the tales that were to flourish in the decade to follow, Machen's little story of *The Double Return* seems harmless enough. The tale is rather reminiscent of *The Guardsman*—you will remember the success of the Lunts in that play on the stage and on the screen. Machen's tale lacked the amorousness or even the intent of *The Guardsman*, it merely told of a man returning home after three weeks in the country.

"Back so soon?" asked his wife.

"I've been in the country for three weeks," said he, rather put out.

"I know," she said, "but you returned last night."

"Indeed not, I spent last night at Plymouth on my way back from the country," said the husband.

Whereupon his wife accused him of being playfull and showed him his cigarette case he had left behind him when he left the house this very morning. Well, the husband had lost the cigarette case in the country some days before, and he *had* spent the night in Plymouth on his way back to London, and so he couldn't have returned on the previous night. There had been a man at his hotel or inn who rather resembled him and so on. The upshot of it all was that shortly thereafter the husband went to America, which seems to have been the thing to do in such cases. A rather harmless



little story, not even a boudoir scene or a hint of one. But *The Double Return* aroused as much interest in the nineties as the most daring double entendre might today.

Oscar Wilde, no amateur at arousing the public, said to Machen, 'Are you the author of that story that fluttered the dovecotes? I thought it very good.' Well, flutter the dovecotes it did, and one did not flutter the dovecotes with impunity, at least so far as the St. James Gazette was concerned. Machen no longer appeared in its august pages. This may or may not have caused Machen concern. He was also doing stories for some of the "society" papers and wrote in this same year *The Lost Club*, so very similar to Stevenson's story of the Suicide Club, *A Wonderful Woman* and others.

The year 1890 happens to be a year of some significance generally, for it opens the decade of the delicate decadents, sometimes known as the Yellow Book Boys.

Among the many books that have been written about the Eighteen Nineties is a small and, on the whole, less pretentious volume than most. This is Bernard Muddiman's *Men of the Nineties*. In it one finds this brief mention of Machen: "Arthur Machen, in those days, belonged to the short story writers with Hubert Crackanthorpe, who was the great imaginative prose writer of the group."

Alas, poor Hubert! Who knows him today as a great imaginative prose writer? Who, for that matter, knows poor Hubert at all, save for those who may look into the bound volumes of the Yellow Book to be found occasionally in the Public Library (under the somewhat bewildering though accurate classification of "Magazines")?

The 1890's was perhaps the most widely and well pub-

licized decade in history, surpassing, in this respect at least, the 'Twenties of our own century. The 1890's spawned geniuses where the 1920's only discovered genius. The analogy between these decades can be carried to even greater lengths and indeed it will be, in a later chapter, for the 'Twenties also rediscovered Arthur Machen.

But for all poor Muddiman's eulogy of Hubert in his slender volume eulogizing the men of the Nineties, the late Mr. Crackanthorpe was *not* the great imaginative prose writer of the group. Nor was the prolific Henry Harland, whose contributions to the Yellow Book were in the New Style—with French phrases popping up half a dozen to the page and French women putting in appearance among the good English spinneys, and representative members of the New Woman being forthright and outspoken for all their "flutter of curls at the brow" and garden hats and "merry peals of laughter." Mr. Harland sprinkled his prose with French phrases, giving them a naughty air (just as, in the Twenties, French phrases were used to give novels a sophisticated air) and his heroes were made "interesting" rather than solid or adventurous or empire building. They, the "interesting" chaps, thought of women as "handsome" or "good-looking" rather than beautiful or lovely. Such words were reserved for inanimate things—things animal, vegetable or mineral, but never the feminine. They further thought of women in terms of "what a *woman* she is!" Like that, with an air of invincible surprise. No, it was not Hubert, nor yet Henry, who was the great imaginative prose writer of the group—it was Arthur Machen. But then Muddiman may have been right after all, for Machen was not truly of the

group of writers who practiced the purple phrase, who wrote in pastels and who composed pastiches in praise of practically nothing.

It may come as something of a surprise to many admirers of Machen to know that he was a contemporary of the Yellow Book crowd. Perhaps it will come as something of a relief to know that Machen was not a member of the group, despite the fact that his first book of stories appeared in this period, issuing from the Bodley Head with a title page by Beardsley. Machen never wrote for the Yellow Book. But for that matter, neither did Wilde. Still, yellow bookery was rampant at the time and since it is sometimes said that a man is the product of his age, it might be well to skirt along the well travelled path trod by the delicate decadents, their critics and appraisers and appreciators.

Osbert Burdett, Holbrook Jackson, Richard LeGallienne and other more talented and serious students have gone over the period with admirable thoroughness. The magnifying glass has been placed over every one of Beardsley's drawings and even the most moribund of the minor poets has been the subject of at least one monograph. Still, it will be interesting to review briefly what has been said of the men of the Nineties, if only because it may be applied, with certain changes and reservations, to the Twenties and, for that matter, to the period which we are about to enter. For the birth of the Atomic Age, for all its violent and destructive debut, cannot have been more shocking, in some respects, than the impact of the coterie of the green carnation upon the Victorianism of the Nineties.

The group known as the Yellow Book boys, or the men

of the Nineties, or the delicate decadents were, as Donald Davidson has remarked, "time-conscious" to an intense degree. They were nearing the end of a century, just as the men of the Twenties lived through the end of an epoch and the men of the Forties enter a new one. There is still, you see, this strange analogy between the "Tragic Generation" as the men of the Nineties called themselves, and the "Lost Generation" as the men of the Twenties called themselves. Whether or not there will be a continuing analogy between the three decades is an interesting speculation, but quite beyond the scope of this study. Or is it?

The men of the Nineties were time-conscious to an intense degree and they were self-conscious to an even greater degree. Being young men, for one thing, and acutely aware of the Victorianism of their Victorian age for another, and rather preoccupied with the importance of being earnest and alive in the closing years of a century for still another, they were rather more self-conscious than most young men.

Now it is an odd thing, when one considers it, that the young and self-conscious members of the Anglo-Saxon races, in whatever age, discover in themselves a remarkable affinity and a positive predilection for the culture and customs of France. This happens time and again, and whenever it does happen it is accompanied by a profound contempt for the Anglo-Saxonishness of their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries and compatriots. No doubt there are excellent reasons for this. It is a strange thing, but it is by no means unusual, since it has happened with something very much like regularity

ever since William the Norman crossed the Channel—and perhaps even before that.

The Saxon nobles who set themselves apart from the peasantry were probably the first to adopt the manners and language of the Norman court. Almost any intrigue current at the time, or for the next few centuries, seemed the more likely to succeed if it acquired a dash of the Gallic. Even in that most English of all English periods, the age of Elizabeth, the young blades and the intellectuals felt the more dashing and, presumably the more intellectual for a smattering of French oaths and a short time spent in the courts or chateaux of France, or the alleys and marketplaces of Paris.

Well, then, the men of the Nineties acquired their smattering of French and their translations of Baudelaire and Verlaine and felt the better for them . . . much as our men of the Twenties rode the cattle-boats to the Left Bank and wrote the "only American literature" of their day. Little magazines sprang up in the Nineties, verse grew steadily more *libre*, and there was little difference, spiritually at any rate, between the Bodley Head in 1890 and the Shakespeare Head in 1920 or thereabouts. Another lost, tragic generation of self-conscious Anglo-Saxons had "found themselves"—and France.

## 3

To return to the Nineties. There were those, even then, who suspected that something was up in the state of English literature. Grave and scholarly men analyzed the state of affairs and speculated on causes and results. If the young men were pleased with themselves there were others who

were not. There was a certain looseness of thinking and of phrasing that was not universally approved. The burden of such critical attitudes is a familiar one—it is the one that attends all new movements in literature, following change as the night follows the day.

The first and best expressed of these critical appraisals appeared in, of all places, the first volume of the *Yellow Book* itself. Advocating "Reticence in Literature," Arthur Waugh wrote: "During the last quarter of a century . . . the English man of letters has been indulging, with an entirely new freedom, his national birthright of outspokenness, and during the last twelve months there have been no uncertain indications that this freedom of speech is degenerating into license which some of us cannot but view with regret and apprehension." A familiar note, an old refrain!

"The writers and the critics of contemporary literature have, it would seem, alike lost their heads; they have gone out into the byways and hedges in search of the new thing, and have brought into the study and subjected to the microscope mean objects of the roadside, whose analysis may be of value to science but is absolutely foreign to art."

Mr. Waugh then proceeds to make the point that every great productive period of literature has been the result of some internal or external revulsion of feeling, some current of ideas. The great periods of productivity had been those when the national mind had been directed to some vast movement of emancipation, the discovery of new countries, the defeat of old enemies, the opening of fresh possibilities. But, Waugh remonstrates, the past quarter of a century had been sterile of important improvements, there had been no

new territories and no new knowledge. Because of this sterility the minds of writers had been thrown back upon themselves and the most characteristic literature of the day had become introspective.

“Following one course,” says Waugh, “it has betaken itself to that analytical fiction which we associate primarily with America; following another course, it has sought for subject matter in the discussing of passions and sensations common, doubtless, to every age of mankind, interesting and necessary, too, in their way, but passions and sensations hitherto disassociated with literature.”

It will be noted that Waugh attributes a certain regrettable trend to American sources, but then he later says that the tendency for literary frankness had its origins in Swinburne. Despite the accuracy of many points made by Waugh, it must be noted that the world in 1890 was not quite the uneventful place it seemed to him. There had been, it is true, no wars of any consequence for a fortnight or two, no Armada threatened, no European paranoiac gazed balefully across the Channel and regicide was, for that moment, happily unthought of. Such things were, so long as Victoria sat on the throne, unthinkable—especially the latter.

But Darwin's *Origin of the Species* had been written some years before, and Karl Marx, who also had something of a London adventure, had written a book with the stodgy title *Das Kapital*, and the Webbs and the Socialists and the Fabians were quietly preparing their various ideologies. Things were brewing, even though under the surface, and no one paid them much heed, least of all the “irresponsibles” of the Nineties.

These things meant little to Waugh, apparently, and seemed of no particular consequence. They seemed of even less consequence to the delicate decadents who were staging a well publicized literary rebellion of their own. It is not our intention to go further into the matter nor to list the peculiarities of these practitioners of pastel prose, nor to relate the peccadillos of its precocious and precious poets. We content ourselves with observing that Arthur Machen had little to do with them, either as individuals or as a group.

## 4

From that day in June 1880 when he first walked in the Strand with his father, Arthur Machen was fascinated by London. He did not always love the city, nor was he ever moved to apostrophise London as young writers have frequently written of Paris. Anyone who reads *Things Near and Far* and *Far Off Things* will wonder, perhaps, why he returned to the city time and again, and why he spent so much of his life there. One is appalled by the dismal history of those years, by the portrayal of the lonely days spent in damp basements and musty garrets pouring over old books for the endless catalogues, and by the lonelier nights in that small room in the Clarendon Road. The long walks through obscure quarters of London and the endless explorations of the suburbs were often the last refuge of desperation and depression. The encounters and experiences with publishers and employers were disillusioning enough, the friendlessness of London was an even greater hardship. You will find all of this in these two books of sketches and reminiscences—but they are only incidentally there. For though Machen plainly



states his loneliness and relates the hardships and disillusionments he endured, he neither emphasizes nor dramatizes them, and if this seems to us a sad story it is merely that we are appalled by it, and not because Machen has said, "See how wretched were my days, how lonely my nights!"

Why then had Machen come to London, again and again? Why had this shy and retiring scribbler left the orchards and fields of Gwent, the pleasant rectory in Caerleon, to live in the great stone city on the Thames? Perhaps it was because his Welsh blood stirred within him and drove him to see the White Tower under which, centuries ago, they had buried the head of Bran, facing to the sea to guard against invasion. Perhaps it was to see the city that had been a city even before the legions came, the city fortified by King Llud, brother to Caesar's great opponent, Cassibelaunus, for whom the city was called Caer Llud and later Caer London and then Londinium and Londres by the foreigners; that king who was buried at the gates still called Ludgate in his honor. Or perhaps it was because in London one could walk into a book shop and ask for Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* as casually as one might walk into the Hanbury Arms in Caerleon and ask for ale.

For London was first and always a fascinating city to Machen. It is apparent in every page of his books. This countryman who could never forget his beloved country, delighted in the twistings and turnings of the streets and roads that led through London and eventually emerged from straggling suburbs into open fields. He notes with pleasure the streets whose crossings and corners he knew in the 'eighties and 'nineties; he misses them when, thirty years later, they have

been absorbed by some great block of buildings. He remembers the facades, if such edifices could be dignified by the term, of the raw, redbrick villas that were then springing up all about London. He remembers the restaurants and even the menus, the taverns and the dwellings in the older sections of London, and the queer individuals and even queerer incidents he encountered over several decades.

London was for many years (and perhaps it still is) a city in which anything might happen. Strange encounters, mysterious strangers—these seemed to abound in the backwaters and byways of London. The city became to Machen a sort of Stevensonian Bagdad-on-the-Thames . . . and he found in its streets and lanes, its Inns and Courts, the materials that went into *The Three Impostors*, *The London Adventure*, *A Fragment of Life* and many another story.

This was true of Machen, and it was true of other writers in that decade. Despite the great calm postulated by Waugh, and in spite of the tremendous vacuum in which Waugh and other eminent Victorians fondly believed England and the world existed, there were great things stirring . . . and the stirring was mostly centered about London. Being neither pamphleteers nor journalists, the writers of that day did not boil and bubble nor forecast trouble as they might today. To be sure, there was considerable pother about the New Woman, and the New This and That. But for the most part they did not try to portray their times. The poets were quite unaware of the peasants and "bourgeoise" was merely an epithet to be tossed at an unsympathetic critic on one of the more conservative journals. Time-conscious they most certainly were, but they aimed only slightly this side

eternity. The delicate decadents, the most prolific and the best publicized group of that time, scarcely bothered to mention the under-currents, but their very activity, their prodigious outpourings, were one of the manifestations of the stirrings beneath the surface. Then too, there was but one Shaw for every score of sonnetteers, one Wells for every dozen dilettante novelists, one Machen for every daring dramatist of the moment.

The beginnings of social-conscience and the vanguard of scientific thought were there, obscured for the moment by the lurid vapors given off by the writers of the purple phrase. There was, in short, a renaissance of wonder, not another revival of mediaevalism or of neo-Gothicism, but of the wonder of things that existed behind the veil and seethed beneath the surface.

This was reflected as much by the lack of reticence in literature as in the development of new kinds of fiction . . . fiction looking to new horizons. Shaw had already begun to puncture the balloons of Victorian complacency, Wells was writing of things that might come, things beyond our time and beyond our world. Machen began to postulate the existence of things behind the veil of common appearances. If Wells looked forward, Machen looked backward. He created a past as strange and as fearful as the future on some Wellsian planet. He was interested in the strange sciences of yesterday as Wells was in the sciences of tomorrow. Machen had read the treatises on alchemy, occult sciences, hypnotism, spiritualism—and in all of these he found a grain of truth. Alchemy, especially, interested him. The search for the basic power of the universe, the power and the ability to transform metals

. . . he could not dismiss completely the possibility. Machen was no scientist but he had, like Wells, a vast respect for the potentialities of science, and a keen instinct regarding probabilities. These men, at least, were not bringing in "the mean objects of the roadside" and subjecting them to the cold stare of the microscope.

Certainly we cannot afford to overlook the development of the detective story by Conan Doyle, whose Sherlock Holmes was presented not as a member of the existing force of law and order but as a radical departure from it. Holmes substituted cerebration for mere procedure. There was then, in London in the 'nineties, a small band of adventurers . . . men who ventured to hold new beliefs, who sought for adventure in social as well as scientific fields, who looked forward (or backward) for strange worlds to visit. Note how they title their tales—each chapter, each episode is captioned in the Stevensonian manner as "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" or "The Novel of the Black Seal." They searched farther afield than Paris for their magic—to the South Seas, to India, to the very Poles themselves—even to America.

Whatever was new and strange was usable. About this time London began to hear tales of the Mormons, and of the band called the Destroying Angels. Stevenson had them in mind when he wrote *The Dynamiters*, Doyle used them for his *Study in Scarlet*, and Machen used them as the genesis of an episode of *The Three Impostors*.

Wonder was in the air—whether it was expressed by a minor poet in terms of languishing eroticism or by Sherlock Holmes in the cataloguing of endless varieties of cigar ash.

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Something was stirring and it stirred most vigorously in London. Behind the facade of London lurked who knew what marvels or horrors. Behind the faces of Londoners lurked who knew what good or evil? London was filled with groups and clubs in search of the unusual. There were suicide clubs, freak clubs, cults of the horrible, Hellfire clubs and many others. Man, wondering about his future and his world, wonders also about himself. The word psychology was used hardly at all, but men were becoming aware of their minds and its quirks. Who was there among a group, a club, who might not have been another Jekyll?

This, then, was London in the 90's . . . a city on the threshold of still another century. Machen could not have forgotten that it had been *Caer Llud*, that the Romans had been there, and before them the *Cymry*. The very stones might burst into bloom, the pavements might ripple and surge and become as soft under foot as turf, the fogs and vapors of its chimney pots might become clouds of fragrance as in an orchard, or of incense as in a great cathedral.

## Chapter Three

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### THE WEAVER OF FANTASY

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#### 1

In 1890, although he had begun to write in the modern manner and had even "fluttered the dovecotes" and startled the readers of the *St. James Gazette* with his stories, the Rabelaisian enthusiasm was still upon Machen. It had, it is true, abated somewhat of late, but when his translation of *Le Moyen de Parvenir* came from the bindery, all brave in blue and cream and gilt lettering, Machen still felt the spell strongly enough to set out, finally, for Touraine.

Actually, he had already determined to leave London before *Fantastic Tales* came out. He had been living in Soho Street in two rooms where took place the grim battle of the fleas. London seemed to pall and to pale after that and he arranged to take a cottage in the Chiltern Hills. He had already written some of the tales in his most famous manner; *The Shining Pyramid*, *The Iron Maid* among them; the idea of *The Great God Pan* had been born and the country seemed the place to allow it to mature. There were certain alterations and repairs to be made on the cottage and he decided to go to France in the interim. It seemed, one must suppose, the thing to do—when one has a handsome set of new volumes one has translated from the French.

Much has been said herein, and sometimes somewhat slightly, of the amazing effect of La Belle France upon the literate Anglo-Saxon. It has been intimated that Paris has always been something of an occupational disease among writers and minor poets. And here is Machen, off to France, like any puerile poetaster upon the publication of his first "slender volume." To those who feel some word of explanation is due, some apology for an opinion seemingly shattered, it will be noted that Machen went to the South of France, to the countryside—and not to the northern cities and carefully manicured meadows and pompadoured pleasure-grounds of the Bois.

Moreover, and this is important, Machen went to a land that never was. For when he arrived at last in the land of Rabelais, of Beroalde, of Balzac—he was greatly disappointed. "The fact was," he says, "that I had taken for granted Dore's wonderful illustrations." He had supposed that the enchanted heights, the profound and somber valleys, the airy abysses of these amazing plates had reprinted, as faithfully at least as a Chamber of Commerce brochure, the veritable scenery of Touraine.

The actuality was, alas! pitifully inadequate. Nevertheless Machen did what all sensible tourists do when the lands of enchantment fail to live up to the four-color posters—he visited the local taverns. This has always seemed to offer consolation and compensation in such cases. At any rate, the "Faisan d'Or" and "Le Caveau de Rabelais" provided noteworthy compensation for Dore. It took Machen a few days to get over his disappointment—but it was not too long before he could sit at his little table in the courtyard

at the Faisan and say to himself, "This night I have had as much good red wine as ever I could drink." And this was one of the great moments of his visit to Touraine. It encouraged him, moreover, and despite his disappointment over Dore, to return to Touraine every summer for the next ten years or so.

The landscape of Touraine and the vintages of the Vouvray pleased Machen, as Paris pleased the poetasters and absinthe appealed (in theory at least) to the young men who burned with a "hard gem-like flame" and who wore their passions and their shoes to tatters in their feverish quest for *la vie*. He discovered that there are, here and there, gardens that address the heart and spirit and not the florist—as Poe well knew.

In the autumn of 1890 Machen returned to London and, the cottage in the Chilterns still lacking thatch or drains or some other matters, he took rooms in Guilford Street. Now it was in Guilford Street, by one account, that he was struck by the idea for *The Great God Pan*. It was, he says, on a dark and foggy afternoon, and with no delay he proceeded to lay out the story. In another place, however, he relates that it was in the summer of 1890 that he wrote the first chapter of *The Great God Pan*. Whichever it was, the tale was completed before he went to his cottage in the country. It appeared in *The Whirlwind*, Vol. ii for 1890, which also carried *A Wonderful Woman*, *The Lost Club* and an almost entirely unknown item—*An Underground Adventure*. Another story, *The Red Hand*, is of this period for it appeared in the Christmas number of *Chapman's Magazine* under the



title, *The Telling of a Mystery*. These matters attended to, Machen retired to the Chilterns early in 1891.

Of his stay in the country we know remarkably little. He spent two years there and, when he returned to London in 1893, he reported that he had "found it nothing." However that may be, he did accomplish a certain amount of work. He wrote a number of his best stories there and completed two books which he promptly destroyed. The contents of these books have not been entirely lost however, for much of what was in them came to light another day. At any rate, it was in the Chilterns that he wrote *The Inmost Light*.

This famous story was written to a special commission, one of the few he received in his life. His stories for the *Globe* and *St. James Gazette* had attracted, as has been noted, considerable attention, and a Miss Bradden wrote Machen, asking him to contribute a tale to an annual she was getting out. *The Inmost Light* was written for Miss Bradden and packed off to her from the cottage in the hills. The affrighted lady returned it after what must have been one of the most rapid readings on record.

At any rate, in 1894, when "yellow bookery was at its yellowest," John Lane of the Bodley Head published these two tales under the title *The Great God Pan* as Volume V of the Keynote Series. There was a title page decoration by Aubrey Beardsley—this, and the imprint of the Bodley Head, indicated that the book was, as one might say today, "aimed at a particular market." Presumably it hit the mark, for the tale achieved a fame that has lasted to this day. For this is the best known of Machen's stories and—even though Machen deprecatingly remarks that the book had "made a

storm in a tiny tot's tea cup"—there was a considerable tempest aroused. *The Manchester Guardian* went on record as feeling that Machen had "succeeded only in being ridiculous." *The Lady's Pictorial* found it "gruesome, ghastly and dull." *The Westminster Gazette* decided that it was "an incoherent nightmare of sex." Nevertheless, the book was well received and gained considerably more of a readership for Machen than had his previously published exercises in the antique. One wonders what the Boston reviewers thought of it—for the book was published by Roberts Brothers of Boston in the same year.

The *Manchester Guardian's* reviewer, a staunch fellow with advanced ideas, had refrained from saying more about *The Great God Pan* "for fear of giving such a work advertisement." This did not prove to be particularly effective for the Bodley Head was compelled to bring out a second edition in 1895. There were other editions: Grant Richards included the tale in *The House of Souls* in 1906, and again in 1913. It was translated into the French in 1901, and reissued again by Simpkins, Marshall in 1916. Knopf brought it out in 1924, and the story has been included in numerous anthologies.

The story of *The Great God Pan* is simple enough—but it has the touch of magic. There is a doctor with strange theories and strange knowledge. He performs an operation on the brain of a simple country girl—an operation which permits her to see, for a moment, the great god Pan, with results that were in accordance with the ancient and traditional legends concerning what might follow such a vision.

Of course we are all prone, today, to interpret litera-

ture according to our own lights, and we employ, with facility if not always felicity—the great gift of hind-sight. We may, in 1948, judge the tale neither as startling nor as horrifying as any one of a score or more pulp masterpieces. We may find Machen's doctor not too much unlike Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll or Wells's Dr. Moreau.

It may even be that *The Great God Pan* doesn't stir us a bit—although that cannot be credited. But in 1894 the story was an amazing one—and even the comfortably righteous reviewer on the *Manchester Guardian* might have pondered, in the depths of the night, this passage: "Suppose that an electrician of today were suddenly to perceive that he and his friends have merely been playing with pebbles and mistaking them for the foundations of the world; suppose that such a man saw uppermost space lie open before the current, and words of man flash forth to the sun and beyond the sun into the system beyond, and the voices of articulate speaking men echo in the waste void that bounds our thought."

Well, our young Manchester guardian of the public welfare very probably cried, "Bosh!"—and went resolutely back to sleep.

Machen, having written it, couldn't sleep on it. In 1924, in a book called *The London Adventure*, Machen quotes the above passage and says, "It seems to me that the passage from *The Great God Pan* is a distinct prophecy of 'wireless'; and what would logic have said to it, in 1890, when that chapter was written?"

And what, for that matter, says logic in 1948—for we have perceived again, in another way, that we have been

playing with pebbles and mistaking them for the foundations of the world. For now we think not only of sending sound to the outermost reaches of space—but man himself, and at speeds greater than the speed of sound.

There is another thought that might have bothered the young man of Manchester. A character in the story has quoted Oswaldus Crollius, "In every grain of wheat there lies hidden the soul of a star." Now in 1894 the reviewer, any reviewer, even the *Bostonian*, would have muttered something about "muddled mysticism" and skipped over the sage utterance of Oswaldus to get along into the "incoherent nightmare of sex." What Machen thought of this in '94 we do not know—but in 1923 or thereabouts he wrote that he thought this a wonderful saying; "a declaration, I suppose that all nature is one, manifested under many forms; and so far as I can gather, modern science is rapidly coming around to the view of this obscure speculator of the XVII century; and, in fact, to the doctrine of the Alchemists."

Now this was a brave thing to say—even in 1923. The muddled mysticisms of the '90's is today's theorem—as has been amply demonstrated. The most fantastic fable or the most ingenious fiction of one decade may become the newest discovery in the laboratory of today.

## 2

The sojourn in the Chilterns was not as unproductive as Machen has implied. He had written perhaps more than we shall ever know—most of his stories lived with him for years before they were written, and a book or two destroyed did not cease to exist. Many of his best tales were born and

others matured in the Chiltern cottage. Still, two years in the country seemed quite enough.

When Machen returned to London in 1893 he was a man of property or, if not property in the Galsworthian sense, of substance in his own. For the various legacies from deceased Scottish relations that might have meant so much a few years earlier, had been coming through and accumulating, and there were now between three and four thousand pounds in the bank. The days of Clarendon Road, of green tea and stale bread and tobacco, were over and there were rooms in Great Russel Street and later in Gray's Inn. There was Benedictine in the buffet and a growing circle of friends and companions.

The possession of several thousand pounds presented problems—at least the semi-important one of how to invest it. After looking about for a "good thing," in a characteristically casual way, Machen thought of the Brothers—that courteous pair under whose benevolent auspices he had translated *Casanova* in a basement. They had, as Machen knew, a proposition now and then, and he thought perhaps they might have suggestions. They had, as it happened, an excellent one. The *Memoirs of Casanova*, which he had translated some years before, was about to be published. A thousand pounds invested in the project might be a good thing indeed. Machen had at least that much confidence in the Brothers, or in his own work—at any rate, he invested. It was then that one of the Brothers, the more benevolent of the two no doubt, suggested that he might, since he was now financially interested, wish to polish up here and there.

Machen was content, however, to limit his contribution

to the translation and the thousand pounds, and let him polish who so desired.

The monumental memoirs came out in 1894. Machen's translation was the first in the English language and, I believe, the only complete one to this day. So it is likely to remain until some unsuspecting scholar may once more be imposed upon, or some highly solvent professor or richly subsidized fellow undertakes the task.

## 3

Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson, Fanny to her friends and Scheherezade to her husband, shared or perhaps inspired her husband's view of London as a fabulous Bagdad of the West, a city of encounters in which all things were probable—even such things as might rival the tales of the Arabian Nights Entertainment.

Stevenson, that prince of story tellers, who knew as well as any man how to invent marvelous tales and to tell them in a marvelous manner, occupied himself and Fanny during an illness by creating *The Dynamiter*. The book was published in 1885 and came to Machen's attention at some time before or during his retreat to the Chilterns.

Machen had been under the Stevensonian influence for some years. In 1890 he published a story, *The Lost Club*, which exhibits marked family resemblance to one of the early adventures in the *New Arabian Nights*. At any rate the *Three Impostors*, Machen's next book, is derived from Stevenson's *Dynamiter*, and was written somewhere in this period when *The Great God Pan* was creating a stir. The manuscript was sent, late in the winter of 1894, to Heinemann who expressed interest, enthusiasm, and then, unac-

countably, regrets. The reader in the publisher's office had been wonderfully encouraging and gloriously flattering. It was better, said Heinemann excitedly, than Stevenson's best. Even a man as modest as Machen marveled at his artistry—and marveled still more when, early in 1895, the House of Heinemann returned his manuscript with the usual regrets and the usual phrase about being unable to use the enclosed manuscript.

And so, later that year, *The Three Impostors* was issued by John Lane, once again in the Keynote Series and once again with the title page decoration by Beardsley. It failed, Machen says, to set Fleet Street afire—but it is, of course, one of his best stories.

Once again, as with so many of Machen's stories, there were those who wrote to inquire whether there was not some foundation of fact, some basis of truth upon which the tale had been built. So willing are men to suspend their disbelief! People were forever asking him if his stories were not based upon some legend current in his part of the country and, of course, there were those who were willing to relate incidents and occurrences which closely paralleled the fantastic fictions of Machen's inventions.

*The Three Impostors* combined a number of popular elements. There was, first of all, a portrait of America, or the American West, as rugged and rough and uncouth as any Briton could desire. It rivaled and even surpassed, in some respects, Stevenson's Western episode in *The Dynamiter*. The Stevenson story had also served as a model for the Mormon episode in Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*. The resemblances here are even more marked than in

Machen's tale. As a matter of fact, Christopher Morley has suggested (in the *Saturday Review* late in 1947) that Doyle found the Mormon episode in his occiput following a reading of *The Dynamiter* on a rainy evening in 1885. However this may be, *The Three Impostors* is a remarkable and absorbing story, even if it did not do as well as *The Great God Pan*—but it has done remarkably well in the fifty-odd years since it was written.

Back in 1923 Knopf published *The Three Impostors* in the famous yellow binding, and again in 1930 in a Borzoi Pocket Edition. In his introduction to the latter book Machen wrote:

“In the course of a quarter of a century, I have received a good many letters of serious enquiry about *The Three Impostors*. My correspondents ask me in various terms and turns of phrase whether there is any foundation for the strange circumstances and tales narrated in the book. . . . I began to get them pretty soon after *The Three Impostors* was published in 1895. Then, on the whole, I was rather displeased than pleased at the question. . . . I was strongly inclined to resent the implication that I had embroidered rather than invented.”

Machen pointed out that the events described in his book not only did not happen, but could not have happened. That, at least, was his attitude just after he had written the book. In later years he changed his mind, for in the Nineteen-twenties he wrote, “I have had experiences which debar me from returning the absolute negative of earlier years. . . . These experiences of mine were trifling enough, but they suggest the possibility of far greater things and far more



extraordinary things for those with the necessary qualifications. . . . I am inclined to urge that the things which I have known may suggest the probable existence of a world very far and remote from the world of common experience.

"It may turn out after all that the weavers of fantasy are the veritable realists."

## 4

Just why *The Three Impostors*, certainly not the most sensational story published in that sensational year, should have inspired such widespread belief, or at least so much willing suspension of disbelief, is not too difficult to understand. The story concerns itself largely with matters having to do with superstitions and, even if the superstitions involved were not familiar ones, they had something of the common quality of all superstitions based on folklore.

The story is told through a series of episodes, in the manner made popular by Stevenson and Doyle. Certain episodes are represented as being taken from the journals of some of the characters concerned; others are set forth in lengthy interviews with still other interested (and interesting) characters. The story is not overburdened with machinery and technical tricks, it manages to hang together without evident strain.

Some of the episodes could stand by themselves as tales in the Gothic genre—indeed, some of them have so appeared in anthologies and collections. It is in the telling of these tales that Machen's skill as a story teller becomes evident. There is no one manner, but several, and each is peculiarly Machen's own—with clever overtones and undertones of parody and satire. The satire, be it noted, is directed always

at the manner and never the matter of the tale.

As for the subject matter, *The Three Impostors* concerns the Little People and strange powers that have persisted until this very day and other speculations. If we accept, as did William Gregg, F.R.S., who figures in one of the stories, the theory that much of the folk-lore of the world is but exaggeration of things that really happened, we are well on our way to accepting *The Three Impostors* as wholeheartedly as did the people who wrote Machen such curious letters back in 1895. Such is Machen's magic, moreover, that we are easily persuaded into accepting almost anything.

*The Three Impostors* also introduces one of the most engaging figures in English literature. Mr. Dyson is not as well known, perhaps, as Henry Ryecroft or Stephen Daedalus or Charteris, but he has, it may be, as fine a future as they.

Mr. Dyson (if he had a first name, I cannot recall ever having read it) is a "man of letters" who, in pursuit of his quiet profession (the chase of the phrase, he called it) does a great deal of wandering about odd quarters of London. He stumbles into and out of the most amazing adventures, none of which appreciably affect his composure and seldom indeed is he startled out of his pompous pedantry.

Dyson's companion in adventure and the recipient of his pronouncements is a Mr. Charles Phillips. Phillips is somewhat younger than Dyson, but they shared a certain gravity of character and pomposity of manner that made them mutually acceptable. They met frequently in each other's rooms or in the tobacco shop in Queen Street where "their talk robbed the tobacconist's profit of half its charm." Dyson exalted the claims of pure imagination, while Phillips in-

sisted that all literature ought to have a scientific basis.

This precious pair, who shared silence as amiably as they conversed, wander sedately enough through the astonishing episodes involving the Young Man With Spectacles, Miss Lally, the sinister Mr. Davis and others. They are encountered in several other tales of this period. Dyson is actually an old acquaintance. He first made his bow, and a very courtly gesture it was, in *The Red Hand* or *The Shining Pyramid*, whichever tale, in truth, came first; but it is in *The Three Impostors* that we really came to know him. We shall meet again.

## Chapter Four

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### A NOBLE PROFESSION

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*"I reflected, then, on my want of prospects, and I determined to embark in literature."*

*"Really, that was strange. You seem in pretty comfortable circumstances, though."*

*"Though! what a satire upon a noble profession!"*

#### 1

This bit of dialogue takes place in one of those chance encounters with which several of Machen's tales begins. It might well have ensued between Machen and some compatriot of far-off Gwent as they met in a London street early in that daringly decadent decade.

For Machen, having served an apprenticeship in grangerizing and cataloguing, having composed calendars and made translations "on the house" and having written a story that fluttered the dovecotes and published a book that stirred up a tempest in a tiny tot's teacup, was definitely a literary man—or at least he pursued the practice of letters. He had cause, in later years, to give the choice more serious thought than he had in the 90's. He had cause to reflect upon it, but never did he regret the choice—if choice it was. For if ever a man's destiny lay in the art and the practice of letters,

that man was Machen. And of course he knew this—he knew it in the lonely room in Clarendon Road and in the downstairs parlor at Llanddewi. And he knew it years later when, in computing his earnings for twenty-odd years labor, he found the sum to be not in excess of £635. And of course he knew it even when he wondered, as he some times did, if he had failed in his art.

Machen had in him, besides the seeds of his destiny, more than a bit of that delightful fellow Dyson whom he created somewhat to his own image and likeness. Dyson, you will recall, was “a man of letters, and an unhappy instance of talents misapplied. With gifts that might have placed him in the flower of his youth among the most favored of Bentley’s favorite novelists, he had chosen to be perverse; he was, it is true, familiar with scholastic logic but he knew nothing of the logic of life and he flattered himself with the title of artist, when he was in fact but an idle and curious spectator of other men’s endeavors. Amongst many delusions, he cherished one most fondly, that he was a strenuous worker, and it was with a gesture of supreme weariness that he would enter his favorite resort, a small tobacco shop in Great Queen Street, and proclaim to anyone who cared to listen that he had seen the rising and setting of two successive suns.”

But this isn’t Machen! Of course it isn’t! Nor am I suggesting that Dyson is a portrait of the artist as a young man. But if you will recall for a moment Machen’s obvious fondness for his creature, Dyson, his almost paternal acceptance of Dyson’s pomposities and his benevolent air in setting down Dyson’s latest preposterous formula, you will

realize, I think, that Machen was the model, and that he rather relished poking a bit of fun at himself, his younger self at any rate.

Well then, early in the 90's Machen had his trip abroad and his cottage in the country and his gradually accumulated legacies. And now he was, at last, about to have his rooms in Grays Inn and his summers in the south of France. He was indeed a man of letters!

## 2

*The Three Impostors*, even though it failed to set Fleet Street afire, did add to Machen's stature. It gave him something of a reputation in certain quarters which, if not exactly fashionable at the moment, were not on the side of the Philistines. The failure, if it was one, of *The Three Impostors* Machen attributes to a contemporary crisis in literary circles. "There were," he says mildly, "scandals in '95—which had made people impatient with reading matter that was not obviously and obtrusively 'healthy.'"

The several tales or episodes that make up *The Three Impostors*, while they may be neither obviously "healthy" nor obtrusively "healthy," were much less unwholesome than most of the literature that was then circulating in London. Based for the most part on early Celtic folk-lore and legends of the Welsh border, they developed the theme of primitive races, of "little people" who have, in some out of the way places, managed to survive to the present day.

The nature of the tales does indeed tend toward the horrific and even the "unhealthy," but the manner of their telling and the presence of the almost "deadpan" Dyson

in most of these episodes results in a rather curious blend of pedantry and unpleasantness. Moreover, so faithfully did Machen follow a Stevensonian pattern that even the Marquis of Queensbury, had he not been otherwise occupied at the moment, could have taken no offense. It would seem, then, that it was this almost sedate treatment that failed to set the bookstalls ablaze. A less restrained publisher than John Lane would have had Beardsley do the illustrations for the book—with quite predictable results. There are those, Grant Richards and George Bernard Shaw among them, who suggest that Lane was rather afraid of Beardsley—and not without reason. For Beardsley was an unpredictable and vindictive chap. He was once criticized for having drawn a Pierrot for a cover design of the "Savoy"—it was not the sort of thing, he was told, that would appeal to the British public.

A sketch of John Bull was substituted, accepted and sent out to subscribers. It was then discovered that Beardsley had taken his revenge by subtly indicating that John Bull was in a condition in which no Briton would willingly appear in public. For such sophomoric shennanigans Lane had given Beardsley the sack. There was never any question of Beardsley illustrating *The Three Impostors*, nor could there be any question of the result. Nevertheless *The Three Impostors* rates perhaps third among Machen's works, and has been frequently re-printed.

The story did cause publishers, from time to time, to ask Machen if he had something else in "the manner of *The Three Impostors*." This was not as flattering to the author's vanity as might seem. Having gone through the tale

once Machen had no wish to "re-cook the cabbage which was already boiled to death." Nevertheless, one doesn't speak thus bluntly to publishers—even when they solicitously seek manuscripts. There was another and, on the whole, very attractive proposition. Two gentlemen, obviously with an eye for such things, proposed a new weekly paper for which, they further proposed, Mr. Machen and a Mr. Wells should do a series of stories—and in their familiar manner, of course. Thus Mr. Machen was to do a series of horror stories in the manner of *The Three Impostors* and Mr. Wells was to do stories in the manner of *The Time Machine*.

*The Time Machine* had appeared about the same time as *The Great God Pan*. While Machen's story was stirring up its teacup tempest, a young gentleman named H. G. Wells had made a very real, and a most deserved sensation with a book called *The Time Machine*. Mr. Wells had written his story at a time when he was living from hand to mouth as a journalist at lodgings in Kent. And so the new paper, to be called the *Unicorn*, was to feature the works of these two young men who had recently created something new and exciting and not, as was too often the case in those days, unfit for general circulation.

Machen admitted that he was cheered and elated at the prospect . . . until he began to re-cook the cabbage. Possibly Mr. Wells felt the same way, for the *Unicorn* ceased to exist before a single one of Machen's tales (he wrote four of them) appeared in it, while Mr. Wells contributed but one story, called *The Cone*.

Machen realized that the *Stevensonian* had been done to a turn—and so he had done with it—there would now be



something new. He had already written *The Shining Pyramid* for *The Unknown World*, edited by his friend A. E. Waite, and one or two other tales—but now, once again—and this time there was no doubt about it—*The Great Romance*.

Once again there was the question—what was it to be about? Machen labored mightily over the beginnings of this new book. He sat at his Japanese bureau in his rooms at Grays Inn, he roamed the deserted streets and squares of Bloomsbury and pondered at great length the problem—what would it be like?

I suppose Dyson would have sympathized deeply with these soul searchings and solitary soliloquies—for Dyson, too, had often wondered what his books would be like, and Dyson had *his* Japanese bureau. At any rate, and before too long, Machen had the idea. His book would be “a Robinson Crusoe of the mind” . . . and for such a book, Machen had traveled well.

## 3

Machen had at last decided, and for the second time in his life, to write the Great Romance. The first time it had turned out to be *The Chronicle of Clemendy*, that light-hearted collection of tales having nothing whatever to do with the Great Romance he had decided to write, and having nothing in it of the loneliness of his life in London. This time it became *The Hill of Dreams*, and one knows in reading it that this also is not the Great Romance: for Machen could not have decided to write *The Hill of Dreams* any more than he could have decided to write a “Robinson Crusoe” of the soul—even though he tells us that this is precisely what he had decided to do. It is perhaps a coinci-

dence, and a very fortunate one, that the book did turn out to be just that.

Machen was, as we have seen, a very careful man with his models. He could write in the manner of Thomas Browne, or Robert Herrick, or William Morris, or Robert Stevenson, and very carefully did he cultivate their manner. When he had perfected the manner, and made use of it, the design was there but the substance had altered. However meticulously he might labor perfecting the model, making no conscious effort to improve upon it, he could not prevent a transmutation from taking place. This is apparent even in *The Three Impostors* for, even though the pattern is recognizable, and even though it is studied and carefully contrived, there are elements, so strong is the triumph of mind over manner, that make it peculiarly Machen's own and not Stevenson's.

The new book, Machen says, was born in a phrase encountered in Charles Whibley's introduction to *Tristram Shandy*. Whibley described the work as being "a picaresque of the mind." And so Machen said to himself, "I will write a Robinson Crusoe of the soul." This was no mere decision; it was, rather, a demonstration of the fact that there is an affinity of the mind, some minds, for an idea, some ideas. *The Hill of Dreams*, the picaresque of the mind, the Crusoe of the soul, was at the heart of Machen's Great Romance. It responded to a phrase for which it had a natural affinity and so the Great Romance, *The Hill of Dreams*, was born.

"It was," wrote Machen, "to represent loneliness not of body on a desert island, but loneliness of soul and mind and spirit in the midst of myriads and myriads of men. I

had some practical experience of this state to help me: not altogether in vain had I been constrained in Clarendon Road and to have my habitation in the tents of Notting Hill Gate. I immediately marked down all these old experiences as a valuable asset in the undertaking of my task: I knew what it was to live on a little in a little room, what it meant to pass day after day, week after week, month after month through the *inextricabilis terror* of the London streets, to tread a grey labyrinth whose path had no issue, no escape, no end. I had known as a mere lad how terrible it was on a gloomy winter evening to go out because a little room had become intolerable, to go out walking through those multitudinous streets, to see the light of kindly fires leaping on the walls, to see friendly faces welcoming father, or husband, or brother, to hear laughter or a song sounding from within, perhaps to catch half glimpses of the faces of the lovers as they looked out, happy, into the dark night. All this had been my daily practice and habit for a long while: I was qualified then, in a measure, to describe the fate of a Robinson Crusoe cast on the desert island of the tremendous and terrible London."

The writing of this book occupied Machen from the autumn of 1895 to the spring of 1897. It went very slowly. For one thing, Machen discovered that the style he had so carefully cultivated for the telling of the improbable tale of *The Three Impostors* had to be just as carefully destroyed and every mannerism eradicated. He had become fluent in the Stevensonian vein—now he found himself writing with uncertainty, nothing flowed easily and naturally. His pen could not keep pace with his mind and his mind was racing

rapidly through the garden of Avallaunius in far-off Gwent. For *The Hill of Dreams* was to be about, if it was about anything, a boy's wanderings and imaginings in a mysterious place he had found, or dreamed he had found, in the Roman ruins near Caerleon.

Chapters were written and re-written, his day's output varied from perhaps three lines to three folios. At last the book was finished in the spring of 1897. He had been at it, quite steadily, for almost two years, with a summer in Brittany in 1896, most of which he spent thinking of the book lying untouched in his room in London. In March 1897 Grant Richards wrote him to ask for his next manuscript. Mr. Richards, a new publisher, and anxious, no doubt, to get off on the right foot, wanted something "in the manner of *The Three Impostors*." He got, instead, *The Hill of Dreams*. Richards returned the book along with a paternal letter pointing out to Machen the error of his ways and urging him not to jeopardize his reputation by publishing such a book. Several other publishers subsequently did the same and the book remained for years as it was, still titled *The Garden of Avallaunius*, and still not published. And then in 1907, after ten years, Grant Richards changed his mind and published *The Garden of Avallaunius*, but he insisted also upon changing the title on the plea, perhaps justified, that no one would properly pronounce "Avallaunius." It may be, however, that *The Garden of Avallaunius* did appear in print before the Richards edition.

In the summer of 1901 Machen wrote to a friend, a Miss Brooke-Alder: "A certain story, translated from the English and called *Le Grande Dieu Pan*, is now appearing

in a French review. Maeterlinck is extremely interested in it and has sent a message to the author asking him to forward any manuscripts in order that they also may be rendered into French. I am sending a manuscript called *The Garden of Avallaunius* which I finished four years ago, and if the great man chances to like it, I suppose I shall have the curious fate of finding myself a French rather than an English author."

Whether or not this translation and publication ever took place, I have been unable to discover. However, the Richards edition of 1907 was the first of almost half a score that have continued to be largely out of print up until the present time.

## 4

Well, then, the Great Romance was completed in 1897—and they would have none of it. And so it remained for another ten years, more or less, in one of the spacious compartments of the Japanese bureau.

Machen was, at this time, living the literary life, not quite as it was lived by the swish young men who were then breaking into print and whose names appeared in the more sensational evening papers and on court writs, but still, it was the literary life and still—a noble profession.

The Japanese bureau, its cubbyholes and compartments jammed with notes and notebooks and scraps of paper, had yielded up many tales and articles that appeared in this or that journal. Machen had already written *The Holy Things*, *Psychology*, *Witchcraft*, *The Rose Garden*, *The Ceremony*, *Midsummer* and many other. He was becoming well known as the author of a number of rather strange, rather clever

stories. Sometimes they were called "nasty" or "disagreeable" stories by outraged critics who were quite likely to view them with an eye jaundiced by too careful perusal of *The Yellow Book*. The Keynote Series sold quite well and Machen's *The Great God Pan* and *The Inmost Light* in Volume V, *The Three Impostors* and *The Iron Maid* in Volume XIX had wide circulation. *The Memoirs of Casanova*, published in the same year as *Pan*, though limited to a thousand copies, brought him some reputation and recognition on a more scholarly plane. Still, he made no fortune on these books, then—or ever. And that was beginning to matter. He was even moved, in 1895, to enter an American short story competition. His entry, *The Red Hand*, written for the competition, won no prize but it did appear in the Christmas issue of *Chapman's Magazine* for that year.

It was a quiet life. He had, in those days, few friends and few acquaintances. His life was in reading books and in writing them. That no one seemed to be publishing them was, for the moment, quite unimportant. He describes his daily routine in *Things Near and Far*: "Every morning after breakfast I read over what I have written the night before, correcting here and there and everywhere, generally convinced that the passage which had pleased me so much as I wrote it was, after all, not magnificent. I took the bulldog for a walk from twelve to one, and another half hour walk in the afternoon. Then two cups of tea without milk or sugar at four, and the rigor of the literary game till seven, and again after dinner till eleven. It was a life of routine, and all its adventures, difficulties, defeats and rare triumphs were those of the written page."

This was the literary life far removed from the rarified atmosphere of the Cafe Royale and merry, mad circle of poets and artists of the Dowson, Beardsley, Conder, Crackenthorpe set who were usually contemplating Soho or suicide or both. It was the literary life of a recluse, of a Dyson or of the brilliant monologist of *Hieroglyphics*. In the course of these long and thoughtful evenings when the perscratched and the bulldog dozed and page followed page into the cubbyholes or into oblivion, Machen formulated many of the theories of art and literature which were expounded by the recluse of Bartsbury. Writing of this period some years later Machen says that literature "is one of the many ways of escaping from life, to be classified with Alpine Climbing, Chess, Methylated Spirit and Prussic Acid." But this was written in 1915 or thereabouts, in 1897 he was less inclined to a mellow cynicism. For it was then not only an escape from life, but a means, perhaps "the only means of realizing and shewing life, or, at least certain aspects of life."

This preoccupation with literature extended even to his employment, for through 1898 Machen worked on the staff of "Literature," a weekly paper published by the Times. This seems to have been not too happy an association, for he says he had been harassed and worried for a whole year in the office of "Literature," and that he was in high spirits in May 1899 when he was released from this bondage.

Besides, there were a great many important things to be done. There was, of course, another Great Romance. Like its predecessors this one did not quite come off, or it was never quite finished. What there was of it was eventually

published as *The White People*. There were other irons on the hearth, and one of these had been heated and re-heated many times before; but it was never quite forged or beaten into shape.

This is the story we know as *A Fragment of Life*. It is, in its present state, a mere fragment of a great work. Machen had lived with the idea for ten years or more, for the story was born in another tale published in the *Globe* or the *Gazette* or some other paper in 1890 under the title *The Resurrection of the Dead*, which was not quite what Machen intended when he originally called it *Resurrectio Mortuorum*.

This story is about a man who one day recovered his "ancestral consciousness." The idea had long fascinated Machen, perhaps because he was forever on the verge of recovering his own "ancestral consciousness," or perhaps because he had never quite lost it. At any rate, it was always close to him, it greatly influenced his daily life because he never became used to the contrast between "raw London suburbs and the old gray houses under the forest near the river" in Gwent.

This, and *The White People*, seemed to have been of the greatest importance to him. Neither was finished in that century—nor were they ever completely finished. Yet in this time he wrote and completed one of the best of his books, and one of the finest books of our time. *Hieroglyphics* was finished in 1899 and it joined the fragments and the beginnings of the Great Romances that had been written and put aside in that repository of Great Romances—the Japanese bureau.

Of *Hieroglyphics* we shall have much to say later, for



it is of greater significance in this twentieth century than in the nineteenth century in which it was written.

5

Now we are come to the end of the year 1899—the turn of the century. This was, as has been previously noted an intensely time-conscious era. The birth of the twentieth century was awaited with perhaps more interest and excitement than had attended similar events in the past. For one thing, everyone was conscious of the enlightenment of their age, progress was almost as much a byword in the Nineties as it became in the Nineteen-Twenties and the early Nineteen-Forties. And, of course, there was the minor satisfaction of knowing that it was quite likely to be the only turn of the century within the memory of living man. Prophets of doom had their say and their day along with those who proclaimed new glory and new heights and new horizons. It was, to be sure, a well-heralded and eagerly awaited event. That a mere clock should unemotionally tick so momentous a second!

The more memorable men of the notorious Nineties were, for the most part, either dead or dying, visibly decaying or decently interred. They passed, most of them, mercifully before the significant second struck.

This was a year of great significance in the life of Arthur Machen. For in this year "a great sorrow which had long been threatened fell upon me; I was once more alone." And in another place, he writes, ". . .and then my life was dashed into fragments. I ceased to write. I travelled."

Again and again he refers to this event, in his two

autobiographical books and in several of the forewords and prefaces he later wrote for re-issues of his earlier books. Always the references are veiled in mystery or followed by a recital of strange experiences and a cloud of mysticism that conceals, as it was intended, the shattering event.

What was this event? There are a few who know, but they are not likely to reveal what they know. As recently as 1947, less than a year before he died, Machen wrote in a letter, "Even now it is painful to recall. I would rather you did not refer to it."

Since this is not intended as a biography, nor a Life, we shall not pursue the matter. There is this much more to be said, that may give some clue to the events of the year 1900. Machen wrote in *Things Near and Far*,

"I can set down the facts, or rather such of them as I remember, but I am quite confident that I am not, in the real sense of the word, telling the truth; that is, I am not giving any sense of the very extraordinary atmosphere in which I lived in the year 1900, of the curious and indescribable impression which the events of these days made upon me; the sense that everything had altered, that everything was very strange, that I lived in daily intercourse with people who would have been impossible, unimaginable, a year before; that the figure of the world was changed utterly for me—of all this I can give no true picture dealing as I am with what I called facts. I maintained long ago in *Hieroglyphics* that facts as facts do not signify anything or communicate anything; and I am sure that I was right, when I confess that, as a purveyor of exact information, I can make nothing of the year 1900. But avoiding the facts, I have got a great

deal nearer the truth in the last Chapter of *The Secret Glory*, which describes the doings and feelings of two young people who are paying their first visit to London. *I never bolted up to town with the house master's red haired parlour maid; but truth must be told in figures.*"

## 6

Back in 1880, while his family were making plans for him, plans involving the Royal College of Surgeons, Machen used to walk to the Pontypool Road station to pick up the London papers. On his way back he would rest for awhile, (it was an eight mile walk) under the hedges and turn to the theatrical pages which seemed to him by far the most interesting parts of the paper, and the stage the most fascinating part of the Fabulous City of the West. And so, in a sense, he followed the bright lights to London, and then, having arrived there, set to work in the dark caves (HERE DWELL PUBLISHERS) of Chandos Street, Leicester Square and Catharine Street.

There is not the slightest bit of evidence that Machen ever thought longingly of footlights and grease paint or, for that matter, that he ever even thought of them at all after he arrived in London. Yet here in 1901 he dons buskins or whatever and prepares to tread the boards, and in a travelling company. His first engagements were with the Benson Shakesperean Company and with them he travelled the length and breadth of England for several season. He seems to have enjoyed it all tremendously, although it does not seem to have affected or influenced his later work. As a matter of fact, with the exception of a brief chapter and a

half in one of his autobiographical books, he does not refer to his career on the stage at any great length. Sufficient unto the days. . . .

And then one day, perhaps when the trees were beginning to put forth, Machen resumed the London Adventure. In 1902, and without fanfare of any sort, Grant Richards brought out a remarkable book with a strange title. It was called *Hieroglyphics*, and it was sub-titled *A Note Upon Ecstasy in Literature*, by Arthur Machen. The book was born, as so many books are, while the author was reviewing books for a weekly journal. It was written in the happy period following his release from "the detestable office life" and as a perfectly normal reaction against it, and it remains to this day one of the best, and the least known and the most sadly neglected books of English criticism.

A noted publisher once told Machen that *Hieroglyphics* had "influenced the whole standpoint of English literary criticism." One wishes it had! At any rate, Machen read proofs of the book while playing in "The Varsity Belle," and he read reviews of it while playing in "Paolo and Francesca." And then, when *Hieroglyphics* seemed unlikely to set Fleet Street afire, or even to start a small blaze in one of the University debating clubs, Machen began once more to write and to publish.

His old friend, A. E. Waite, a distinguished writer in the field of the occult and the mystic, began to publish Machen's stories. Waite, who was also manager for Horlick's Malted Milk, had managed to persuade the malted milk magnate to sponsor or subsidize a magazine. This was certainly the strangest commercial venture on record, for the

magazine published material concerning the occult and mystical topics that appealed to Waite. Horlick was, presumably, happy to see his name on the cover and on the masthead of the magazine. It was in this esoteric little journal that some of Machen's work first appeared . . . *The White People, A Fragment of Life* and, at long last, *The Garden of Avallaunius*.

Machen remarks, somewhere, that he did not know that the sale of Malted Milk was unfavorably affected by the publication of these tales. As a matter of fact, the stories were quite well received. Such things get around and, in 1906, Grant Richards collected the best of them, plus *Pan, The Inmost Light, The Red Hand* and published them in a book called *The House of Souls*. Richards had changed his mind about Machen, but apparently with reservations, for in 1906 another Machen book, *Dr. Stiggins*, appeared, but under the device of a little-known publisher. This book is, in effect, an amplification of some views set forth in the Preface to *The House of Souls*. Mr. Richards wouldn't touch this, but he did bring out *The Hill of Dreams* in the following year.

And then there was another change in Machen's life. He fell into journalism . . . something that had once been devoutly wished for by the dear, dead folk of Caerleon.

## *Chapter Five*

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### THE LEGEND OF A LEGEND

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#### 1

When the Allied armies achieved the break-through at Saint Lo some few years ago in that war we call Second, our armored columns fanned out over the Brittany peninsula and thrust deep into the river valleys of France. Most of us watched the drive for Paris, shook our heads over that nasty business at Avranches, and breathed more freely when Paris fell. From then on it was largely a matter of following, as closely as the security blackout permitted, Patton's progress toward the Rhine and the star-shaped forts at Metz.

Few of us were then aware of the column under Hodges that began first to probe, then to thrust northward into Belgium. At the time it was briefly noted that our push to the Belgian border was even more rapid than the German drive southward in 1940. And so our entry into and beyond Mons passed almost unnoticed. Even the Germans were not too well aware of it, apparently, for it was outside Mons, you will recall, that German tanks were waved on by American MPs and obligingly clanked into bivouac areas with the General Shermans and the half-tracks of the American First Army.

There were, if I remember correctly, and I am sure that

I do, one or two references to the Angel of Mons incident of the last war, but these were merely notes in passing. The mere mention of Mons meant Machen to me, and I suppose that, like many another Machenite, I waited with something like bated breath for a sign of some sort, or a sequel to the legend that had been born just thirty years ago that very month of September.

And, I suppose, devout Machenites the world over re-read in that September of 1944, the invented tale of the wonderful Welshman, the tale that was at first called simply, *The Bowmen* and which came to be called, by popular demand, *The Angels of Mons*.

It was one of the strangest stories of that first World War and a story pure and simple it was. But it so captured and fired the imagination of all Englishmen, and of the world, that people were unwilling for it to remain merely a magical tale by a Welshman writing strange tales in the city of London. People must have their miracles, and so Machen's invention of the Bowmen became one of the hallowed legends of the war. You may remember the story, for you must have heard it, in one version or another, even if you had never even heard of Arthur Machen.

*It was during the Retreat of the Eighty Thousand*, the tale begins. The English were in danger of annihilation. At a particularly important point in the line the German guns had thundered and shrieked all morning. Finally, their numbers greatly reduced, the English saw a tremendous host moving against them. German infantry—as far as the eye could see. Well—the English fought on. One of the riflemen, who happened to know Latin and other useless things,

recalled a motto he had once seen in a restaurant, *Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius*, which motto he said, uttered or shouted. As he did so he felt "something between a shudder and a shock" and behold! the roar of battle died down to a gentle murmur and a great voice and a shout louder than the thunder cried, "Array, Array, Array!" This was followed by other battlecries in English and in French—cries to Saint George. And then he saw, "beyond the trench, a long line of shapes, with a shining about them. They were like men who drew the bow," and their arrows flew toward the German host. Who, as it happened, were stopped in their tracks.

Now this invention served its purpose, no less than any inspirational tale or legend or truth or half-truth. But it became a matter of great controversy because, as it happened, Arthur Machen, when questioned about it, blithely revealed that there was not an ounce of truth in it. The story was pure invention, a piece of fiction which was not, he added, entirely to his satisfaction as a writer.

This discrediting of a miracle soon got abroad, and there was a great hue and cry and indeed a notable hullabaloo about the matter. Machen was taken to task . . . the clergy thundered against him and many a pulpit was pounded by many a pudgy ecclesiastical fist. Gentle ladies began to produce "evidence" that the event had actually taken place—that they had had it from a soldier who was there. A great many witnesses, once or twice removed, were found and quoted. The controversy grew and with it the legend.

As for Machen, he finally wrote a preface to a new American edition to *The Bowmen*, now called *The Angels*



of *Mons*, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1915. In it he wrote:

"This was in last August, or to be more precise, in the last Sunday of last August. There were terrible things to be read on that hot Sunday morning between meat and mass. It was in the *Weekly Dispatch* that I saw the awful account of the retreat from Mons. I no longer recollect the details, but I have not forgotten the impression that was then made in my mind. I seemed to see a furnace of torment and death and agony and terror seven times heated, and in the midst of the burning was the British Army. In the midst of the flame, consumed by it and yet aureoled in it, scattered like ashes and yet triumphant, martyred and forever glorious. So I saw our men with a shining about them, so I took these thoughts with me to church, and, I am sorry to say, was making up a story in my head while the Deacon was singing the Gospel." Well—that is the genesis of *The Bowmen* or, if you insist, *The Angels of Mons*.

It was murmured and hinted and suggested and whispered in all sorts of quarters, Machen says, that before he wrote the tale he had "heard something." The most decorative of these whisperings was this: "I know for a fact that the whole thing was given him in typescript by a lady-in-waiting." And, presumably, as is the custom with all popular legends, most everyone had a cousin or a brother-in-law who had been there. By the time the story had been reprinted in parish periodicals and spread by word of pulpit, it began to seem to Machen that he had failed in the art of letters. There began to be variations on the theme—such as one in which the German dead were found to be punctured with

arrow wounds. The occultists next had a go at it, then the scientists began to talk learnedly of "mass hallucination."

The legend was then translated into several languages including, at any rate, the French. The shining figure of St. George became, variously, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Joan of Arc. The Germans, for security reasons no doubt, offered no opinion or explanation of their abrupt halt or of the tale. However, as Machen observes, "Other versions of the story appeared in which a cloud interposed between the attacking Germans and the defending British. In some examples the cloud served to conceal our men from the advancing enemy; in others, it disclosed shining shapes which frightened the horses of the pursuing German cavalry. St. George, it will be noted, has disappeared—he persisted some time longer in certain Roman Catholic variants—and there are no more bowmen, no more arrows. But so far angels are not mentioned; yet they are ready to appear, and I think I have detected the machine which brought them into the story.

"In *The Bowmen* my imagined soldier saw 'a long line of shapes, with a shining about them.' And Mr. A. P. Sinnett, writing in the May (1915) issue of *The Occult Review*, reporting what he had heard, states that 'those who could see said they saw 'a row of shining beings' between the two armies.' Now I conjecture that the word 'shining' is the link between my tale and the derivative from it. In the popular view shining and benevolent supernatural beings are angels and nothing else, and so, I believe, the Bowmen of my story have become 'the Angels of Mons.' In this shape

they have been received with respect and credence everywhere, or almost everywhere."

Pamphlets were published, as is usual in such cases. The Theosophists published an "answer to Mr. Arthur Machen." Another worker in the field collected "numerous Confirmations, Testimonies, Evidences of the Wounded" and other materials in an "authentic record" of the event. The furore died out after the war and the Angels of Mons rested in legend with only sporadic appearances in the pages of the Sunday supplements. Within a few years the legend had graduated to the sphere of science or pseudo-scientific study.

## 2

In 1930 there was published in London a book called *The Mystery and Lore of Apparitions, with Some Account of Ghosts, Spectres, Phantoms and Boggerts in Early Times* by Harold Shaylor, an investigator in various fields of the marvelous.

The Frontispiece of this comfortably plump volume is "from a Drawing by A. Forestier, reproduced by kind permission from the Illustrated London News." The sketch shows eight or nine soldiers in a trench in the foreground firing at advancing hordes of Germans. To the right and standing above the parapet of the trench are three gigantic bowmen, helmeted and with swords at their sides, launching arrows (visible in the sketch) at the Germans. A fourth bow and part of an arm are visible at the extreme right. The Germans are falling in great numbers, at least one is visibly pierced by an arrow.

Within the book, among the many marvels, we find this:

“Considerable discussion took place in the Press during the autumn of 1914 and the early part of 1915, with respect to the phenomena said to have been seen at the Battle of Mons.

“The publications of these stories brought forth many others of a similar character, the veracity of which appears to be unquestioned, and it will be found interesting to compare them with some of the accounts of phantom armies told in the preceding pages” (of Mr. Shaylor’s collection).

There follows then a story told by a non-commissioned officer who was in the retreat from Mons on or about August 28th, 1914. The weather was hot and clear and, between eight and nine in the evening, this officer was with a group of others on guard duty. An officer came up and asked if they had seen anything “startling.” Two men were sent forward to see if they could discover what the officer meant. They returned with nothing untoward to report. The officer then came back and, “taking me and some others a few yards away, showed us the sky. I could see quite plainly in mid-air,” says the non-commissioned officer, “a strange light which seemed to be quite distinctly outlined and was not a reflection of the moon, nor were there any clouds in the neighborhood. The light became brighter and I could see quite distinctly three shapes, one in the center having what looked like outspread wings, the other two were not so large, but were quite plainly distinct from the center one. They appeared to have a long, loose, hanging garment of a golden tint and they were above the German line facing us. We stood watching them for about three-quarters of an hour. All the men with me saw them, and other men came up

from groups who also told us they had seen the same thing. I remember the day, because it was a day of terrible anxiety for us. Later on the Uhlans attacked us and we drove them back with heavy losses. It was after this engagement, when we were dog-tired, that the vision appeared to us."

Thus the story of the non-commissioned officer as told to Mr. Thompson. Another account of spectral figures is recounted by a private of the Lancashire Fusiliers. He is supposed to have given an account of his experience to a Sister in a hospital. "It's true, Sister, we all saw it. First there was a sort of yellow mist like, sort of rising before the Germans as they came to the top of the hill. Come on like a solid wall they did. The next minute comes this funny cloud of light and when it clears off, there's a tall man with yellow hair in golden armour, on a white horse, holding up his sword and his mouth open. The men knew it was St. George. Hadn't they seen him with his sword on every 'quid' they'd ever seen?"

Thus the Lancashire Fusilier in Mr. Thompson's 1930 account. Machen encountered him just as the Putnam edition was on the presses in 1915. In a Postscript to that edition of *The Bowmen*, Machen refers to an article called *The Angelic Leaders* written by a Miss Phyllis Campbell. Miss Campbell relates that she was a nurse in France where there came into her care a Lancashire Fusilier (the same one presumably, mentioned by Thompson). He said he had seen St. George on a white horse, leading the British at Vitry-le-Francaise, when the Allies turned. His story was corroborated by a wounded R.F.A. man who was present. The R.F.A. man said he saw a tall man with yellow hair, in golden armour, on

a white horse, holding his sword up, and his mouth open (as if, comments Machen, he was saying, "Come on, boys! I'll put the kybosh on the devils!") This figure was bareheaded and the R.F.A. man and the Fusilier knew that he was St. George, because he was exactly like the figure of St. George on the sovereigns. "Hadn't they seen him with his sword on every 'quid' they'd ever had?"

The difference between having a quid and seeing one may be significant. At any rate, Machen makes a rather telling point concerning his Lancashier Fusilier. The soldiers are said to have known it was St. George by his exact likeness to the figure on the sovereign. This strikes Machen as being odd because the apparition is described as being bareheaded and in armour while the St. George on the sovereign or quid is just the reverse, since he is quite naked except for a short cape flying from the shoulders and a helmet. So—the evidence of the quid they'd either had or seen scarcely presents sufficient identification of the saint.

A final vision is presented in C. J. Thompson's book—this one by a soldier in an artillery battery in a letter dated June 26th, 1915. He describes a being like an angel with outstretched wings surrounded by a luminous cloud which appeared between the advancing Germans and the British. The artillery man further states, "with regard to the stories which you have heard about angels and spirits, they may be right but of course you must remember that trench work is mind-straining as well as nerve-racking and that may account for a lot of these stories."

And indeed, Mr. Thompson ascribes most of these visi-

tations, visions and miracles to nerve strain or mass hallucination.

It will be noted that the legend had, by this time, divorced itself completely from its creator. Mr. Thompson makes no mention of Arthur Machen, either as the reporter or creator of this astonishing event. Nor do Thompson's *Acknowledgments* or *Index* contain any mention of Machen Arthur; or of his published works. Of course the tale of *The Bowmen* was first published in a newspaper, the *London Evening News* for September 29, 1914, for which paper Machen was then a reporter. Mr. Machen may have been included in Mr. Thompson's inclusive word "Press."

## 3

However, the curious turnings and twistings of legend are not yet finished. The miracles of 1915 became the mass hallucinations of 1930, and the creator of the slight story of *The Bowmen* had been quite forgotten in the furore attending each of them. But by far the most curious circumstance in the whole curious affair is contained in the most recent, to my knowledge, mention of the Mons legend. It occurs in an article by Meyer Berger, entitled *Legends of the War*, published in *Harper's Bazaar* in January, 1944.

Mr. Berger is an extremely competent correspondent for the *New York Times*. As a matter of fact, it was out of respect for Mr. Berger's worth as a correspondent that I saved from salvage the magazine in which his article appeared. Early in the spring of 1944 I was cleaning out the winter's accumulation of magazines and newspapers and readying them for the next paper pick-up. The baroque

*Bazaar* is not, usually, to my taste, but seeing Berger's name over an article I placed the magazine to one side and took it up to read some nights later.

The article concerns *legends* of the war. Mr. Berger remarks, sensibly, that war nurtures in the soldier some dormant sense that opens the door to superstition, to mysticism, and to visions of the supernatural. He then outlines the various legends of the White Lady on various fronts, the Christ in Flanders legend and, of course, the Angel of Mons. Mr. Berger uses the singular, and so one supposes, there is an Angel of Mons legend as well.

Mr. Berger outlines the legend briefly, explaining that there was no earthly reason for the Jerries to have stopped the pursuit, but stop they did—and the wherefore of this astonishing halt forms the basis for the story.

"Arthur Machen said later," continues the Berger article, "that he conceived the legend of the Angel of Mons as he daydreamed in church over the news of the German's miraculous halt." This is not quite what Machen said, of course. Machen explained that he conceived the story of the Bowmen as he brooded in church over the news of the British *retreat*. Berger goes on to relate that when Machen's story appeared in the London *Evening News* as fiction it was, to his (Machen's) astonishment, taken up and spread all over the world as something that actually happened. "There is no reason," remarks Berger, "to question his explanation."

On the other hand Berger spoke in France with Tommies who swore that, Machen or no Machen, they saw the Angel at Mons, though not as he described it in his piece. "The Machen story said that when the British were hardest



pressed at Mons, there appeared in the heavens, above the battlefield, an unusual cloud formation. This changed into a giant likeness of St. George, flanked by rows of medieval English bowmen whose flights of arrows killed virtually all the German horde. When the bodies were examined there was no sign of a wound."

Whatever this may be, it is *not* the Machen story. Machen has no cloud, no giant St. George . . . only "a long line of shapes with a shining about them." Mr. Berger also talked with a Sergeant Coombs of the King's Royal Rifles at an English base hospital in Trouville. Coombs swore he had seen the Angel of Mons and Berger had reason to believe him, "if only because he wore the Mons Star." Coombs describes "a kind of triple cloud" . . . a large center cloud with two clouds at either side. They had no particular shape at first but they gradually became a great angel . . . "the two smaller clouds were enormous wings, and the angel spread its wings as if it were signalling the jerries to stop where they were."

This seraphic semaphore is a refinement that had not previously appeared in any of the many versions of the legend. One of the legend's variations, writes Berger, "has a faintly humorous side." It appeared in the *North American Review* in August, 1915.

"It told of a soldier, hard-pressed with the rest at Mons and ready to drop, who found himself murmuring, 'Adest Anglis Sanctus Georgius.' He knew no Latin and he didn't know what moved him to the utterance. Even as it came to his lips, he recalled that he had seen it lettered on a plate in a vegetarian restaurant in London, before he was called

up to service. It means, roughly, 'May St. George be a present help to England.' Something like an electric shock convulsed the soldier and his shock-packed ears dimly heard men around him shouting, 'St. George for Merrie England.' From that point, the story followed the Machen pattern—archers appeared in the sky and the Germans dropped by thousands."

Now this version, with the "faintly humorous side," which appeared according to Mr. Berger in the *North American Review* in August, 1915, is the Machen story. Whether or not the *North American Review* version was written by Machen I have been unable to discover. There are differences, of course, even in the very condensed portion offered by Berger. The *North American's* soldier knew no Latin . . . he merely recited, incorrectly at that, and at a very propitious moment, a motto he had seen in a vegetarian restaurant. Machen's soldier, although he had apparently patronized that very same vegetarian restaurant, did know Latin "and other useless things."

And so the legend of the legend of the Angel or Angels of Mons continues to grow out of Arthur Machen's tale of *The Bowmen*.

#### 4

In 1915, possibly because he was then writing *Far Off Things* and was in a mood reminiscent, Arthur Machen declared that he had failed in the art of literature. Most good writers have felt, at one time or another, a similar sense of failure—or at least of mild frustration. Presumably they have a particular instance in mind, certainly Machen had his. It was simply because his tale of the Bowmen had been accepted as truth.

Now it may seem to many a triumph of art that one's work is held to be so life-like and so real that it is generally accepted as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Our realists, for example, are said to feel that way. They consider the verdict of veracity the highest critical success. They have mirrored life and that, so help them, was what they had set out to do!

Machen felt differently about it. His invention, his creation, was not only accepted as being true, but his inventiveness and creativeness were denied him. His magic had been judged mere journalism and that, to Machen, or to any other creative artist, meant failure. However this may be, Machen did not fail in his other legends of the war. Possibly because he called some of them legends—perhaps because the public felt their "willing suspension of disbelief" already supported too great a load—at any rate Machen's further inventions were permitted to remain inventions and he was accorded a considerable, if not fanatical, amount of praise.

These other tales, *The Soldier's Rest*, *The Monstrance*, *The Dazling Light*, had in them the very elements that should have appealed to those who make legends of inventions. They offered much in the way of tradition blended with mysticism, a mixture that should have drawn credence from a much less tradition-loving people than the British. Perhaps there was too much mysticism in these tales—anything less subtle than a warrior saint might not appeal to the Church Militant.

But surely *Drake's Drum*, or the tale called *Munitions of War* had the stuff of legend in them, and tradition too.

Layed on, as a matter of fact, with the trowel. *Drake's Drum* should have become one of the glorious legends of the sea-girt Britons, the race of mariners. This is the tale that relates the events that took place off Scapa Flow, when the British Navy awaited the German High Fleet in November, 1918 to accept their surrender. There were rumours that the Germans might possibly fight and the crews of the British ships stood at "Battle Stations." Then, as the first German ship appeared through the mist, a drum began to beat in the "Royal Oak." And it beat and it rolled from then until the entire German Fleet was encircled and helpless. Of course the unauthorized drumming was investigated, but with all hands at Battle Stations, and especially upon such a momentous occasion, it was hardly possible, and highly improper, that there might be anyone aboard ship with the time and the inclination to beat a drum. However, neither drum nor drummer were located and there was no choice but to believe that what everyone had been hearing was Drake's Drum—"the audible manifestation of the spirit of the Great Sea Captain, present at this hour of tremendous victory of Britain on the Sea."

Now this is certainly a tale that should have appealed to the Britons, as indeed it did, but they refused to raise it to the status of a legend. Then too, the story appeared in 1919, by which time England had less urgent need of legends. In any case, the perfidious Teutons had by that time scuttled their ships at Scapa Flow.

*Munitions of War*, a story published in 1915, also has the stuff of legend, but somehow it never caught, never quite made the grade. Oh, it was successful enough as a story, but

it never became a legend. Which, on the whole, pleased its creator. It tells of a traveller who went to a seaport in the West of England and how he was awakened in the night to hear vast oaths and burly voices heaving and ho-ing as they loaded ships. The language used by these stevedores had an other-century quality and the watcher in the night could only conclude that these men had loaded Nelson's ships before Trafalgar. Had this story been written in 1942 or 1943 instead of 1915 it might have been printed in the "Welders and Steam-Fitters Gazette," or some other house organ, and it may even have been legendized by England's defense workers and winners of the coveted "E" award—or its British equivalent.

## 5

One of the longest, and by far the best, of Machen's stories of the war period is one that made no appeal whatever to the legend-loving instincts of a people at war but which contained, as we may see in this post-war year of '48, something of the nature of prophecy.

*The Terror* was first published in 1917. It was obviously inspired by the reception accorded the tale of the Bowmen combined with more of Machen's creative magic. In the opening chapter Machen refers to the rumours and legends current in the early years of the war—the Bowmen, and the Russians who traveled through Britain by night on their way to some great push or other. These absurdities, Machen points out, depended upon the newspaper for their dissemination. The events described in *The Terror* had been held in strictest secrecy and no word had been given to the Press.

For reasons of security all events connected with the Terror had been hushed up.

However, continued Machen, in a "now-it-can-be-told manner," these were the reasons why "almost two years of war had been completed before the motionless English line began to stir." The story of the Terror is, then, purported to be the secret of the long inactivity of the British Army.

Things were happening all over England . . . very strange things. An airman had been killed under mysterious circumstances. The circumstances appeared to have been obvious enough—he seemed to have been attacked by a flock of birds, a rather mysterious matter in itself. There were other happenings here and there, and rumors of many more. After a few strange events had been reported in local papers there were no further accounts, and sometimes there was no local paper thereafter. Few people would have connected these events in any case. An airman is killed. A child chases a butterfly and is seen alive no more. There are strange stories about munitions works and fiery clouds and bees and horses and dogs. But none of these may be written up in the papers.

Well, at long last and with Machen's usual circumambience and magic the story reveals that the mysterious deaths and strange events are being caused by animals—by cows and sheep and dogs and horses and bees and birds and moths. The explanation? Machen writes—

". . . The source of the great revolt of the beasts is to be sought in a much subtler region of inquiry. I believe that the subjects revolted because the king abdicated. Man has dominated beasts throughout the ages, the spiritual has

reigned over the rational through the peculiar quality and grace of spirituality that men possess, that makes a man to be that which he is. And while he maintained this power and grace, I think it is pretty clear that between him and the animals there was a certain treaty and alliance. There was supremacy on the one hand, and submission on the other. . . . 'Spiritual' signifies the royal prerogative of man, differentiating him from the beast. For long ages he had been putting off this royal robe . . . he had declared, again and again, that he is not spiritual, but rational, that is, the equal of the beasts over whom he was once sovereign. He has vowed that he is not Orpheus but Caliban. But the beasts . . . perceived that the throne was vacant—not even friendship was possible between them and the self-deposed monarch. If he were not king he was a sham, an impostor, a thing to be destroyed."

But before these mysteries are resolved there is much talk of German spies, of mysterious rays, of all sorts of things that attempt to link the chain of horrors with the Germans. And in the course of these attempts to implicate the Germans in the Terror, Machen creates several hypotheses which seemed the very stuff of fiction in 1917—but which in our time must seem like prophecy.

It was in 1944 that the Viking Press issued a volume of its Portable Library devoted to *Six Novels of the Supernatural*. Machen's tale of *The Terror* was one of the six. Thus it happens that I re-read *The Terror* at about the time our forces were capturing the platforms from which the robot bombs were launched at London. Now *The Terror* has always pleased me as a tale, a diversion and, as with

most of Machen's magic, something to think about when the world is quiet and mysterious—say a midnight in October, or three o'clock of an August afternoon. Nothing is inconceivable at such times, I think, and anything can happen—or seem to happen. A long, long look at a tree or a hedge or a hillside might give rise to disturbing thoughts—and one often finds oneself looking hastily away before something actually *does* happen.

But to return to *The Terror*. I had read it several times before and I thought I knew it quite well. But reading it in 1944 it seemed quite new. I had not remembered some things, perhaps because they seemed only incidental to the plot. They were the sort of thing one skipped over rapidly to see what would happen next, or when and where the Terror would strike again.

Well along into the story a Mr. Merrit, one of Machen's more talkative characters, is explaining to a group of friends that "the Terror" is all part of a German plot, that there are, indeed, Germans established in England who are doing these things. And this, according to Merrit, is how it was done:

"The scheme had been prepared years before, some thought soon after the Franco-Prussian War. Moltke had seen that the invasion of England presented very great difficulties. The matter was constantly in discussion in the inner military and high political circles, and the general trend of opinion in these quarters was that at the best, the invasion of England would involve Germany in the gravest difficulties, and leave France in a position of the *tertius gaudens*. This was the state of affairs when a very high Prussian per-



sonage was approached by the Swedish professor, Huvelius."

Professor Huvelius, according to Merrit (or Machen) was an extraordinary man. He was personally an amiable individual who gave every penny he owned to the poor, who dissipated his salary on charity and kindness. He starved himself in order to help the needy. And he wrote a book called *De Facinore Humane*, which book proved the infinite corruption of the human race.

The amiable Professor preached a cynical philosophy, the main tenets of which have a familiar sound. He held that human misery was due, by and large, to the mistaken notion that man was naturally well-disposed and kindly. Murderers, thieves and other abominable creatures are created by the false pretense and foolish credence of human virtue. And he goes on to say that kings and the rulers of people could decrease the sum of human misery to a vast extent by acting on the doctrine of human wickedness.

"War," says the mild Professor, "which is one of the worst of evils, will always continue to exist. But a wise king will desire a brief rather than a lengthy war, a short evil rather than a long evil. And this not from the benignity of his heart towards his enemies, for we have seen that the human heart is naturally malignant, but because he desires to conquer, and to conquer easily, without a great expenditure of men or of treasure, knowing that if he can accomplish this feat his people will love him and his crown will be secure. So he will wage brief victorious wars, and not only spare his own nation, but the nation of the enemy, since in a short war the loss is less on both sides than in a long war. And so from evil will come good."

This philosophy sounds more and more familiar as Merrit goes on to expound what he knows of the works of "Professor Huvelius." The wise ruler will assume that the enemy is infinitely corruptible and infinitely stupid, since all men are so. The ruler then makes friends in the very council of his enemy and among the people of his enemy, bribing the wealthy and offering opportunity for still greater wealth, and winning the poor by swelling words. "For," says the Professor, "it is the wealthy who are greedy of wealth, while the people can be gained by talking to them of liberty, their unknown god."

At any rate, this Huvelius sold his plan to the Germans. His philosophy too, apparently, and presumably he donated the moneys thus obtained to his favorite charity. The Germans accordingly proceeded to buy lands in certain suitable places in England, secret excavations were made and in a short time there was a subterranean Germany in the heart of England. The Germans, having made themselves as secure as Crusoes, waited for "the Day."

This, then, was the plot outlined by Machen as he carefully prepared the background for his story. It seemed not too incredible in 1915 as he worked on the book, for there were rumors even then of emplacements ready for guns discovered by British troops in Belgium and in France, and certain caves along the Aisne seemed to have been made ready for cannon.

Now all this imagining in 1915 and 1917 comes pretty close to the events of 1940. Whether the Germans had read Huvelius or Machen in the years of the Long Armistice, or

confined their reading to *Mein Kampf*, which seems the more likely, they had certainly covered the ground from Eben Emael to Quisling.

At any rate, *The Terror* is first rate reading at any time, and certainly a Machen "must." It is too lengthy to be included in the usual bibliography—but it is readily available in Viking's "Six Novels of the Supernatural."

## *Chapter Six*

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### THE YELLOW BOOKS

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#### 1

It would be unflattering indeed to imply that Arthur Machen's books were quickly discarded by their owners, or that they had ever crowded, in any considerable numbers, the shelves of the secondhand book shops. Nevertheless it is a fact that for some years, especially in the late Twenties and early Thirties, the shelves, counters and sidewalk tables of Fourth Avenue were high-lighted for browsers by the bindings that blazed forth the magic of Machen.

Mr. Alfred Knopf who undertook in the Twenties to introduce, or to reintroduce, Arthur Machen to American readers elected, perhaps for obvious reasons, to issue the odd-sized books in a bright yellow binding. For this, as well as for his work in bringing Machen across the Atlantic, Mr. Knopf is to be thanked; but whoever designed the books, having specified an unmistakable color for the cloth binding, decided also upon a dark blue paper label with gold lettering—a combination that became, in a reasonably short time, completely indecipherable. There was, however, no mistaking a Machen—even when it turned up in the darkest corner of the most unassuming hole-in-the-wall in Fourth Avenue, Twelfth Street or lower Lexington Avenue. The



SOME MACHEN ITEMS: Showing one of the famous Knopf "Yellow Books," title pages of Knopf edition and Pocket Book, Putnam's 1915 edition of "The Bowmen" and several rare items.

adept Arthurian merely looked for the unmistakable yellow binding with its dark and indecipherable patch. It must be admitted that the production manager or book designer for Knopf planned better than he knew, for it seemed that time could not dull, nor dirt disguise, nor grime diminish the yellow of those bindings. The experienced browser could spot one at thirty feet in the dimmest corner of the dingiest shop, sandwiched though it might be between *V. V.'s Eyes* and *The Conquest of Fear* or buried under a pile of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian romances. A recent convert might, for a time, respond to the lure of the yellow only to find, on closer inspection, something about it a eunuch by a man named Pettit, or an early Ben Hecht, or some other ordinary book bound in yellow; but in time he learned to distinguish that one especial hue. He came to know it, however faded, for it seemed to fade predictably.

Thus the yellow books issued by Knopf became the most eagerly sought-after books along Fourth Avenue. It was not too long of course, before they became scarce. Soon they were taken from tables and stacked reverently on shelves, and before very long they were behind glass doors or in the shelves behind the proprietor's desk, or even in that holy of holies—the back room.

Today they have disappeared from Fourth Avenue. You may find, now and then, one of the Martin Secker editions, or perhaps one of the deluxe editions of the *Hep-tameron*—or even a set, fabulously priced, of the *Caerleon* edition. For the most part, however, the book shops are *Machen-less*, a condition that might be remedied, and profitably, by some enterprising publisher, or even by Mr. Knopf.

The House of Knopf, however, seems remarkably disinterested in its valuable property, and a valuable property it is, for not only did the series include almost all of the best of Machen, but almost every volume contained a preface or a foreword written especially for these editions by Mr. Machen. These comparatively recent Machen items are worth a volume of their own, a proposition warmly advanced by Mr. Joseph Vodrey but received coolly enough, thus far at least, by Mr. Knopf.

## 2

Machen had first appeared in print in America in 1894 when Roberts of Boston published *The Great God Pan*. There were several other Machen items published in this country prior to the Twenties. Dana Estes brought out *The Hill of Dreams* and *The House of Souls* not long after the Richards editions and in similar format. Putnam published *The Bowmen* in 1915 while the controversy over the legend was still raging. There were a few others, but the Machen boom was still to come. Mr. Cabell's tribute to Machen in *Beyond Life*, published a few years later, undoubtedly did much to create a body of readers eager for Machen.

Just how and when Mr. Alfred Knopf became interested in Machen as a literary property I do not know, one does not with impunity ask publishers why they seek out certain authors. Certainly Mr. Knopf was of the opinion that the Twenties was ripe for Machen—anyone who remembers that era would, even today, vindicate Mr. Knopf's judgment. Yet somehow, Machen did not catch on as well as might have been expected. Or perhaps he did—for the Twenties. For this was certainly a prolific period, genius

was hailed weekly and books sold by the thousands. Perhaps Machen's books did sell quite well by the standards of the Twenties. The Knopf printings seem to have been exhausted within a remarkably short time and very rapidly disappeared from book stores until their reappearance on second-hand stalls in the Thirties. Arthur Machen is not remembered too well as one who was popular in the Twenties, but then all too few of the writers of the Twenties are remembered at all.

Who were they? Critics and commentators of the times hailed book after book, they acclaimed name after name—but most of those names are seldom mentioned in the current revival of interest in the Twenties. The "best seller" lists of the day hardly indicate that John Dos Passos, Cabell, Van Vechten, etc., etc., were what all America was reading. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis and one or two others are notable exceptions, but the real best-sellers of the time would sound unfamiliar even to students of that era. Most people were reading *The Sheik*, *If Winter Comes*, *Black Oxen*, *The Green Hat* and *So Big*. Zane Grey and Ibanez were more widely read than Sinclair Lewis, even though *Main Street* had created a stir. There were outlines of history and of philosophy and even the "art" of thinking was popularized. There were books about China and Africa and India—and some of them even became the centers of controversy. Storms raged over books whose very titles are unremembered today, while the books we now consider "typical" of the Twenties sold slowly—and in small editions. One discovers that Eleanor Wylie, Ellen Glasgow, Floyd Dell, E. E. Cummings and most of the others who,



even though they were hailed on alternate Tuesdays and Sundays as "new stars of great magnitude in the literary firmament," were not too widely read, despite the assistance some of them received from the newly formed book clubs. Nor are they recalled nowadays with even fond recollection by very many. It is, therefore, not surprising that Arthur Machen remains one of the more obscure writers of the American Twenties, as well as of the English Nineties.

Interest in Arthur Machen was stirring even before the Twenties, but it was principally among writers and literary people. James Branch Cabell, whose *Beyond Life* was first published in 1919, was perhaps the first to mention in print the name of Arthur Machen and something of his work. In one of his lengthy monologues, speaking through the amiable and erudite Charteris, he says, "I wonder if you are familiar with that uncanny genius whom the London directory prosaically lists as Arthur Machen? If so, you may remember that in his maddening volume *Hieroglyphics* Mr. Machen circumvolantly approaches to the doctrine I have just voiced—that all enduring art must be an allegory. No doubt, he does not word this axiom quite explicitly: but then Mr. Machen very rarely expresses outright that which his wizardry suggests."

It was about this time that Starrett discovered Arthur Machen, perhaps through Cabell whose work he was among the first to praise. Starrett it was, along with Paul Jordan-Smith, who tried to popularize Arthur Machen even before the famous Knopf "yellow books" were issued. A small group gathered about Starrett and Jordan-Smith to try to prove to publishers that Machen *was* important and

that his books *were* being collected. In 1919 Smith wrote to several publishers about Machen, but they were not interested. The group then made every effort to have Machen's first editions rise from nothing to ridiculous heights.

They succeeded all too well in this, for as Jordan-Smith says, "There were only a few of us then, but we seemed to be many, for we were bidding against one another in a hundred shops all over Britain. We did not expect the publishers to enter the rare book field. We merely wanted them to publish new books and reprint old ones by Machen. Instead they made limited editions and spoiled the whole business."

Mr. Starrett, who is one of the most enthusiastic of Machen's admirers, finally did something about it on his own. In 1923 he published, with his friend Covici, a collection of Arthur Machen's stories and essays under the title *The Shining Pyramid*. This book was published in an edition limited to 875 copies. It contained, besides the title story, a number of pieces that had not previously been published in book form, and many of which have not since been reprinted. This is one of the better collections of Machen material which deserves reprinting today. In the following year Starrett published another collection under the title *The Glorious Mystery*. This, too, contained much new material and much that has not appeared elsewhere.

At the same time, perhaps even before Starrett was preparing to publish his collections, Alfred Knopf became interested in Arthur Machen and wrote him with an offer to publish anything of his he could find. Apparently Knopf's negotiations coincided, in point of time at any rate, with

Starrett's plans. In 1925 Machen published in London a collection called *The Shining Pyramid*. The book was published simultaneously in New York by Alfred Knopf. It contained an introduction in which Machen wrote: "*The Shining Pyramid* is the result of a collaboration. Two years ago an American man of letters, full of industry, rummaged in old papers, magazines and manuscripts owing their origin to me, and produced as a result of his labors a volume published at Chicago, called *The Shining Pyramid*. The American gentleman, I may say, did not disturb my peace by consulting me as to the content of the book in question. Then, in 1924, pleased, I suppose, with the results of his toils, he rummaged a little more, and, using the same methods, produced a second volume of scraps and odds and ends from my workshop. This book he entitled *The Glorious Mystery*."

Knopf had, by this time, published quite a number of Machen's earlier books. Three books were published in 1922, four in 1923, four in 1924 and four in 1925, of which *The Shining Pyramid*, with its introduction, was one. The "yellow books" were finding their way to the more discriminating and discerning readers in America.

The publication of two books bearing the same title, one issuing from Chicago, the other from London and New York, stirred up a controversy. How far this went and how it terminated is not public knowledge. In April of 1924 Knopf circulated to the trade a letter on the Alfred A. Knopf-Arthur Machen versus Covici-McGee-Vincent Starrett controversy. According to Paul Jordan-Smith the whole thing was the result of a misunderstanding. "This much

I know. Starrett had been given the manuscripts of two or more books to get published as he could, at a time when publishers were shy of Machen. Years ago I saw them and at least one letter advising Starrett to do what he thought best about publishing them. Then Knopf came along with an offer to publish anything of Machen's he could find. How Machen answered this I do not know, but he did give the rights to Knopf. But in the meantime Starrett had made arrangements with Covici, his Chicago friend and former book seller. It was unfortunate and I fancy Machen's poverty and Knopf's established position made Machen want to transfer to him. Both were rather bitter. But as I recall the matter over the years I was impressed with the fact that both had acted in good faith until Knopf's money made Machen jump. I think he would not have embarrassed Starrett if he had not been utterly lacking in money and had not had two small children to feed."

Apparently the whole matter was settled amiably, for one of the subsequent Knopf editions is dedicated to Vincent Starrett. The "controversy," such as it was, is not a matter to be revived, nor is it my intention to do so. Machen, and all who know him, owe too much to both Mr. Knopf and Mr. Starrett.

Another early worker in the Machen field was Carl Van Vechten. Besides making Machen a sort of intellectual "prop" for his precious *Peter Whiffle*, Mr. Van Vechten wrote some of the earliest appreciations of Machen. I must confess that there was a time when V. V.'s eyes seemed to me a trifle jaundiced in his estimate of Machen, and there was a time when I rather hotly resented the im-

plications of the title *Excavations*. But time mellows most of us, Machenites especially, and I have come to regard and to welcome Mr. Van Vechten as a trail-blazer. It is true that I cannot accept some of his estimates of Machen, and I dare say I have often thought that he liked Arthur Machen for all the wrong reasons. However, let the student of Machen the Silurist decide for himself. *Excavations*, containing reprints of Van Vechten's earlier reviews and articles, was published by the alert Mr. Knopf in 1926.

Vincent Starrett's study of Machen is, I think, more in sympathy, or at least more to my taste. The title of the book in which his essay on Machen appears is *Buried Caesars*—it enraged me no less than *Excavations*, and at one time I regarded these books as two voices in a chorus that had come not only to praise Machen but to bury him in rather extravagant prose.

### 3

There has been little news of Arthur Machen or about Arthur Machen since the late 1920's. He enjoyed a certain popularity for perhaps five years, a popularity that lingered much longer in more literary circles. For the most part Machen had disappeared from the world of literary figures just as his books had disappeared from the bookshops. That he is still read today we know, and we know too, that he has been slowly gaining new readers through the years. In 1933 Machen published his last novel, *The Green Round*. This has not yet been published in this country, although it is scheduled for publication this year by August Derleth's "Arkham House." In 1936 there were published in London two collections of his stories, most of which were reprints

of earlier stories with the addition of some new pieces. These books are *The Children of the Pool*, published by Hutchinson, and *The Cosy Room*, published by Rich and Cowan. Within the past few years Machen's stories have appeared in anthologies put together by Dorothy Sayers, Somerset Maughan, Phillip Van Doren Stern, Will Cuppy and, of all people, Boris Karloff!

August Derleth, the youthful sage of Sac Prarie, has been more active than anyone else in recent years in his efforts to spread the magic of Machen. Back in 1937, in the November issue of Ben Abramson's "Reading and Collecting," Derleth published an article on Machen, to which was appended a bibliography by Nathan Van Patten. Derleth's article, the first to appear in almost a decade, followed the pattern of most previous articles about Machen. But Derleth has gone beyond prose. He has, from time to time, included Machen's more macabre pieces in his various collections of supernatural stories. He has also published, or is planning to publish, reprints of several Machen books.

The late H. P. Lovecraft was an admirer of Arthur Machen's work and a foremost exponent of the Machen manner in modern fiction. It is difficult to apply the epithet "pulp writer" to Lovecraft, but that is, after all, what he was. Recent appraisals of his work, and the publication in book form of his stories, have done much to raise him out of this category. It was Lovecraft who introduced Machen to August Derleth and to who knows how many thousands of other readers. In his essay, recently republished by Ben Abramsom, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft supplies one of the most up-to-date, if perhaps one-sided,

appraisals of Arthur Machen's work. Lovecraft concentrates his attention, naturally enough, on Machen's tales of horror and the supernatural. The result is a valuable piece of Macheniana but one that should be approached only by an adept. The chance reader or the casual reader would receive a rather specialized view of Machen.

## 4

More than one observer of the literary scene has drawn the obvious parallel between the 1890's in England and the 1920's in our own country. Both periods were characterized by a sharp break with tradition. In both periods the younger writers found themselves voluntary exiles from their own country and both groups selected the same European city as the scene of their exile. There are other parallels, . . . the flood of "little" magazines, the cultivation of the "continental" attitude, the revival of the art for art's sake tradition and a general letting down of the bars once again. Mr. Waugh, the 1890 Mr. Waugh, might well have written his *Reticence in Literature* for the benefit of the new generation of bold, bad, young intellectuals.

Peter Munro Jack, writing in Malcolm Cowley's symposium *After the Genteel Tradition*, called this the "James Branch Cabell Period," and Alfred Kazin, in *On Native Ground*, refers to the writers of the Twenties as "The Exquisites," while "All the Lost Generations" seems to him a suitable chapter heading to cover a brief history of the Twenties.

Mr. Jack credits it all to Cabell's *Jurgen* and to novels by Carl Van Vechten and Eleanor Wylie. "These books,"

says Mr. Jack, "brought to our shores the very spirit of Rabelais and Voltaire, Balzac, Anatole France and Horace Walpole, Pater, Wilde, Maclaren, Max Beerbohm and Aldous Huxley . . . and converted a barbarous literature over-night into an airy dance of verve, irony and Gallic sophistication." Mr. Kazin also begins with *Jurgen*, which apparently ushered in "a vogue of elaborate decadence and enthusiasm, very wicked, world weary and ornate." Kazin goes on to indicate that "just as the pale, imitative exoticism of the late Nineties had marked not merely the beginnings of revolt against the old parochialism but a leisure-class psychology in an America that had finally attained a leisure class, so that the new literature of sophistication that came in with the James Branch Cabell School was fundamentally the ambitious baroque luxury of a period that had finally obtained a self-conscious splendor of its own."

Mr. Kazin writes from the vantage point of 1942, and anything can happen to a critic, a book, or a period in a dozen or more years. Hindsight used to be considered superior, in some ways, to foresight—but such is the condition of the world today that this is no longer particularly true. Mr. Kazin, writing in the heyday of the four evangelists of modern American fiction—Don Passos, Hemingway, Farrell and Steinbeck, looks back upon the era of "baroque luxury" and "self-conscious splendor" with anything but nostalgia. Malcolm Cowley, contributing an essay on Dos Passos to his own symposium, an essay which preceded Kazin's book by five years, and to which Mr. Kazin is somewhat indebted, remarks that Dos Passos had entered college in those olden baroque days, "at the beginning of a period



which was later known as that of the Harvard aesthetes." This is noted with an almost, but not quite, imperceptible touch of pride—or of snobbishness. These young Cantabrians, our boy Dos Passos among them, are reported to have acted in a manner befitting the Elizabethans, or least the men of the Nineties, or any other generation that felt it was living in a Golden Age. They read, Dos Passos still among them, Pater and *The Hill of Dreams*, and they explored the slums of Boston—which must have seemed to them at least as romantic as Cheapside or Houndsditch.

At any rate Machen was accepted and more or less widely hailed as one of the more important importations by some of the little magazines that began to spring up at this time. "The Reviewer," one of the most important of the new journals, published Machen along with Ellen Glasgow, Joseph Hergesheimer, Ernest Boyd, Ronald Firbank, Ben Ray Redman, Edwin Muir and others. His public and enthusiastic acceptance by Van Vechten, that inveterate organizer of torchlight parades, was quite enough to launch Machen successfully with the intellectuals who, in those halcyon days, had scarcely an ideology among them.

It has been said that the writers of this period, motivated no doubt by the cynicism they either created or absorbed, or both, tended to escape from this world they never made and produced in the process of escaping some of the most exciting and readable books ever written in America. Of course neither Mr. Cowley nor Mr. Kazin draws exactly these conclusions—they are rather scornful of the Twenties and of the books produced in the Twenties.

They are both, Mr. Kazin more than Mr. Cowley since

he came in later, in rather a hurry to get on to the Thirties when the Four Horsemen of the Apocryphal were beginning to gallop madly down the back-country lanes and through the congested streets of cities and the back-yards of milltowns. Nevertheless it must be apparent to even the most ideological reader of these weighty volumes that, for all their efforts at deprecating the self-conscious splendor of the period, both Mr. Cowley and Mr. Kazin manage to make the Twenties sound vastly more entertaining than the dull period to follow, when the leftist interpretation of literature placed black Marx against every novel that showed signs of having been written for the sheer pleasure of writing, or the desire to create a character or to tell a story.

This seems to be the great fault that is found, by such men as these, with the novels of that era. They were not so judged in the Nineteen-Twenties. The sentiments expressed by Arthur Machen in *Hieroglyphics*, and echoed in Cabell's *Beyond Life*, were rather widely accepted at the time, not only by a large portion of the reading public, but also by members of the more critical profession. Dyson, however much he may have fussed with his pipes and his pencils, his notes and his notions, expressed what was the literary credo of the day; "I will give you the task of a literary man in a nutshell—to create a wonderful story and to tell it in a wonderful manner." And so Cabell and Wylie and Fitzgerald and Hume and Wilder and many others created wonderful stories. In this time of man and to this manner of writing Machen was admirably suited.

People who found New York in the Twenties as fabulous a city as Machen and Stevenson found London in

their day, were delighted with the yellow-bound books that came out under the Borzoi imprint. For many a speakeasy in the mid-Forties, or in the Village, offered possibilities as extraordinary as Stevenson's *Suicide Club* or *The Lost Club* of Machen. Indeed there are undoubtedly those who can recall when their favorite haunt disappeared over-night and then, as if by magic, reappeared in the brownstone house across the street. The city parks, as yet uninhabited by muggers, were magical places after midnight and lonely as the sunken lanes of Avalon. Those who delighted in the doings of Dyson and the adventures of the Young Man in Spectacles were enchanted by the curious byways of London, and they shared the satirical views of the dyspeptic Doctor Stiggins and the Hermit of Barnsbury. It pleased immense numbers of people who tired of Dreiser to find, in *Hieroglyphics*, this perfect reflection of their own attitude: "Imagine having to spend twenty years with *such* people."

The crash in the fall of 1929 was followed by a stunned silence—and presently one began to hear the hoof beats of the four frightening Horsemen and the voices of the economical evangelists crying, and wreaking, havoc.

The realists began to be heard because realism seemed to be what people wanted—politically, at any rate. The polemics disguised as novels began to appear in greater and ever-increasing numbers. It has since become obvious that realism of this sort was a one-way street to despair—and it was the realists, not the now-silent "romanticists," who were called, in their own time, "The Irresponsibles." But with the rise of the proletarian novel, the heroic mill-hand and the long, dreary lines of the unemployed, the

period came to an end. Machen, along with the others, ceased to be read except by those who re-read him, or discovered him in the dusty bookshops where the yellow binding gleamed from the darkest corner.

## *Chapter Seven*

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### MACHEN'S MAGIC

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#### 1

Of recent years there has been a tendency to regard the novel as something it has become rather than what it should be. Most novels that do not fall neatly into one of several categories created by the critics and reviewers are judged to be poor novels indeed. As a matter of fact, the whole of fiction, as well as of poetry, has come to be judged according to standards which, while they may be excellent standards when applied to journalism or the so-called "documentary," serve fiction rather poorly. It has become the custom to label all stories, novels and poetry that may fall outside the special categories set up by such standards as "escapist." It is a convenient enough classification, and it is an apt enough description, but the word has come to be used in a rather derogatory sense.

Now it may be demonstrated by an application of these very standards that almost every one of the world's great books, and every one of the world's heroic poems, is "escapist." And that is, after all, what they were intended to be. But we are concerned with the telling of a story and the manner of its telling. To tell a wonderful story in a wonderful manner, this, says Arthur Machen, is the func-

tion of the writer. There is another equally fine description of the writer's task, this time by James Branch Cabell, another story teller of some eminence.

There is in almost all great stories a certain magic that becomes apparent from the first sentence. One picks up *Moby Dick* and reads: "Call me Ishmael." There is a quality of strangeness in the name and abruptness of introduction that serves to set a mood, a mood that persists through the entire book. Many of Poe's stories have this same strangeness and this same quality. One finds it too, in many of Machen's stories. The opening sentence, for example of *The Hill of Dreams*: "The sky glowed as if great furnace doors had been opened."

The magic of Machen depends as much upon his style as it does upon the magical things of which he writes. His finest stories appeal to an essential and basic desire for "escape" from the common life. They depend for their effect upon that willing suspension of disbelief of which Coleridge wrote (and for which Coleridge is known by far too many who would turn its meaning to their own uses), a suspension of disbelief which it is Mr. Machen's happy fortune to bring about almost at will.

And yet, apparently, there is much more to it than the mere suspension of disbelief—it is rather a desire to accept such matters as may be set forth, whether or not they challenge belief—simply because they make an appeal to *instinctive belief*. One doesn't have to try very hard to believe in the existence of certain powers, especially those which cannot be, or have not yet been, explained as any known existing force. From this point onward the develop-

ment of a story by Machen may hinge upon the manner of telling as well as upon the selection of the materials for the tale. There must be no fumbling of the matter, no crude effects, no creaky props, no bolstering up by the shabby tricks and melodramatic artifices of the penny dreadfuls. Machen's magic is very simply achieved. In each of his tales an improbable, but not implausible, theme is stated; usually one that is based upon something involving an instinctive belief, for example: the existence of "little people," the continuance of some ancient power under certain circumstances, and in explaining certain occurrences or events for which no rational explanation exists. Folk tales, superstitions, local legends and mythology, most of these embody certain elements in which most of us have at least an instinctive belief. Then, too, a great deal of Mr. Machen's own particular magic is achieved through his ability to see things and to present things that are "removed from the common life."

Most of Machen's characters are not unusual people, they are not especially "peculiar" in any accepted sense except as they may be affected by certain occurrences in the earlier development of the story. For example, the young man in *The Novel of the White Powder*, the boy in *The Novel of the Black Seal*, and the Vaughan girl in *The Great God Pan*. But for the most part his characters are, or were, very ordinary people; ordinary, that is, in the sense that Dyson and Phillips, and even Lucian Taylor, are quite ordinary people. Indeed the very ordinariness of some of these people becomes the starting point of an entire sequence of extraordinary events. Just as it was the ordinary

qualities of a young married couple visiting relatives of a Sunday night in a dull, stodgy, respectable suburb of London that resulted in the strange story called *A Fragment of Life*.

Machen's characters are completely believable, whatever events may occur, simply because of their very ordinary qualities. Lucian Taylor, the "hero" of *The Hill of Dreams* an introvert we would call him today, was a normal school boy who did not conform too well to the rigors of the Public School System, and whose solitary home life conditioned him to react as he did to the strangeness of his environment and to succumb to the influences, real or imagined, of the Roman ruins near his home. To the development of such a simple and ordinary character, in this particular story, must be added one very important magical element—the influence of landscape upon character.

For the peculiar potency of Machen's magic owes much, if not most of its force, to landscape and to the subtle influence of the weird topography of his stories. Many of Machen's most telling effects are achieved through the mere portrayal of a brooding landscape, the sombre background of mountains, the deep, rutted lanes that run along between head-high hedges, solitary hilltops shimmering in heat waves, old grey houses that sit somberly at the edge of the forest and rivers that coil in slow esses through forests and skirt the walls of mountains. There is no doubt that the wild Welsh countryside had this effect upon Machen himself.

Machen's first book, it will be remembered, was written by one "Leolinus Silurensis"—and Machen frequently calls himself a "Silurist." For Gwent, in the old days, the



days before Arthur and before the Romans, was the home of the Silures, one of the three great tribes in this last corner of the West. The Silures seem to have been more Iberian than Celtic—they dwelled in the Black Mountains and along the estuary of the Severn. It was, then, this dark and ancient land that formed the background of Machen's life and most of his work. Machen explains, and illustrates, the influence of his homeland in *Far Off Things*:

"This, then, was my process: to invent a story which would recreate those vague impressions of wonder and awe and mystery that I myself had received from the form and shape of the land of my boyhood and youth; and as I thought over this and meditated on the futility—or comparative futility—of the plot however ingenious, which did not exist to express emotions of one kind or another, it struck me that it might be possible to reverse the process. Could one describe hills and valleys, woods and rivers, sunrise and sunset, buried temples and mouldering Roman walls so that a story should be suggested to the reader? Not, of course, a story of material incidents, not a story with a plot in the ordinary sense of the term, but an interior tale of the soul and its emotions; could such a tale be suggested in the way I have indicated? Such is to be the plan of the great book which is not yet written."

But of course this book was written, not once but over and over again. One finds its content in almost everything Machen ever wrote. One discovers too, the influence of landscape upon Machen and his work. One notes the feeling for landscape as much in his work as in the work of Poe or Coleridge or Hawthorne. One day, no doubt, a

learned scholar will write a lengthy monograph upon what might be called *The Influence of Landscape Upon the Creative Imagination*. There are already many footnotes available for such a work.

Machen recognized this influence, it became apparent to him as he walked in the land of the Silures and as he read in the evenings in the drawing room at Llandewi. This snug, old fashioned "parlour" in the Rectory was the treasure house of the Machens. Here were their china and silver and here the books gathered by the Rector and his forebears. It was here that Arthur Machen, on his vacations from school at Hereford, discovered the wonders of Waverley and De Quincy. Here, too, was Parker's *Glossary of Gothic Architecture*. This book initiated Machen into the spirit of Gothic and, as he says, "that is one of the most magical of all initiations." Gothic meant to Arthur Machen "the art of the supreme exaltation, of the inebriation of the body and soul and spirit. It is not resigned to dwell calmly, stoically, austere on the level plains of this earthy life, since its joy is in this, that it has stormed the battlements of heaven. And so its far-lifted vaults and its spires rush upward, and its pinnacles are like a wood of springing trees. And its hard stones, its strong based pillars break out as it were into song, they blossom as the rose; all the secrets of the garden and the field and the wood have been delivered unto them."

Machen early developed this sense of wonder in the land. In his reading he discovered, in the age of Coleridge and Wordsworth, the "renaissance of wonder." His taste for Scott and DeQuincy and Coleridge and Poe and Hawthorne and Parker; his taste, in short, for the "Gothic," sup-

ports and explains this. For landscape and its influence are important elements in that which we have come to call "Gothic" . . . and it is this Gothic-ness that is also one of the elements in Machen's magic.

## 2

And then of course there is the final test of the storyteller's magic. Mr. Machen's inventions have frequently been taken for truth. The tale of the Bowmen at Mons is the classic example. Machen has told how he received letters following the publication of some of his books—letters in which the writers sought explanations of the stories, letters which were undoubtedly prompted by a belief in some basic truth on which they suspected the story had been built.

Many years ago Vincent Starrett wrote, in his preface to the Chicago edition of *The Shining Pyramid*, that there were three Machens—Machen, the Saint, Machen the Sorcerer and Machen the Critic. It is, of course, Machen the Sorcerer whose work is most popular, or shall we say, the best known. Machen himself once wrote: "Sorcery and Sanctity, these are the only true realities." We might interpret these to mean religion and science—although it is doubtful if all of the admirers of Arthur Machen make this interpretation. At any rate it is the works of Machen the Sorcerer that have been most widely anthologized. These are the stories one finds classified under such headings as "supernatural stories, tales of terror, horror stories" and the like.

Let us admit that supernatural fiction, supernatural tales, have quite a respectable lineage. It must not be im-

aged, as some intellectuals do, that the tale of terror is something to which only the readers of pulp magazines are addicted. The supernatural tale has been the subject of several excellent studies. One has only to mention the work of such admirable scholars as Dorothy Scarborough, Edith Birkhead, Montague Summers and Eino Railo.

It has been said by some of these scholarly investigators that almost every English writer of any importance has, at one time or another, written at least one story or novel that fits somewhere into one of these categories. And then, of course, the scholarly investigators proceed to give reasons for the interest in such stories, and they point out that the interest as well as the belief in such matters is always in direct proportion to the ruggedness of the terrain. And they also list, as evidence of the extent of their research, the means whereby the best effects may be achieved in this particular field. Basically these have to do with landscape, architecture, antiquity and a whole collection of odds and ends, of props and stage settings that form the background for the venerable school of Gothic literature started many years ago by Horace Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*.

One thing all of these tales have in common is, naturally enough, strangeness. A strangeness in landscape, a strangeness in character. Basically too, one supposes, these stories are written about, and because of, men's fears. That is why they are called ghost stories, or horror stories, or tales of terror. This fear is not merely a fear of the dead returned, but of the past. For these stories concern themselves, even when not with actual ghosts, with past glories, past powers, past civilizations, and ancient ceremonies.

It is not that man seeks to frighten himself that he reads these stories and is fascinated by them. Psychologists, of one sort or another, have said that the popularity of ghost stories and mystery novels can be traced to a desire to enjoy vicariously the precarious situations in which characters in these tales find themselves; and that by substituting themselves for the characters involved the readers may obtain a certain stimulation which is lacking in their humdrum, calm and civilized lives. This, it seems to me, is not particularly true. It is rather because the past *is* the past—simply that and nothing more. For the past is the one thing man can never alter, although it has become fashionable for us to try even that. The present is here, the future is attainable and foreseeable and it may even be influenced. The past is unattainable and will always remain so, therefore man remains fascinated by it. The more shrouded in the mists of time and of antiquity, the more fascinating. Man does not read of the past to frighten himself any more than he drinks in order to experience a hang-over. Nor does the average reader of supernatural stories identify himself with primitive men's fears any more than he identifies himself with the abstract forces for good or evil when reading detective stories. Man is a curious creature and his curiosity leads him into strange places. His curiosity concerning his amazing curiosity leads him to even stranger conclusions.

This preoccupation with the Past is part of man's eternal preoccupation with Time; is now, and always shall be, world without end; from the days of the early Greeks, who knew that Chronos was the father of great Jupiter himself—the parent of the father of the Gods. Many years ago

J. W. Dunne wrote a strange and tantalizing book, *An Experiment with Time*, a book much remarked by critics and book reviewers in the practice of their trade, but seldom quoted beyond a mere mention of its title. This is an extraordinary book, perhaps out-dated now, in this age of the supersonic and the expanding universe and the expanding ego. Nevertheless, H. G. Wells and Kipling have been influenced by it; and many another creator of the marvelous and the wonderful. One may read many strange and wonderful books, one may even read strong and powerful and significant books—but one never forgets such books and plays written about the Time theme as *The Time Machine* and *Berkely Square*, Priestly's *I Have Been Here Before*, Ford Madox Ford's *Ladies Whose Bright Eyes* and many others.

## 3

The magic of Machen is due no less to his wonderful style than to his wonderful material. In these days when one can scarcely speak of style without being considered stuffy and perhaps even pedantic, to praise a writer for his style is almost to damn him with faint praise. This is undoubtedly because we have had no stylists for the last several decades, for which, on the whole, we may well be grateful! It is possible that stylists fell into disrepute because so many of them, in the past, concealed a tremendous vacuum and a cavernous nothingness beneath and behind a facile facade of fluency.

Yet Arthur Machen has a distinctive style, the perfection of which, while it appeals to the pedantic and soothes the scholarly, must be apparent even to the readers

of those horrendous anthologies which have reprinted Machen while the scholars were busily interring him in their fascinating masoleums. This matter of style is rather a tricky one. It is the sort of thing of which one might say, as some have, and when all definitions fail, "Either one has it, or—one hasn't!" However feelingly and with whatever academic finality this axiom may be delivered—style is obviously more than that, and more than the man. More, too, than words and a certain way of putting them together, and much more than a mere choice of words or dexterity in manipulating them. We have come to think that many of these things *do* constitute style. Indeed, a certain publisher recently hailed a new book (one of his own, of course) as being in the "tradition of the English Stylists." Simply because the writer employed, here and there, a compound-complex sentence, composed with a certain felicity and manufactured of polysyllabic words or those with a certain antique charm. It is felt, then, that a matter of phrases makes a Fielding—which is no more the case than that the use of a quotation from Donne makes a writer one to stand with the Elizabethans.

Style is, like so many other things, more apparent in the breach than in the observance, which comes perilously close to the didactic dictum, "Either you have it, or—you haven't." But not quite. To be sure, every written word or group of words has style, even roadsigns, notices of trespass, mayors' proclamation, editorials in the *Daily Worker*, even soap operas have style. The most popular writers of pot-boilers have a style—and many of them have so pro-

nounced a style that they can be and have been recognizably parodied.

It might be said of a good style that it is one that cannot be parodied. An examination of Machen's style would indicate that it is, in his case at least, quite true. For Machen's style is a blend of many things; of words with magic connotation, of sentences that create moods, of passages that suggest, subtly and almost unconsciously, the exact atmosphere for which they were intended. Mr. Machen is a master at evoking the willing suspension of disbelief, and he does it without employing any of the stock properties listed by Coleridge and other authorities as having the proper connotative value for the creation of a "Gothic" mood or atmosphere.

When all is said and done, however, it must be admitted that Machen's style is merely a reflection of his faith in the credo of a literary man as set forth by the admirable Dyson. And here, of course, we come to the crux of the matter, and as close as we may to an explanation of Machen's magic which cannot, after all, be appraised in rational terms. In that wonderful book called *Hieroglyphics* Machen poses a series of questions:

"Explain, in rational terms, The Quest of the Holy Graal. State whether in your opinion such a vessel ever existed, and if you think it did not, justify your pleasure in reading an account of the search for it."

"Explain, logically, your delight in color."

"Estimate the value of Westminster Abbey in the avoirdupois measure."



“Faery lands forlorn. Draw a map of the district in question, putting in principal towns and naming exports.”

Machen agrees that one cannot express art of any kind in the terms of rationalism, and that “If literature be a kind of dignified reporting, in which the reporter is at liberty to invent new incidents and leave out others, and to arrange all in the order that pleases him best; then, let us have as much “common sense” and “rationalism” as you please . . . but if literature is a mysterious ecstasy, the withdrawal from all common and ordinary conditions . . . [we had better] confess that with its first principles logic has nothing to do. . . . For if Rationalism be the truth, then all literature . . . is simply lunacy.”

#### 4

There are, sometimes, certain superficial resemblances between the works of imaginative writers that are outside the province and beyond the charge of plagiarism. An age produces a culture, a culture produces works of art, and all the while the individual consciousness, or sub-consciousness, feeds upon and is nourished by the raw materials and the basic elements of the culture. For in any age there are bound to exist certain individuals in whom combinations of common experience develop along certain lines and who may be expected to react in almost predictable patterns to identical stimulæ . . . just as certain identical combinations of chemical elements may be expected to react in identical manner under identical circumstances. Which is, after all, no major discovery but merely a restatement of the obvious fact that lies behind the continuity of any

culture, or even, on a smaller scale, of any literary movement, or on occasion, of something less significant than a literary movement.

This fact also lies behind the periodical resurgence of certain ideals of culture or revivals of interest in certain abstractions such as realism, naturalism, romanticism and the like. And it explains, in individuals, the influence one writer may have over another, or the appeal of certain types of material to certain similar individuals.

Superficial resemblances are a common manifestation of spiritual relationships. Some years ago a rather clever critic of music wrote a book called *Music for the Man Who Enjoys Hamlet*. Now, the resemblance between people who enjoy Hamlet no doubt extends to a great many things other than the stage and Shakespeare and music, and, for all we know, it might even be established that such people have a mutual preference for a specific cocktail or a certain brand of cigarette. Our critic did not attempt to prove this; he contented himself with discussing music of a type to soothe the Hamlet-enjoying intellect. And so the superficial resemblances between Poe and Coleridge and DeQuincy extend far beyond a need or addiction, accidental or otherwise, to stimulants of one sort or another. The lines that connect and link these individuals, feature for feature, element for element, with an incomplete analogy here, and a broken chain there, would no doubt resemble a physicist's laboratory model of the atomic structure of the very newest isotope of the most recently discovered element.

Perhaps individuals themselves constitute the electrons and protons of a cultural atom. We might link individuals

of a certain sort, the men who enjoy Hamlet, for example, or Poe, DeQuincy, Hawthorne, Coleridge, and find isotopes here too—Brockden-Brown, Walter Scott, Tieck, Machen, Sheil, Stevenson, Wells and so on and so on. And we would find that these elements or individuals had certain affinities, certain properties in common. They are not alike merely in that they wrote in a certain fashion, or that they wrote about more or less similar ideas, or that the moods they created were more or less identical. There are certain other qualities, perhaps insignificant, but revealing.

Poe, like Coleridge, was fond of designing title pages and planning magazines and journals of a very literary sort. We find that Poe and Coleridge shared a facility for creating exotic and quite unreal localities. For example Coleridge's *Pleasure Palace of Kubla Khan* and Poe's *Domain of Arnheim* are very similar in conception. The conception of tremendous wealth appealed, in a most impractical way, to both Poe and Coleridge. And, finally, both shared a great liking for names of Oriental origin . . . there is no distance at all, on the literary map, between Xanadu and the kingdom by the sea; and the River Alph or one of its tributaries, empties into the tarn of Auber. Machen's own landscape is not too far removed. It was first peopled by the dark people who came from Defrobani, which is to say the City of the Golden Domes, far to the east on the shores of Marmora. And Machen's eternal preoccupation with a Great Romance is akin in many ways to Poe's grandiose schemes for epic compositions no less than it is to the complete unpublished works of Coleridge.

There was magic in these men and in their manner of

telling a tale. There was, in each of them, an ability to create that which made its strongest appeal to that love of strangeness in most men's minds.

De Quincey, alone in London; Hawthorne, so solemnly settled in Salem, Coleridge surrounded by blue-stockings and blue lakes; Poe in his erratic course from salon to saloon . . . these men made magic of a sort no realist could ever devise. Machen's magic is of this sort.

## Chapter Eight

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### THE PATTERN

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#### 1

Toward the close of the first quarter of this century Mr. Alfred Knopf, being ready to reissue *The Anatomy of Tobacco*, asked Arthur Machen to write a new introduction for the volume. The *Anatomy* had been written some forty-three years before and it seemed time a new edition and a new introduction were called for. The *Anatomy* is a slight book, and a rather dull and pretentious one, turned out as a sort of sophomoric exercise under the influence of Burton and other pedantic antiquarians. Machen had no objection to writing a new introduction to the book of "Leolinus Siluriensis" and so he sat down at once to do so.

Most of Machen's work, and certainly all of the best of it, had already been written and published . . . there was no Great Romance on the fire just then. Several years before he had written his memoirs, or come as close to writing them as he ever would. *The Confessions of a Literary Man* appeared serially in the London Evening News through several months of 1915. Secker issued the *Confessions* in 1922 as *Far Off Things*. A year later Machen wrote *Things Near and Far*; another two years later came *The London Adventure*. These three books are Machen's

autobiography, although it has been said that almost everything he ever wrote was, to a great extent, autobiographical. At any rate, Machen saw the books in print and occupied himself with journalism, which he detested, and with thinking over the books he had written which, on the whole, he rather enjoyed. And so when, in the 1920's, he began the *New York Adventure*, Machen sat down and wrote not one but a whole series of new introductions. There is no nonsense about these introductions, and no "graceful writing." The introduction to the new edition of the *Anatomy* begins quite simply:

"It struck me once, during a long meditation on literature, that every man who has written has had but one idea in his head. To the best of my recollection, the particular example in my mind at the time was Edgar Allen Poe, who executed a wonderful series of variations on one theme."

Now this idea had been in Machen's mind for a great many years. A year or two before completing his introduction for Mr. Knopf he had been engaged in writing a book called *The London Adventure*. The book contains much material that is found in neither the *Confessions* nor in *Things Near and Far*. While writing the book he became intrigued with some old note books he had kept many years before. In reading them he was reminded of a story by Henry James, *The Pattern on the Carpet*, in which is expressed the notion of a man of letters who had written many books and was quite surprised to find that one of his admirers had failed to recognize that all these tales of his were variations on one theme; that a common pattern, like the pattern of an eastern carpet ran through them all.

In the story the novelist died suddenly without revealing the nature of the pattern. Nor does Henry James, in whose works one might also trace a common pattern. He too leaves it to his readers to discover for themselves the mystery of this one design, latent in a whole shelf of books.

Machen himself has such a pattern, and such a theme. It occurs again and again in all of his works, in his short stories as well as in his novels: in the slightest of his essays as well as in *Hieroglyphics*. This theme he defines in several places quite briefly and simply. It is, he says, "The sense of the eternal mysteries, the eternal beauty hidden beneath the crust of common and commonplace things: hidden and yet burning and glowing continuously if you care to look with purged eyes."

We have noted, several times over, Machen's preoccupation with a Great Romance. Many years ago he wrote, "There is a great book that I am hoping to write one of these fine days. I have been hoping to write it, I may say, since 1898, or '99, and somewhere about the later year I did write as many as a dozen pages. The *magnum opus* so far conducted did not wholly displease me, and yet it was not good enough to urge me forward in the task. And so it has languished ever since then, and I am afraid I have lost the manuscript that contained all that there was of it long ago. Seriously, of course, it would not have been a great book if it had been ever so prosperously continued and ended; but it would have been at least a curious book, and even now I feel conscious of warm desire at the thought of writing it—some day. For the idea came to me as follows:

"I had been thinking at the old century end of the work that I had done in the fifteen years or so before, and it suddenly dawned upon me that this work, pretty good or pretty bad, or as it may be, had all been the expression of one formula, one endeavor. What I had been doing was this: I had been inventing tales in which and by which I had tried to realize my boyish impressions of that wonderful magic Gwent."

Now this great book was not only written but it was rewritten under various forms, in entirely different ways, and with no surface similarities at all. For almost sixty years he had written purely to please himself, nor did he hesitate to publish, at his own expense, the books he wrote for his own pleasure. It was his feeling in this that there was no reason why a beginner should not be willing to pay his own way. And yet, as he says, it is a queer pleasure when one does write to please oneself. For, as Machen says,

"I wrote purely to please myself; and what a queer pleasure it was! To write, or to try to write, means involving oneself in endless difficulties, contrarities, torments, despairs, and yet I wrote on, and I suppose for the reason which I have given, the necessity laid upon most of us to create another and a fantastic life in order that the life of actuality may be endurable."

In these excerpts from Machen's autobiographical sketches one encounters over and over again certain key-words: 'escape,' 'common life,' 'eternal mysteries,' 'removal' and so on. And these same key words are, of course, the underlying themes of every story he ever wrote. They con-



stitute the criteria by which he judged the literature of past and present as well.

## 2

Machen had been brought up on Scott and Coleridge, Hawthorne and Poe and all the authors one would naturally expect a school boy to encounter in an English public school in the 1880's. In addition to these there were the books he found in the rectory at Llanddewi. These included one especially significant book by Parker on Gothic architecture.

We have already noted that Machen early became aware of the beauty of the Gothic and that he was all of his life more or less under its influence. His conception of the Gothic was not quite the same as Horace Walpole's. It stemmed rather from Parker and from Coleridge, from whom he learned that there is "in the spectacle of external nature something much more than mere pleasantness or sensuous beauty." The rugged terrain of the land of the Silures would seem to offer little of pleasantness or sensuous beauty . . . yet it did act upon Machen in much the same way that such a landscape had acted upon the imagination of such a lyrical poet as, for example, Wordsworth.

As a matter of fact, Machen did not hesitate to refer to Walpole's "sham Gothic," and he assumes that Walpole had a sort of "vague idea that there was something in a particular architecture of a particular era which was somehow or other curious and admirable." Machen further remarks that one cannot possibly compare the school of Coleridge in its appreciation of nature with the school of Walpole in its appreciation of the Gothic. And then, he poses

a question in which there lies the answer to his own and to many another writer's problem. "May it not be that Coleridge and his fellows were but the forerunners of . . . new doctrine which was not fully revealed to them."

We have remarked that Machen employs none of the traditional trappings of the Gothic tale. There are no clankings and bumpings and ghosties in the night. There are no ruined castles, no hermits in caves. Instead we find deserted houses in Lambeth and in Clerkenwell, and sometimes the houses are not even deserted. Nor are they occupied by monks or knights or old families in whose closets lurk the most deplorable of skeletons. The typical Gothic "hero," either the sardonic Byronic or the melancholy Manfred type is never encountered. Machen's heroes, if such they be, are rather ordinary young men like Lucian Taylor and Ambrose Meyrick, or perhaps you may wish to call the ever-present Dyson and the companionable Phillips heroes. There are, of course, sinister characters in Machen. Mr. Davies, outwardly ordinary, is as black a villain as can be found anywhere in the whole school of Otranto. Miss Lally, or Miss Leicester, are as horrific in their own quiet way as any harpy or hag encountered in the novels of Radcliff.

Arthur Machen is much more closely related in his work to Hawthorne and Poe than he is to his English contemporaries and predecessors. As Paul Elmer More has noted, Hawthorne and Poe are the only two writers in America who have won almost universal renown as artists, and that these two are each, in their own manner, a sovereign in that strange region of emotion which we name the

weird. Their achievement, as Mr. More points out, is not at all like the Gothic novel introduced by Horace Walpole. There is little in them of the revival of medieval superstition and gloom which marked the rise of romanticism in Europe.

The unearthly visions of Poe and Hawthorne were not the results of literary whim or unbridled individualism but, according to Mr. More, were deeply rooted in American history. Now this is a rather strange matter, for there is nothing nationalistic in the nature of the work of these American writers. It follows a well established tradition, but it is not the tradition of the English school of the Gothic revival. It was greatly influenced by Germanic mysticism, just as Coleridge was influenced by Teutonic theory. These American writers seem to have missed the diletantism that was associated with the Gothic revival in England. In this they are very close to Machen and his work. Both these writers were greatly influenced by their surroundings and by the influence of their own native landscape. The personal alchemy of each one transmuted the elements of that landscape and created a time and place that never were.

Poe especially, and to a far greater extent, was affected by landscape not only of his native Virginia but of every place he ever visited. Some years ago John Cowper Powys, a visiting, but much more sympathetic than usual, Englishman commented upon this aspect of the writings of Poe:

"For myself, as a traveller for a score of years between all of Edgar Allen Poe's particular cities, and knowing the country round them a good deal better than I know my

own, I confess—though it may be because of a kindred sensibility toward the ghostly the weird, and the horror hinting: I have found even in those districts, though of course far more in the deeper south, elements here and there that correspond with disturbing closeness to the frightening things in his imaginary landscape.

“But it is not from those pine haunted woods and those morasses and those treacherous estuaries and those Lethean wharfs that the darker vistas and more troubling visions of Poe’s inspirations comes.

“They are conjured up from the symbols of pre-incarnate tremblings that we all find written on the nerves of our race—though only a few abnormal individuals can render articulate these hieroglyphics of holy terror.

“. . . We all conceal within us, inherited from an immemorial past, a secret yearning to enjoy by some magical shortcut the hidden potencies of nature. A responsive pulse begins to beat irrepressibly within us when Faust makes the sign of the Macrocosm, for there is not one among us for whom the idea of forbidden joys and an unnatural power over the forces of nature has not got a seductive appeal.”

Machen made this comment in a letter on the subject of the Gothic novel. “The fact is, I believe, that all the Gothic romances are sham Gothic romances. I mean that the people who put back their period into the middle ages, had hardly the faintest notion of what life in the middle ages, in a Gothic castle was really like. This, let me note, is nothing against their books as literature or else we should be laughing at a highly esteemed writer for sup-

posing that ninth century life at Elsinore had the remotest resemblance to the life which is depicted in *Hamlet*."

## 3

The books of Arthur Machen which have gained the greatest amount of attention are, naturally enough, the more sensational stories in which he touches upon themes that approach what is, or what has been in the past, forbidden territory. It seems odd that Arthur Machen, whose works have been so generally neglected, should have been scolded on occasion by various critics for his use of sexual themes. Actually there is no sexuality as such in any of Arthur Machen's books. It does enter into some of the stories through the medium of mythology, Roman or Celtic, and sometimes aboriginal. And yet, such a critic as the gentle A. E. Houseman, could write of him, "Mixing up religion and sexuality is not a thing I am fond of." Mr. Houseman, had he possessed something of Machen's scholarship, would have perceived that religion and sexuality were not mixed up by Arthur Machen but rather by his own Celtic or Teutonic or Scandinavian ancestors. It is the more surprising, however, that such opinions as that expressed by the later great poet have not resulted in greater popularity for at least some of the work of Arthur Machen.

By far the most important elements in the pattern that runs through Machen's work are the very ones he himself expressed many years ago, "The sense of the eternal mysteries and the eternal beauty hidden beneath the crust of common and commonplace things."

The reputation of Arthur Machen undoubtedly rests

most securely on a single book, *Hieroglyphics*, and on perhaps a half dozen of his essays. His definition of what constitutes fine literature is, even today, beyond dispute. His thoughts on realism, or naturalism, a movement that was only just beginning to be felt in his youth have been admirably expressed in a passage in his book *The Secret Glory*.

"Of course, he said, (Arbrose Meyrick) I take realism to mean absolute and essential truthfulness of description, as opposed to merely conventional treatment. Zola is a realist not—as the imbeciles suppose because he described—well, rather minutely—many unpleasant sights and sounds and smells and emotions, but because he was a poet, a seer; because, in spite of his pseudo philosophies, his cheap materialisms, he saw the true heart, the reality of things. Take *La Terre*, do you think it is realistic because it describes minutely, and probably faithfully, the event of a cow calving? Not in the least; the local vet who was called in could probably do all that as well or better. It is realistic because it goes behind all the brutality, all the piggeries and inhumanities, of those frightful people, and shows us the strange, mad, transcendent passion that lay behind all those things—the wild desire for the land—a longing that burned, that devoured, that inflamed, that drove men to hell and death as would a passion for a goddess who might never be attained. Remember how 'La Beauce' is personified, how the earth swells and quickens before one, how every clod and morsel of the soil cries for its service and its sacrifice and its victims—I call that realism.

"Of course, there may be people who think that if you describe a pigsty well you are a realist, and if you describe an altar well you are romantic. . . . I do not know that the mental processes of Cretins form a very interesting subject for discussion."

Frank Norris, an early apostle of realism, wrote, while he was still at college, this analysis of realism and of Zola: "Naturalism, as understood by Zola, is but a form of romanticism after all . . . the naturalist takes no note of common people, common in so far as their interests, their lives and the things that occur in them are common, are ordinary. Terrible things must happen to the characters of the naturalistic tale. They must be twisted from the ordinary, wrenched from the quiet, uneventful round of everyday life and flung into the throes of a vast and terrible drama that works itself out in unleashed passions, in blood and in sudden death."

There are many provocative passages on this subject in Machen. Take, for example, these thoughts expressed in Machen's *The Art of Dickens*:

". . . it is not the main point in the finest literature to draw people so well that the reader begins to think that they must be 'real' people, and that the author is a sort of journalist with supernatural means of finding all the facts about them."

"If we want to go to Margate, it would be idle to take a fairy barque, and *simili modo* it would be but faint praise of a Gothic cathedral to say that it was quite weather proof."

"What does it profit a painter to delineate a tree which

is very like a tree, unless it is something much more—unless it is also the symbol and the revelation of some great secret of nature? If this were not so, then the camera would be superior of Turner, and the shorthand writer would look down from his desk on poor blind Homer, who talks of gods and goddesses of fairy isles, and giants with one eye in their foreheads.”

## 4

Vincent Starrett many years ago made the statement that there was little humor in Arthur Machen's works. Of humor, in the broadest Mark Twain, or even in the gentle Stephen Leacock vein, there is very little. But there is in almost all of Machen a wry, dry humor with perhaps a rather bitter taste. There are passages, even in *The Hill of Dreams* that are as humorous as anything by Leacock. One reads his account of the publishing business as it was in his day with a realization that Machen is as much at home in satire as in sorcery. His autobiographical books are filled with humor, this time not so bitter. Many of his essays employ humor and satire in generous doses. Shortly after the publication of *The Hill of Dreams* and *The House of Souls* Arthur Machen wrote several essays on the subject of the Holy Graal. These essays, the first of which appeared under the editorship of A. E. Waite, aroused quite a bit of attention and resulted in a certain amount of controversy in antiquarian circles. The Graal legends through their association with Arthur and Caerleon had been of great interest to Machen from his earliest years.

He knew every legend and every theory in the literature of the Graal. His first essay was at variance with some



of the new theories that were then springing up. Chief among these was the theory that the Graal legends had their basis in a fertility cult which persisted in Wales right up until Norman times. Machen promptly branded this theory as absurd. "Let us grant," he wrote, "that the question of fertility, which is the question of life, both for ourselves and for our cabbages, is behind everything. If we go far back enough, it is clear that we can do nothing in this world if we are so unlucky as to be dead: and this applies equally to the Phallic hypothesis of the origin of everything, which can be worked in very well with the fertility hypothesis. The whole point of a great many of the rites in fertility ceremonies seems to be built about the hypothesis that fertility could be induced by certain ceremonies that were expected to put nature in a mood to be fertile." And then Machen quotes from one of the experts who clung to this hypothesis, "Just as the sailor imitates the wind that he desires by whistling for it, so did the countrymen imitate the trees in the wood by making a mock tree called the Maypole."

Machen seems willing enough to accept these theories but he asks, "What light shall we gain as to the actual emotions and intent of the seventeenth or sixteenth century people who danced about the Maypole? I venture to say none whatever . . . they were not addressing any invocation to the woods or anything else. They were being jolly or merry at a certain time of the year in a traditional manner. For all I know, our learned people may decide that the game of marbles was originally a reminder to the spheres to keep on rolling. If I am told so, I shall not deny the

doctrine, but I shall maintain that the boys who play marbles on London pavements know nothing of it. Granted this hypothetical origin of marbles, it has nothing whatever to do with the game of the twentieth century."

The note books of Arthur Machen, as fragmentarily revealed in *The London Adventure*, are as fascinating as are the notebooks of Hawthorne, which as a matter of fact they much resemble. For example there are many notes concerned with patterns—and these bear a direct relationship with the earlier material in this chapter. Most of the notes concern labyrinths, mazes, spirals and whorls. He asks the question: Why was this form common to all primitive art? And then, in almost the same place in his note book one finds the sentence: "Literature began with charms, incantations, spells, songs of mystery, chants of religious ecstasy, the Bacchic chorus, the rune, the mass." This sentence is the basis for *Hieroglyphics*. It is, according to Machen, the thesis of the book fairly well summed up in one sentence.

And this same pattern occurs in most of his stories. Among his notes we find this, "The maze was not only the instrument but the symbol of ecstasy; it was a pictured 'inebriation,' the sign of some age old process that gave the secret bliss to men, that was symbolized also by dancing, by lyrics with their recurring burdens, and their repeated musical phrases: a maze, a dance, a song: three symbols pointing to one mystery."

It would require a thorough examination of the notebook of Arthur Machen, if such a thing were possible, by a man with the skill and scholarship of a John Living-

ston Lowes to trace and to tell the complete story of the pattern in Arthur Machen. Yet here, in brief, and in all his works, the pattern is everywhere apparent.

There are, undoubtedly, those who prefer Machen the essayist to Machen the story teller. Certainly his greatest work, *Hieroglyphics*, is sufficient reply to those who have tried to dismiss Machen as the creator of "shockers" concerned with demonology and sensational horror stories. The delightful pieces that appeared serially in the Lyons Mail and the Illustrated News and the London Graphic would please even the Manchester Guardian or A. E. Houseman, who once wrote that he found Machen not quite to his taste. His essays on the Grail legend are authoritative without being archeological, witty without being flippant or, what would have been unbearable, satirical.

And yet, in the essays no less than in the stories, the pattern is there and is recognizable. One is forever running across a phrase or a notion one has encountered before—some where, some time, some place—and the place usually turns out to be another Machen essay. For the pattern of Machen's thinking is as obvious as the pattern in the rug; as obvious, and as simple, as the definitions supplied in *Hieroglyphics*. The pattern is, as we know, summed up in the phrase: "removal from the common life." It may be simplified further in the one word: "ecstasy."

Now the word "ecstasy" has caused some confusion in the minds of certain of Machen's detractors as well as among his admirers. There was a tendency, in the Twenties, as well as in the Nineties, to give the word "ecstasy" a connotation or a meaning similar to that employed by

the popular novelists of the time. "Ecstasy" seemed to many to be the "ecstasy" of the pallid, perverted creatures of the Cafe Royale and, later, a sort of Elinor Glynn-ish, sinnish quality. It was a word much favored by the writers of romances, the practitioners of the purple phrase. And so we encounter, at times, this "novelist of ecstasy and sin" sort of nonsense.

It should be pointed out that *Hieroglyphics*, that excellent volume of literary criticism having little to do with passion, in or out of the desert, bears the illuminating subtitle: "*A Note Upon Ecstasy in Literature.*" And *this* ecstasy is of the mind—it is an exultation of the spirit of men. It is, to go back to the more descriptive phrase, the removal from the common life.

This pattern exists everywhere in Machen, sometimes it is developed by the characters and circumstances in his tales, or again it is carried out by argument or analysis in his essays, but always, upon closer examination, the grand design is apparent.

One may read, for example, the essay called *The Hidden Mystery* and find that it is almost exactly the same as *The Mystic Speech*. And then one reads *The Secret Glory* and finds, once again, the same theories, the same logic, the same figures and the same conclusions, expressed and explained as only Machen can set them down. This may send the casual reader, or even the amateur bibliographer, hunting from volume to volume with pencil and reading glass, for there seems to be indeed a hidden mystery, a mystic speech, a glorious secret in these passages and paragraphs.

Actually, of course, one is merely becoming aware of the pattern, and one is becoming impressed with the simplicity and the one-ness of everything Machen ever wrote. Of course there are actual resemblances between the essays mentioned and strong connections between them and the book. For the essays were written years before, and one of them was actually delivered as a lecture before the learned Quest Society of London. They are all a part of the book that is now known as *The Secret Glory*.

## *Chapter Nine*

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### THE VERITABLE REALISTS

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#### 1

Our modern civilization is, if nothing else, a well-documented one. No sooner were we at war than we began to talk about the post-war world. Our introduction to the marvels of the post-war world began very shortly after Pearl Harbor. Prophets sprang up in every advertising agency and began to lead us into the promised land of the push button and the ever-present plastics—where every prospect was pleasantly postwar-ish and only man seemed likely to remain vile, as indeed he proved by brilliantly discovering how to smash the atom. It was significant that the art of propaganda, perfected to the point of art by the original perpetrators of the war, should become the means of showing us the wondrous shape of things to come.

So well indoctrinated were our people, so thoroughly documented had we become, that it occurred to many to venture opinions on the state of man in this almost perfect state of the future. It was obvious, even to the prophets, that man would engage in activities other than pushing buttons to start and to stop things, to change climate or a record, to launch a war, a ship or a new hydro-electric plant.

It seemed obvious, even to the prophets, that there might be malice in this wonderland.

Man, with more leisure than ever before, would undoubtedly manage to stir up more trouble than ever before. And while we certainly were not going to sell apples on street corners, we knew enough, we said, to look for an increase in crime, a new wave of disillusionment and, most certainly, a new point of view.

We were quite resigned to these things. We were prepared to usher in a brave new world to the tune of some fantastic *Gotterdammerung* in the Bavarian Redoubt. The suicide of the Austrian Corporal was anti-climax indeed, since everyone knew, had known for years, that he had it in him. Things shuddered to a slow halt in Europe and the post-war world seemed about to be launched with nothing more stupendous in the offing than the truth about V-1, 2 and 3. The atom's howl at Hiroshima came as the cataclysmic climax.

Well, then, once again we had fought in a great war and once again had emerged comparatively victorious. Because victors always anticipate a certain course of events which, we have yet to learn, never follow victory, we had already anticipated the cynicism that was to follow. At least we have learned to anticipate the cynicism, and that of course is an achievement. It represents, one must admit, progress. In developing and enlarging upon our visions of the push-button world we had not neglected to include the conception of push-button wars. This could be called the crowning cynicism—and a less disillusioned world might well do so.

But it is probable that our cynicism is really not quite so bitter as it was the last time, because one isn't really cynical at discovering that what one never believed in does not exist. At any rate we felt, and perhaps we still do, that there was a pattern to be followed. We have had some prior knowledge of the pattern—it was becoming familiar to us. There might be, of course, some slight variations here and there. For example: in tracing out the pattern before, our cynicism resulted in an escape into realism—and this time it might result in an escape from realism. Cynicism in 1947 or 1948 might very well be an isotope of uranium 235, with a few unknown qualities but with a predictably high escape-velocity.

The post-war era seems to be fairly familiar. The political scene conforms in a great many respects—but our reactions do not. That we will do exactly the same thing about exactly the same problem is not only unthinkable, it is extremely unlikely. Blunder we very probably will, but we will have found new ways of blundering. After all, we do progress. And this time we can blunder with no more effort than is required to push a button. It might be argued, then, that it is extremely unimportant to ponder about the sort of things that will be written in this post-war world—escapist or realist. But that one may predict, in the face of this reality, an escape from realism seems at once probable and inevitable—and there are certain indications that seem to favor the inevitable.

Superficially we might consider that a number of critics and writers have remarked upon certain similarities between the late Forties and the early Twenties. And, so linked have



the two decades become, a mere mention of the Twenties leads inevitably to a rediscovery of the Nineties. The Modern Library, which was more than just a publishing venture in the 1920's, began its series of reprints with Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*. One of the first in a recent cycle of films developed about psychological themes was a somewhat sinister version of *Dorian Gray*. A recent theatrical season featured simultaneous presentations of a play about the Twenties and of several about the Nineties. Indeed, *The Importance of Being Earnest*—a likely title that!—gave fashion its first really fashionable color since before the war. Yellow, said a foremost fashion magazine was *The Color*. To be sure, these are only superficial similarities. That Wilde was revived in the Twenties and in the late Forties is a manifestation without much meaning in itself. That Yellow became a favorite color of the season was perhaps no more than a reaction to our khaki consciousness of the war years . . . but there were other, and more significant, indications.

## 2

There have been, this past year or so, a number of articles appearing in various literary journals, and even of late in the more popular magazines, the burden of which seems to be something between a call for a new estimate of literature and a prediction that such an estimate is in the making. Certainly the recent years, during which more books were read by more people than at any time in history, have given practicing writers the wider audience they had, for centuries dreamed about. The writers for small

cliques have had every opportunity to expand their cliques. The writers for the masses had such a market as even the most popular of them had never imagined. The Big Names ran to bigger printings than even a publisher had dreamed of. That we were in the midst of an almost world wide paper shortage seemed at least the most obvious result of this promiscuous reading and writing. But what have been its literary effects?

Have the realists gained in favor as they predicted, and had been predicting for years, that they would? Have the proletarian novelists grown in stature now that, at long last, the proletariat were not only reading but buying books? Have the multitudinous novels about the Common Man, the Little Man, the Man in the Street, been widely accepted by the Common Man, the Little Man, the Man in the Street? In this, the Century of the Common Man, such a conclusion would seem to have been foregone. The writers for the Common Man, spurred on by the foregone-ness of their conclusions, became commoner and commoner—but the Common Man began to show that he had developed a few rather uncommon tastes indeed. Aside from the comic books, which he consumed by the shipload (and they can scarcely be called realistic), he has done all sorts of queer things. He has granted the greatest gift in his power, sales running to a million or more, to a book about a lady and an egg, and to a group of the most outrageously escapists novels that have ever cluttered up a publisher's list. Historical novels which were neither good history nor good novels, became the new opium of the masses. Lusty rogues and busy wenches went through their amorous

in the usual ceremonies attendant upon the presentation of a new writer named, let us say, Smerv.

Alois Smerv is, or was, a Montenegrin mystic. Comparatively little is known about his work, most of it has never been published, none of it can be readily understood. Nevertheless his name finds its way into practically every review devoted to anything but juveniles. Smerv seems to have been obsessed by most of the commoner manifestations made famous by various Viennese psycho-analysts. It is said that his books, had they ever been published, would have attracted the unfavorable attention of the fascist authorities and would undoubtedly have resulted in his expulsion from his homeland or his installation in a concentration camp. This, of course, is pure supposition, all that we know for certain is that Smerv died of acute myopia in 1942 in an obscure town in the Balkans. His note books, scrap books, ration books and a mess of mss. found their way into the sympathetic hands of an international litterateur—with the inevitable result. This, then, is one of our latest literary idols.

### 3

And now we come to the point of conceding that Arthur Machen is not and never has been a "naturalist," that is, he has never written in the manner which we have come to call naturalism or realism. A great deal of modern American and English fiction over the past forty or fifty odd years has been of this sort. It stemmed, following one of the periodical Anglo-Saxon reversions to the Gallic, from Zola, the father of naturalism. One need hardly wonder what Machen might say today of naturalism and Zola, he

said it some fifty years ago in *Hieroglyphics* and again in *The Secret Glory*. And Machen was saying *then* a great many of the things the critics of today are just beginning to discover.

To take an excellent example; we have the case of one of our best known and most highly regarded novelists; one whose realism has begun to transcend reality so much that his last book has been called an allegory. His characters are so super-real as to be almost "arch types," and they may eventually come to be regarded, unless they are entirely lost in the shifting of values, as sketches worthy to stand in a Dickensian gallery along with Micawber and Pickwick.

For this is assuredly the direction of our drift—we are not only turning away from naturalism and realism, we are beginning to wonder why we ever turned to them at all. For literature as a removal from the common life, or art as an interpretation rather than a portrayal of life, has little to do with either naturalism or realism. It may be that, within this very decade, we will decide that the whole trend of the past thirty or forty years has been up a dead-end street inhabited by the dead-end kids of the literary world, whose greatest talent was to shock each other with the words they chucked up on the walls and fences of their realistic little slum.

It has become increasingly obvious, even to the more advanced critics, that there had come to exist but a very narrow line between the realistic-naturalistic novel and the journalism of the day. Not so long ago it was considered the highest praise to call a novel "a significant

social document." Now it is becoming more fashionable to refer to a novel as a rather poor novel *as* a novel, *but* a significant social document. We are, it would seem, about half-way round the circle. Mr. Sinclair Lewis wrote a book a year or two ago which is also a case in point. Although the critics were unanimous in pointing out that it was a very bad novel, they admitted that it was significant. So too, the flood of books about alcoholism, insanity, race prejudice and other social problems. Most of these books defy honest criticism on almost any grounds, since almost everyone is more or less opposed to the same things these books are against.

Of course these problems do exist, and they are urgent problems indeed; but they do not necessarily constitute the stuff of great or even good literature. Nor should the importance of the problem automatically confer importance or significance upon any writer, good, bad or indifferent, who chooses to deal with it. Today's tabloid may be as raw a slice of life as today's top ranking best seller—but no one calls it literature. As for the revolt against "the genteel tradition," it was a natural reaction against stuffiness, victorian morality and overly "nice" novels—but the course taken by those who rebelled against these things was not necessarily the right one. It was, or soon became, quite as stuffy and even more unreal. Still, there is much to be said on the subject, for realism, by which we *can* mean honesty, cannot be, and should not be, eliminated entirely as a literary force.

It cannot be said that Dickens, that eminent Victorian, was not a realist or that he was not realistic. No Hemingway he, to be sure, but still, no Harold Bell Wright. Nor

can we say of many a writer relegated to oblivion by the realists that they were not realistic. John Galsworthy wrote as realistically of the upper-middle classes as John Steinbeck writes of paisanos—and Soames Forsyte is as much a person, a *real* person, as the youth with the acne. Now this is a very close to the heart of the matter, for the realists, and the naturalists, have claimed that writers like Galsworthy are not realists—and of course their point would be that Galsworthy wrote of Soames Forsyte and Steinbeck wrote of bums and vagrants, of the dispossessed and the youth with the acne.

It would seem, then, that they quarreled rather with Soames than with Galsworthy—that Soames was, for some reason or other, less real than, for example, an earnest young picket-line marcher. Indeed, it has been almost a prime principle, that the realists write of the so-called “underprivileged,” and all that was needed to earn a reputation for a book was a fairly accurate portrayal of life in the less-desirable quarters of any city or town. If a few scenes of drunken quarrels, beatings by cops (classically called Cossacks) and tableaux in which oppressed mill-workers were being violently oppressed, so much the better. Of course not all realists wrote exclusively about the underprivileged. Many wrote of the upper classes, for this was considered realism too—but only if the upper classes were portrayed in an unfavorable light. So it becomes apparent that almost the whole of realism has been a social rather than a literary movement. For a time, and under special conditions, this seemed reasonable enough, but there are

indications that it is in the process of being rejected as the only literary criterion.

## 4

Of the novelists whose names have formed a sort of literary litany this past decade or two: Hemingway, Dos Passos, Farrell, Faulkner, Caldwell and Steinbeck—the work of Steinbeck offers most in the way of material for analysis according to the lights of both realists and romanticists. For Steinbeck has been hailed as a great realist, and it was he who first seems to have transcended reality, and certainly he comes closest to approaching the “removal from the common life” postulated by Machen as the prime requisite for the creative writer. *The Grapes of Wrath* was and is a wonderful book—as great a piece of journalism as has been produced in an age that specializes in that peculiar literary form—the documentary; and it was saved from being mere competent journalism, or even inspired journalism, by characterization alone. Here again we must look to Machen for, if not a direct reference to Steinbeck, at least an applicable parallel.

For Steinbeck's characters, the Joads, the Paisanos, the Hermit with his dogs, the bums in *Cannery Row*—these are all figures of such proportion and created in such a perspective as that described by Machen in his essay on Dickens. Machen points out that Dickens was a symbolist . . . no such persons as Pickwick or Micawber ever walked the earth. “They are creatures,” says Machen, “of the world of vision, of that other world which is beside us always, which transcends the sight of unpurged eyes.” And then Machen goes on to define the ‘true realist’ as one who

symbolizes "by means of phenomena, eternal verities."

This deftness of Steinbeck's in drawing portraits has led him into trouble with his devoted critics for whom, apparently, realism can be carried to extremes. A case in point is the Colonel in *The Moon is Down*. This German, if not Nazi, officer, it will be recalled, was quite a controversial figure back in the war days when the book was published. Now the Colonel had every right, actually and literarily, whether as an actual person or an imagined one, to act as he did. It may have been a none too happy choice for Steinbeck—he could have given us the Eric Von Stronheim figure we all expected of him, but he gave us instead the Major Stanhope type. This was not a very popular choice with the ardent and articulate admirers of Mr. Steinbeck's realism.

Then there was the matter of *Lifeboat*, a motion picture shown during the war. Mr. Steinbeck did the script, or worked on it, or did whatever it is established writers do in Hollywood. At any rate Steinbeck was taken to task by at least one film critic and not a few columnists who stepped out of their roles long enough to have a look at the films. The story, a Hitchcock natural, involved a group of people thrown together in a lifeboat. Among the group was a German submarine officer—perhaps the Captain. The thing that angered the erstwhile admirers, confounded the critics and dismayed the defenders of Democracy, was that the German was portrayed as the most capable man aboard the lifeboat. Not only did he show qualities of leadership which were found to be detestably proficient, but other members of the crew, all Allies of one sort or another, were



shown to be a confused and sometimes cowardly lot. This outrageous invention by a man with a reputation for realism upset the critics and the columnists. No less an authority than the American Sybil cried out against the extravagance of the invention in which an officer and a seaman was permitted to exercise both authority and seamanship. Of course most of these outcries may be attributed to the fact that we were then at war with both the confoundedly charming Colonel and the confoundedly capable Captain.

Nevertheless everyone breathed easier when *Cannery Row* was announced as a return to the "early Steinbeck" even though, by this time, realists everywhere had become aware of a chink in the armor, and the left-wing critics took a decidedly dim view of the light-hearted way in which Steinbeck's social outcasts took their social ostracism.

When *The Wayward Bus* rattled onto the literary scene the critics scanned the faces of the passengers as eagerly as relatives waiting at the depot. Sure enough—there were cries of recognition from several groups. One crowd hailed the youth with the acne—Johnny had come marching home again to swell the ranks of the realists. Others, remembering the Colonel and the Captain, recognized at least a lineal descendant in the girl who sat in wine glasses. She was, for a girl who sat in wine glasses, sufficiently incredible to belong to the gallery of allegorical figures set up for the specific purpose of puzzling the proletarians. And so the bus pulled in with apparently the right character for almost everyone waiting at the depot.

This somewhat didactic digression, while it seems to

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have no direct bearing upon either Arthur Machen or his works, is offered in explanation of some of the theories expressed in *Hieroglyphics*—under the sub-title, if you wish, of *The Ultimate Fate of a Realist*.

## 5

We have arrived at a point in our literary history (or, if you prefer, our social progress, our ideological advancement, our cultural development) when there is need for a new estimate of the task and aims of our modern literature or at least the re-establishment of certain values and standards previously set aside.

We must once again divorce literature from life, if by that we will understand that literature is not, and never was supposed to be, a mirror held up before our common life. We must discard the so-called "true-to-life" standard by which our critical attitudes have been governed for so many years. Above all, we must renounce the propaganda psychosis, and we must admit that even good propaganda is never literature and that even great literature is seldom propaganda. We have those, of course, who will rise to point out that such and such a book or novel or play was excellent propaganda for such and such a cause or event. To which we may answer: it was not so conceived. For the glibness with which the word propaganda is used is rivalled only by the glibness of the propagandists themselves. To make a case for any work of literature as a bit of effective propaganda for any cause is to distort and debase the purpose for which it was created.

There is much too much to do with literature today

that has nothing to do with literature at all. We must learn again that the weavers of fantasy are, after all, the veritable realists. For it must be admitted that we have at hand ample evidence that this is so.

There is realism in great literature, but realism alone does not make great literature. The writer, or observer, who sees an event or an occurrence, however rare or moving an event it may be, who is moved to write about it merely to describe, with minute realism, what he had observed is no more creating literature than the earnest New Englander who writes to the Times or the Globe to report the first robin. But Arthur Machen has said these things before—and said them better.

You will find, in the closing pages of *Hieroglyphics*, this passage, which seems an excellent closing passage for this digressive chapter:

"Have you noticed how many of the greatest writers, so far from desiring that compliment of 'fidelity to life,' do their best to get away from life, to make their books, in ordinary phraseology, 'unreal.' I do not know whether anybody has compared the facts before or made the only possible inference from them; but you remember how Rabelais professes to derive his book from a little mouldy manuscript, found in a tomb, how Cervantes beginning to *propria persona auctoris*, breaks off and discovers the true history of *Don Quixote* in the Arabic Manuscript of Cid Hamet Benengeli, how Hawthorne prologizes with the custom-house at Salem, and lights, in an old lumber-room, on the documents telling him the story of *The Scarlet Letter*. *Pickwick* was the transcript of the 'Transactions' or 'Papers'

of the Pickwick Club, and Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur* shelters itself, in the same way, behind the personality of an imaginary writer. There is a very profound significance in all this, and you find a trace of the same instinct in the Greek Tragedies, where the final scene, the peripeteia, is not shown on the stage, but described by a 'messenger.' The fact is that the true artist, so far from being the imitator of life, endures some of his severest struggles in endeavoring to get away from life, and until he can do this he knows that his labor is all in vain."

## Chapter Ten

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### THINGS NEAR AND FAR

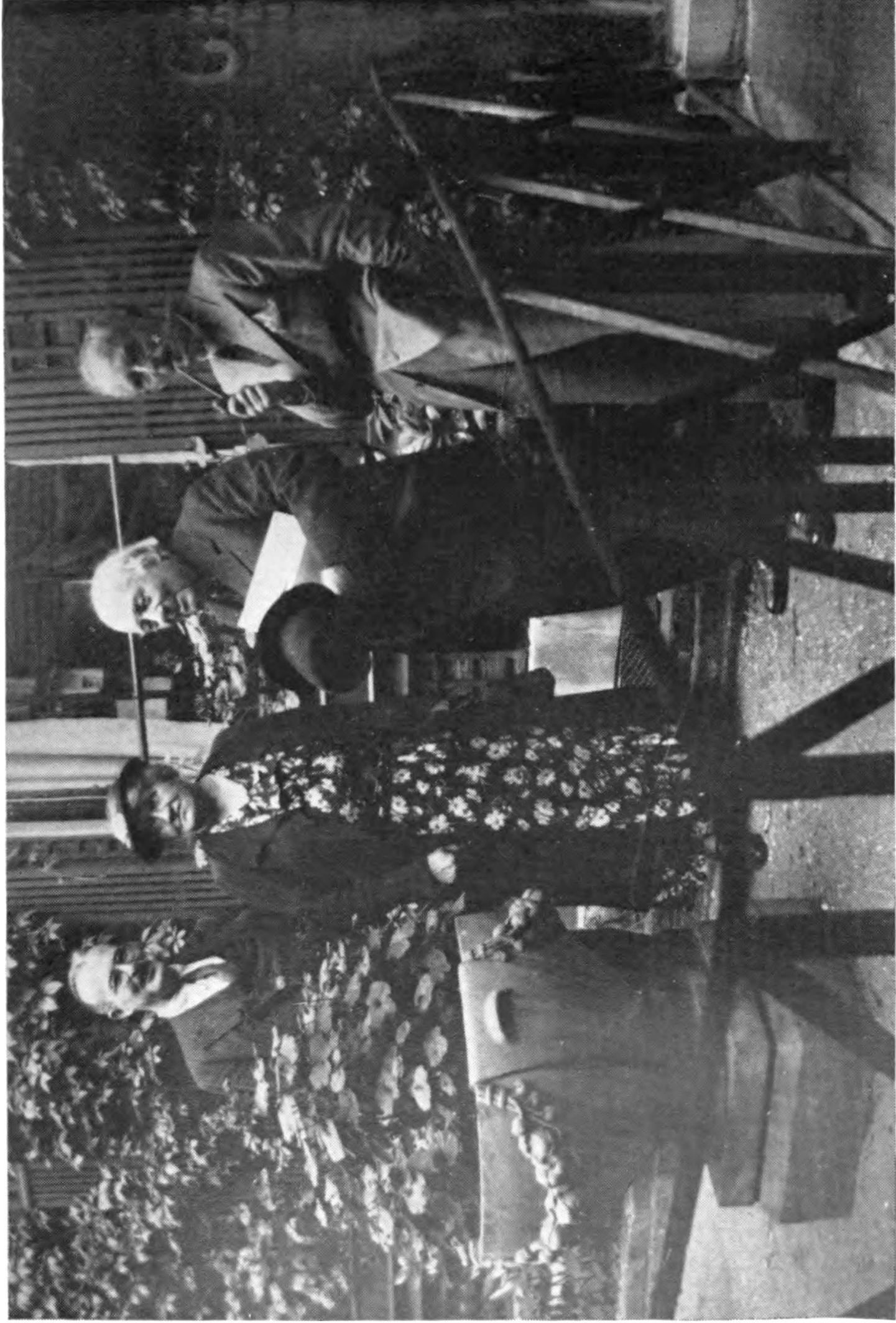
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#### 1

The original outline for this book included a chapter to be called "Hieroglyphics." This was to be composed largely of what other writers had said or written about Arthur Machen. It seemed a good title and a sound enough notion, and certainly there has been enough said and written about Machen to compose a fine chapter indeed.

And then it occurred to me that there was a rather cynical note being struck here, that the use of that particular word in such a connection might imply (and I am quite sure that at one time it was meant to imply) a certain lack of respect for some of the material to be grouped under that heading. Much has been written about Machen, not as much, certainly, as one would like to see; and some of it, unfortunately, is the sort of thing with which one cannot agree. As, for example, the views of the anonymous Manchester guardian, the reviews of some of the early books as they appeared in London newspapers, and the estimates of Miss Dorothy Scarborough in her otherwise excellent book about the supernatural elements in English literature.

On the other hand: one cannot always agree with the



**THE MACHENS IN LONDON:** Photo taken by Holbrook Jackson in 1937. Left to right, Montgomery Evans, Mr. and Mrs. Machen and Bertram Rota before whose bookshop photo was taken.

idolizers and the cultists. These are, at times, even more annoying and sometimes rather embarrassing.

The admirers of Arthur Machen are probably as heterogeneous a collection as one is likely to find anywhere outside the membership lists of the Book of the Month Club, the Literary Guild and a distinguished After Shave Club. There are, among the more ardent Arthurians, poets and pedants, dilettantes and divorcees, men of letters and three-letter men from the universities, reviewers and romanticists, critics and connoisseurs, columnists and collectors of every description—a rare assemblage that numbers sincere admirers, warm friends, not a few dreads and some drolls. Mr. Machen's works are known to the Librarians at Yale and at Stanford. They are known also to the librarians at Liggett's and Walgrens—for recently several anthologies have appeared on the forty-nine cent table and several Machen stories have made the grade in the corner drug store through the medium of the quarter pocketbooks. This is passing strange company for a man whose first editions were published in Vigo Street under the Sign of the Bodley Head and whose American triumphs were under the auspices of the aristocratic Borzoi.

Mr. Machen's published works have fared as variously. His stories have appeared in anthologies whose sales have run into thousands, and there is noted in Van Patten's bibliography a small work published in an edition of two copies.

How does one decide upon an edition of two copies? It must be admitted that, to his fervent admirers at least, the peddling of Machen to the millions along with the

malted and lunches at Liggetts is to be preferred to the arch-conservativeness that confines a Machen item to a very limited edition of two copies. It may cause shudders to run up and down the arthritic vertebrae of many a venerable Machenite to suggest such a thing, but I find myself wishing that Winchell would one day give Machen "the works." And who knows but that he may? With realism and the realists in disorder, if not retreat, in disarray if not utter rout, with realism seen from a rapidly shifting focal point, with reviewers suggesting that the work and the world of our realists may be, after all, allegory—who knows but the Sunday Night Sage may not admonish Americans from coast to coast to demand from their bookseller a copy of *Dog and Duck*, or the *Anatomy of Tobacco* (LSMFT) or even *Hieroglyphics*?

Such unscholarly suggestions may seem unworthy, may even draw the fire of many Machenites who will deeply resent such facetious flippancy—but they are offered merely as an antidote to the equally absurd and equally unworthy tactics of some collectors who come to praise and to bury Machen in the same devout breath.

I must confess that, while I envy certain men and mausoleums the possession of many a Machen item, I am pleased beyond measure to find *The Great God Pan* or *The Cosy Room* or *The Novel of the White Powder* in the gaudiest, grizzliest anthology of horror stories displayed for the delight of the drug store trade.

However, to return to the Arthurians, whether of the cultivated or the common garden variety. The response to a prospectus describing this volume when it was in its pro-



jected state was enlightening. There were letters on fine paper bearing the crests of famous colleges and libraries, there were scribbled notes from, obviously, "stfans" in Kansas City, Dallas, Scranton and the Coast. These letters did affect the construction of this book in one important respect. I determined then to add to the book a bibliography that would direct the reader of Machen to the stories and essays of Machen wherever they may be found. The scholars and the specialists know in which vaults the more valuable manuscripts are under lock and key. Let them rest in peace. One day, perhaps, they will be released and they will be read as it was intended, by the man who wrote them, that they should be. Meanwhile it may be amusing to compile a list of the unlikely and out of the way corners of literature in which there are mentions of Machen—and to the true Machenite the mere mention of Machen is rewarding.

We've wandered from Wilde to Winchell, but there are many more unexpected encounters awaiting the ardent Arthurian. For example, Tiffany Thayer, *enfant terrible* of the late Twenties and early Thirties, whose books were rather lurid things, made use of Machen in certain passages. We find, if we dredge deep enough, a passing reference to Machen, and one that might conceivably outrage the true believer.

An even more strange, and not too flattering, reference is found in one of the books of William Seabrooke. Mr. Seabrooke, who visited strange places and saw strange things, once visited, as a client, and I violate no confidence, an asylum. Since Mr. Seabrooke wrote a book about his

experiences therein, any hesitation on my part would be a needless delicacy.

Mr. Seabrooke's mention of Machen is even given a title: *Self-Portrait of a Dementia Praecox Case on First Reading the works of Machen*. The "self-portrait" follows: "Sweet spirits of my own dementia praecox! womb-wailing guide calls reechoing throughout sub-cavernousterraneous! fuga, fugae. Corncopios fugalations in depths arbeitung verstaltheight . . . I have just read *The Hill of Dreams!* By the brazen buttocks of that brimstone bellona who lolls in lakes of lava, never in my life have I read or even imagined that such a piece of escapist literature existed. He is superior to Dunsany and to Algernon Blackwood who though almost not an escapist may be classed with them. The book is filled with black magic. The man's powers of psychotic invention are almost unbelievable and his familiarity with certain phenomena of abnormal psychology is creepy. Are you acquainted with Tchaikovski's scherzi? especially the waltz-scherzo of his Fifth? It moves in this same weird, uncanny way. Now I wish I were dead. . . ."

Seabrooke's d.p. exhibits astonishing lucidity toward the end, is apparently versed in intellectual small talk, and displays a familiarity with the works of James Joyce as well.

It is sometimes fascinating to compare different reactions to certain of Machen's tales. Basil Davenport writing in the *Saturday Review* some years ago noted: ". . . there are some stories which portray a non-moral fall into a moral gulf; someone's foot quite innocently slips, and there is no stopping above the bottom of hell . . . that is what makes Mr. Arthur Machen's stories supreme of

their kind . . . and such a story of irrational, irresistible temptation as Mr. Machen's *The White People* . . . about a little girl whose nurse happens to be a witch, and who becomes a devil-worshipper without the least idea of what she is doing." Carl Van Vechten says of this same story: "Was ever a more malignantly depraved story written than *The White People* (which it might be profitable to compare with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*?)."

Mr. Carl Van Vechten's *Peter Whiffle* probably did as much to popularize Arthur Machen in the Twenties as any score of reviewers, but it also had the effect of rarifying Machen and conditioning him for a specific audience. It was Mr. Van Vechten's (or rather, Peter's) audience more than it was Machen's. It was this audience, I think, that prompted Walter Winchell to report, breathlessly, that Arthur Machen was "tops among the literati." Peter was a delightfully "naughty" character—there were so many of them in the Twenties! When he spoke of Machen he was speaking mostly about Peter. Nevertheless he was an able press agent. Said Peter, in part, and to paraphrase a phrase, we quote:

"It is a byword of the day that one only takes from a work of art what one brings to it, and how few readers can bring to Machen the requisite qualities, how few readers have gnosis! Machen evokes beauty out of horror, mystery and terror. He suggests the extremes of the terrible, the vicious, the most evil, by never describing them. His very reserve conveys the infinity of abomination. . . . But his expression soars so high, there is such ecstasy in his prose, that we are not meanly thrilled or revolted by his

necromancy; rather we are uplifted and exalted by his suggestion of impurity and corruption, which leads us to ponder over the mysterious connection between man's religious and sensual natures." From this point on Peter's bizarre rhapsody over Machen includes references to so many Florentine painters, Arabian necromancers, Asiatic messiahs and French Symbolistes that the average Machenite loses sight of his idol in the confusing blaze of intellectual pyrotechnics.

## 2

And then we have the testimony of C. Lewis Hind, a sort of literary journalist who once saw Machen plain. Mr. Hind did essays and sketches of literary people about London and collected them into books called *Authors and I* and *More Authors and I*. He remembers having met Machen once at a dinner given for Sir Frank Benson and members of his Shakespearean Repertoire Company; he also recalls having seen Machen "slouching through the interminable corridors of the Evening News."

An article on Machen, published in one of his collections, he credits to a letter from Vincent Starrett. Mr. Starrett's enthusiasm apparently moved Hind to do a piece on Mr. Machen. The encounter described in the article was, apparently, a chance encounter of the sort in which Machen himself delighted.

Mr. Hind had gone, one evening, to call upon an acquaintance who lived in one of the London Inns of Court. While he was peering at the names inscribed on the oak door the door was opened—by Arthur Machen! "My friend was not in, but the author of *Hieroglyphics*

and I had some good, rapid talk. He is an admirable monologist when in the mood (see *Hieroglyphics*). For some reason or other I have a vivid recollection of that brief encounter—the open door, the snug room beyond, the books and a lamp, warmth and stillness, and Arthur Machen standing in the passage—smiling and talking, ready to talk but also ready to go back to his folios.”

—Machen was, according to Mr. Hind, “a heavily built man, with a large genial, yet brooding, clean-shaven face; a good companion, I think, but one who keeps many of his thoughts to himself.” Mr. Hind was, in short, charmed and impressed, but he obviously did not consider Arthur Machen a V.I.P. It would be interesting to read Machen on Hind.

One of the most curious estimates of Machen is made by Professor Cornelius Weygandt in his *A Century of the English Novel*. Professor Weygandt admires Machen somewhat for his essays, and classifies him as a “lesser late Victorian” along with Baring-Gould, Quiller-Couch, Marie Corelli, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, Walter Pater and others—a very curious group indeed!

The professor devotes a full page to Machen, which is not at all bad, and well above the average, for lesser late Victorians! Machen’s great fault, the professor finds, is that he is not a story-teller, he has not taught himself the craft. He has little sense of the creation of character and his own life is, obviously, very narrow. As an essayist, however, concedes the Professor, Machen is often a bringer of delight. *The Hill of Dreams*, on the other hand, is saved

from futility only by some good writing. So sayeth Professor Weygandt.

Wagenknecht, in his *Cavalcade of the English Novel*, is much more to my taste than the austere professor. He introduces Machen as "one of the most remarkable examples of sustained devotion to creative work in literary history." He finds that Machen reveals a gift for breathless narrative to match LeFanu's, but he feels that this quality is lacking in the book generally regarded as Machen's masterpiece—*The Hill of Dreams*. Nevertheless, Wagenknecht considers Machen "important," he rates him with Blackwood and de la Mare, and has included Machen's *The Terror* in his collection *Six Novels of the Supernatural* published a few years ago by Viking.

### 3

The student of Machen is not content to have read everything Machen has ever written (and there are few who have), he must also read everything that has ever been written about Arthur Machen. He may begin, naturally enough, with a study of the period in which Machen first appears. There have been quite a few books written about the Nineties, these unaccountably yield but little material on Machen. Richard LeGallienne, Holbrook Jackson and Osbert Burdett, whose studies of that period are very carefully written and copiously annotated, scarcely mention Machen at all.

One then moves on to memoirs and biographies of the men who lived and wrote in this period, and even consults the critical studies on the whole vast subject of English literature. One picks up dozens of such books and soon

develops the habit of examining them from the back cover forward, for a glance at the index reveals whether the book is worth while, from this viewpoint, or not. Too often one finds mention of Macaulay, Lord; MacCarthy, Desmond; MacLeod, Fiona; even Mackenzie, Compton—but few are the mentions of Machen.

One finds too that the index of a book can be a very revealing thing indeed. We have before us, for example the memoirs of a Literary Figure of, let us say, the 1890's and the early 1900's. The index indicates that our man knew everyone worth knowing. We find Shaw and More, Shelley and Kelley, Shakespeare, Rossetti and Donne, Keats and Yeats, Whistler and Wilde, Moore and Hardy and a generous sprinkling of the nobility. It would seem, from the index, that our man lived a very full and eventful life, that he was close, as they say, to the heart of things.

The book itself is rather likely to be pretty dull stuff—mostly about our man's preoccupation with his public school and his dislike of games, the amazing and discouraging tenacity with which his great aunt in Bath clung to life, the duplicity of publishers and the simply astonishing things that can and do befall an Englishman in Naples, Nice or Florence. Throughout the book, however, one encounters reports of what Whistler said to Pennell or Pater or both; what G.B.S. wrote to the brash American journalist and how Lord Lymph responded to a quip tossed out by Lord Lissom. Hence the index. One can only conclude that reviewers, and possibly publishers, read the index more carefully than the book itself.

Occasionally, however, the slow unrewarding progress

through the shelves of the public library does yield a choice bit or two and these, be it noted, more frequently in books by Americans than by Englishmen.

Mr. Grant Richards who wrote in 1895 to Arthur Machen asking if he had anything he would care to have published, has written at least two books of his experiences as one of England's most enterprising publishers. Neither of them contained a single mention of Arthur Machen although Richards published several of Machen's books, and at a time when Machen's name was certainly an asset to any publisher's list.

The index of Richards' book about A. E. Housman (Oxford, 1942) arouses hope. There are three references to Machen. The first of these is contained in a letter from Housman to Richards. The context, in full, follows: "I don't think Machen ought to drink port on the top of Burgundy." One may wonder, one is tantalized, by the implications of that brief note. Does it imply that Machen did drink port on top of Burgundy—or that he merely contemplated doing so or sought advice on the advisability. If he did, were the results memorable, and in what respect? Does it imply that Housman is a purist in these matters? A Tory in tippling? Does it hint at "an incident"?

Another reference is even more brief and profoundly unimportant. "We know too that Housman read Arthur Machen and Frederick Baron Corvo." The most significant entry is this, from another Housman letter: "Thanks to you, I believe I possess Machen's complete works. He is always interesting (except in the *Evening News*) and to some extent good. Mixing up religion and sexuality is not a



thing I am fond of, and in this book the Welsh element rather annoys me. The imitation of Rabelais is very clever."

We know, at any rate, that Housman read Machen, quite a bit of him. He was not fond of the Welsh, nor of mixing religion and sexuality nor, for that matter, of mixing port and burgundy.

What we would like most to know from Mr. Richards, I think, is why it took him ten years to change his mind about *The Hill of Dreams*, and why he changed it when he did. Of this, unfortunately, we have no hint.

The Machen revival of the Twenties lasted through to the end of the decade and, to some, to the end of an era. Machen appeared at rare intervals in public life, preferring the countryside of Wales and the company of his friends, a great many of them Americans. Paul Jordan-Smith and Robert Hillyer and Montgomery Evans have given us sketches of Machen through this period. For the most part, however, his work was done. In the early Thirties Machen wrote a novel, *The Green Round*. It has not yet been published in this country nor is it very well known. Machen says it is "sorry stuff." As for *Tom O'Bedlam*, it was an essay "written to order of an American." Machen never saw the book in print.

In 1936 there was a brief revival of interest in Machen occasioned by the publication of two collections of his stories and essays. Hutchinson brought out *The Children of the Pool* in which there appeared seven stories not previously collected. Rich and Cowan brought out a collection called *The Cosy Room*, consisting of essays and stories collected over a period from the late 1880's to the late

1920's. Each of the pieces included in this collection is given a date—apparently the year in which it was written. Some of the dates supplied, presumably by Machen, give rise to bibliographical speculation. Most of these pieces had been published elsewhere although some of them, obviously “the wreckage of discarded and abandoned books,” appeared in print for the first time.

The dust-jacket of Hutchinson's *Children of the Pool* carried an “Appreciation” of Machen, one of the finest and most admirable I have ever encountered. To find it on, of all places, a dust-jacket! This is no publisher's blurb but an analysis that deserves to be included in this or any book about Machen. The author of the following tribute is unknown, to me at least: “Mr. Machen creates his own world. This world is a fusion of the world that is accepted in every day reality—in which events and their causes are explicable by traditional and hum-drum interpretations—and one that is distinguished not only by the weird and extraordinary effects. The author does not try to present a state of affairs so topsy-turvy and bizarre that you are intrigued merely by its very madness. The supernatural insinuates itself subtly into these stories. They have an air of common reality until the author develops their mystical undercurrents. And in this blending Mr. Machen's art is supreme. It has an infinite capacity for producing what E. J. O'Brien describes as “a willing suspension of disbelief” [*this fine phrase has also been attributed to Dr. Canby, Bennet Cerf and, of course, Samuel Taylor Coleridge*]. That Mr. Machen's faculty in this direction can extend beyond the circle of sympathetic readers and convince masses has been proved by the

fact that his imaginative treatment of a very famous occasion was accepted by thousands of men and women as literal description. These stories offer varied excursions into realms simultaneously unfathomable and alluring, and on that account alone they are memorable. But there is also Mr. Machen's craftsmanship, and his style which is a delight to read. A character in the book says: 'A man must know the grammar of his business, whatever it is; the rest, if it is to be the first order, must be the work of the hidden flame within.' "

Now and then Machen did an introduction or preface for a book or collection, none of them are of particular importance as Machen "items." In 1937 Hutchinson brought out Philip Sergeant's *Witches and Warlocks* with a preface by Machen. The book was, according to the publisher, suggested to Sergeant by his old friend Arthur Machen. In his introduction Machen quotes some of the theories expressed in *The White People* and *The Great God Pan*. He hints, in other words, and in justification of his friend's labours, that there are more things in heaven and earth than mere hawks and handsaws.

## 4

In the years since the publication of the "yellow books" by Knopf and the attendant enthusiasm for his works, Arthur Machen has been very little in the public eye. The Machen vogue of the 1920's seemed to exhaust itself almost as soon as the Knopf editions were exhausted. The Caerleon Edition, published in 1923 by Secker in London, quickly disappeared, and we entered once again upon a lengthy period of "neglect".

Actually, Machen has not been as neglected as we might suppose. It is true that he has not been accorded the recognition that is his due, but there are hundreds, possibly thousands, who have never neglected nor forgotten Machen. The late Alfred Goldsmith, one of New York's most amiable booksellers, wrote me, a year or two ago, that there is and always has been a constant, if small, demand for his books. Ben Abramson of the famed Argus Book Shop has his North Wall addicts who are always eager for Machen items. August Derleth, the one-man wonder of mid-western publishing circles, knows the value of a Machen story in a collection issuing from Arkham House. A new generation of booksellers on New York's Fourth Avenue know Machen by reputation, even though many of them have never seen one of the eagerly sought-after books.

Machen himself went into retirement some years ago. For years there were gatherings at his home in St. John's Wood, gay parties attended by writers and theatrical people and journalists—and Americans. Machen has always had a tremendous appeal for Americans—possibly because of our Hawthorne and Poe, and possibly because we managed to avoid the stagy school of the Gothic novelists which he so disliked. And Machen liked Americans, too, as Robert Hillyer related in his *Atlantic* article. It pleased Machen that the majority of the letters he received about his works were from Americans. On one occasion he told Hillyer he would consider it a compliment to be taken "into the fold as a fellow American."

Later, when Machen retired to Wales, there were

picnics on the cliffs overlooking the sea. Robert Hillyer has given us an amusing account of one of these festive occasions in his recent article on Machen. With the coming of the war these visits were impossible, of course. Montgomery Evans, late of the U. S. Army, member of the Salmagundi Club and resident of Greenwich, was the last of Machen's visitors before the war.

Evans had known Machen since 1923. It was his pleasant practice to give parties with the Machens on such American occasions as the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving. These parties promoted Anglo-American understanding with "American food and French wine" and such guests as Augustus John, Holbrooke Jackson, Tommy Earp and others. Evans happened to be again in England when World War II broke out. Machen had written an introduction for a book Evans was about to publish. Book and introduction went to the bottom of the North Atlantic with the torpedoed *Athenia* as Evans was bound for home when the war was only a few days old.

Throughout the dark years of the war Machen corresponded with his American friends—Evans, Jordan-Smith, Goldsmith and others. These were unhappy days: Machen's health was poor, his eyesight was failing rapidly, his son Hilary was in a German prison camp, letters were few and far between and Machen too old to contrive legends as he had done in the darker days of 1915.

After the war Machen was placed on the King's List—the result of a movement instituted largely through the efforts of Montgomery Evans. In a letter to Robert Hillyer Machen wrote: "Our gracious Sovereign, King George the

Fifth, out of his great bounty and kindness, has awarded me a pension."

Mr. Hillyer's reflection at this news is worth repeating here: "I had a vision of the fine old man in Bardic raiment, receiving a bag of gold from a mediaeval monarch clad in ermine and silks and with a golden crown on his head."

Machen's Street Fleet days were over now, he no longer appeared, a Johnstonian figure, in the streets of London, nor was he ever again to impersonate the great Doctor in pageants. There were occasional articles in magazines and one last book, *The Holy Terrors*, published in 1946.

With the close of the war, correspondence was resumed on a more regular schedule. Machen was failing badly, his eyesight was almost gone, his hand had lost its grace but his letters were, as Montgomery Evans notes, "as charming and Johnstonian as ever." Hilary had been released from the Germans and returned home. Scarcely had the family been reunited at Amersham, however, when another blow fell—Machen's wife died. This "ample, easy-going, good natured woman," as Hillyer describes her, meant much to Machen and their two children. She was, she must have been, a woman of great understanding and of infinite patience. She accepted poverty, hoping always for the recognition she felt was her husband's due. And of course she knew, as well as he, that what he wrote might interest, at most, comparatively few. After her death Machen declined rapidly. His letters had to be written by his son, but the mind that composed them was still that of "the greatest master of English prose in our time." Then, in the closing

days of the year 1947, in a private hospital in Beaconsfield, Arthur Machen died at the age of 84.

Machen's passing was not unnoticed. *The New York Times* (Dec. 16, 1947) printed his photograph and an obituary under the heading: "Author of the Story That Led to 'Angel of Mons' Legend Dies at 84—Won Success at 60." A few other papers in the country carried similar stories—there were no bulletins, no eulogies by electronic commentators. Subscribers to the *Atlantic Monthly* probably recalled Robery Hillyer's article on Machen in the May issue. Letters passed between friends expressing regret for there were, as Nathan Van Patten wrote, "some who mourn."

Chief among these, perhaps, are the members of the Arthur Machen Society. This Society was formed early in the spring of 1948 by Nathan Van Patten, Vincent Starrett, Paul Jordan-Smith, Carl Van Vechten, Montgomery Evans, Robert Hillyer (all names that will long be associated with Machen) as well as August Derleth, Joseph Vodrey, Ben Abramson, James T. Babb, William P. Wreden, Frederick Coykendall, Cyril Clemens, Gilbert Seldes, Ashton Stevens and a score of comparative newcomers in the great society of the admirers of Arthur Machen.

This is an informal group which hopes, in the words of its president, Mr. Van Patten, to stimulate an interest in Arthur Machen's work. There is to be an exchange of information and privately printed Machen material, with possibly an annual or quarterly publication.

In the summer of 1948 Alfred Knopf issued *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural*, the largest and the best col-

lection of Machen's stories ever published. Edited by Philip Van Doren Stern, it included a reprint of Hillyer's *Atlantic* article. The book was reviewed with interest by Orville Prescott and John Dickinson Carr in the *Times*. *The Nation's* reviewer thought the atmosphere of the tales did not "compensate for his failure to explain the inexplicable." Mr. Knopf's ad-men, applying modern techniques, exhorted readers to "remember Machen, it rhymes with crackin'."

The Arthur Machen Society has already begun to make good its promise to stimulate interest in Arthur Machen:

Mr. Joseph Kelly Vodrey of Canton, Ohio, a specialist in Machen bibliography, has printed and distributed to the members of the Society a booklet: *There Are Some Who Mourn*, written by Nathan Van Patten.

Mr. Van Patten, a distinguished professor of bibliography at Stanford University and dean of Machenites, has printed a handsome booklet, limited to fifty copies, of Arthur Machen's *The Gray's Inn Coffee House*.

There will be others. At long last something is being done to right the wrongs of which Mr. Cabell wrote so many years ago.



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## EPILOGUE

One might devote a great amount of time and give considerable thought to the final pages of a book about Arthur Machen. It is not easy for anyone who admires Machen to leave off talking or writing about him.

This book was planned and begun while Arthur Machen still lived. He knew of its creation, its aims and its purpose, and he gave the book his "plenary blessings." The early chapters were sent in galley form to Amersham. Machen read the proofs or, his sight failing badly, had them read to him by his son Hilary. The proofs were returned with a little note and sometimes with comments or corrections written in the margins.

I have hoped many things for this book—that it would arouse more interest in Machen, that it would bring about a great revival of reading his books. He has been sadly neglected as a writer, we all feel that, and yet Machen writes: "I question whether what you call the neglect of my work is due to any fault of publishers or public—the real cause of it, I believe, is the fact that I have been interested as a writer in a variety of things which only interest a few people. This is a matter of individual constitution: it is incurable."

We who are incurable, and we are not few, can only hope to interest many people in the variety of things about which Arthur Machen wrote.

FINIS

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*"I am sure that Bibliography is a capital game, but it is not my game."—Arthur Machen*

*"I don't care two pence whether a book is in the first edition or in the tenth, nay, if the tenth is the best edition I would rather have it."*

*—Arthur Machen*

A complete and comprehensive and correct bibliography of the works of Arthur Machen would be a wondrous work indeed. It would include such important matters as colors of cloths and types of bindings, the number of pages and the presence of prefaces and plates. It would, one hopes, clearly indicate such dates as were of importance and many other fascinating facts to delight and bedazzle the bibliographer.

There is no such bibliography of the works of Arthur Machen in existence, nor does this one pretend or propose to fill that need. What is also needed, however, and by readers rather than collectors, is a complete listing of the works of Machen, together with notes on their appearance in print and clues to their possible location. Such a listing presents certain typographical problems which I have tried to work out without having to resort to the cabalistic symbols common to certain catalogues and all time tables.

It is my belief that people who like to read Machen like also to read about Machen, therefore I have added a listing of books and articles in which there appears more

than a mere mention of Arthur Machen. Furthermore, since I feel that I have not listed all of these, nor all the Works for that matter, I have provided several blank pages for the use of the eventual owner of this book. Such additional information as he may gather may be entered on these pages under the general heading of "Notes."

This then is the purpose of the unconventional bibliography that follows: to lead and direct the general reader to the work of Arthur Machen, and to direct him to certain books and sources in which may be found material of interest to the admirers of Arthur Machen.

## THE ESSAYS:

The Essays of Arthur Machen are listed alphabetically below. Machen was, for many years, a practicing journalist, writing for many papers and journals. Obviously not all of his pieces, nor even all of the best of his pieces, have appeared in book form. Obviously, too, it is impossible for anyone to obtain copies of the many papers for which he wrote, or even of the various journals and magazine-listed herein. This listing is therefore far from being complete—it lists only those pieces which are available, or should be, or have been, in print. Many of these pieces are undated, except as having appeared between dates that may be a decade apart. This is, unfortunately, unavoidable. There is little we can do about it, except to suggest that someone establish a Fellowship for the sole purpose of investigating and excavating the complete published works of Arthur Machen.

**ADELPHI, FAREWELL!** an essay first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, appears also in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, London, 1924 and Alfred Knopf, New York, 1924.

**ADVENTURE OF THE LONG LOST BROTHER**, an essay first published in the London *GRAPHIC*, appears also in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, London, 1926 and Knopf, New York, 1927.

**APOSTOLIC IDEAL, THE**, an essay, first publication (?), appears in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Covici-McGee, Chicago, 1924.

**APRIL FOOL!** an essay first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, also in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.

**ARS ARTIUM**, an essay, first published (?), appears in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Covici-McGee, Chicago, 1923.

**ART OF DICKENS, THE**, an essay, first published (1910?), appears in *THE WAVE*, Chicago, 1922. Also in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Covici-McGee, Chicago, 1923.

**ART OF UNBELIEF, THE**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL* but rejected. Appears in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.

**BEFORE WEMBLEY**, an essay written for the London *GRAPHIC*, appears also in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.

**BOWMEN AND OTHER NOBLE GHOSTS, THE**, a group of essays relating to the story, *THE BOWMEN*, appears in the Simpkins, Marshall 1915 edition, of which there were two issues, and the Putnam 1915 edition.

- CAMPDEN WONDER, an essay written for the London *GRAPHIC*, also in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- CASANOVA IN LONDON, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, appears in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- CEREMONY ON THE SCAFFOLD, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, also appears in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- "CHARACTERS," an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, also appears in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- CHIVALRY, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- CHRISTMAS MUMMING, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, appears also in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- CONCERNING COCKTAILS, an article written for *BOOK NOTES*, London, April, 1928.
- CONJURING TIME, essay, first published (?), appears in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- "CONSOLATUS" AND "CHURCH MEMBER," an essay, first appearance in Vincent Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- CUSTOM OF THE MANOR, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- DARK AGES, THE, an essay, first appearance (?). Appears in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- DEADLY NEVERGREEN, an essay written for the London *GRAPHIC*, also included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- DISSENTING LOGIC, an essay, first appearance (?). Included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- DOG AND DUCK, an essay and a punch made famous by Machen. Also title of a collection of essays originally written for the *LYONS MAIL*. Published by Cape, London, 1924 and Knopf, New York, 1924.
- DOUBLES IN CRIME, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- ECCLESIA ANGELICANA, (I-II), essays first published (?), included in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATED, an essay, first published in Starrett's *SHINING PYRAMID*, Covici-McGee, Chicago, 1923. Also appears in Knopf's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, 1925.
- ENGLISH AND IRISH, an essay included in Vincent Starrett's collection, *ET CETERA*, Chicago, 1922.

- EUSTON SQUARE MYSTERY, THE**, an essay first published in the *GRAPHIC*, also included in *DREAMS AND DREAMS*, Secker, 1926; Knopf, 1927.
- FAITH AND CONDUCT**, an essay first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- FALSE PROPHETS**, an essay first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- FRAGMENTS OF PAPER**, an essay first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- GRAY'S INN COFFEE HOUSE, THE**, an essay by Machen, appeared in "Wine and Food," London, 1938. Published for Members of Arthur Machen Society, by Nathan Van Patten, Stanford, 1949.
- HAPPINESS AND HORROR**, an essay first published (?) by Vincent Starrett in *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- HIDDEN MYSTERY THE**, an essay, first appeared in *THE ACADEMY*, London (1907?) Also in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923; *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- HIGHBURY MYSTERY, THE**, an essay written for the London *GRAPHIC* and included in *DREAMS AND DREAMS*, Secker, 1926; Knopf, 1927.
- HOW CLUBS BEGAN**, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREAMS AND DREAMS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- HOW THE RICH LIVE**, an essay appeared in the *GRAPHIC* and in *DREAMS AND DREAMS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- HOW TO SPEND CHRISTMAS**, an essay first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- IN CONVERTENDO**, an essay, first appeared in *THE ACADEMY*, London, 1907. Included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923 and Knopf, 1925. Part of the book called *THE SECRET GLORY*.
- INGENIOUS MR. BLEE, THE**, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREAMS AND DREAMS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- INTOLERANCE**, an essay first published (?), included in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- ISLINGTON MYSTERY, THE**, an essay included in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY* and in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936. Also in *BLACK CAP*, edited by Cynthia Asquith.
- JULY SPORT**, an essay first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- LA DIVE BOUTEILIE**, a fragment surviving from Machen's Rabelaisian period. Included by Starrett in his collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.

- LAMENT FOR LONDON'S LOST INNS, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC* and included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- LITTLE PEOPLE, THE, an essay, first published in the *GRAPHIC* and included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MADAM RACHEL, an essay written for the London *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MAN FROM NOWHERE, THE, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MAN WITH THE SILVER STAFF, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, also included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MANDATUM NOVISSIMUM, an essay first published (?), included in the Starrett collection, *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- MARCH AND A MORAL, first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, appears also in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- MARRIAGE OF PANURGE, an essay, first published (?), appeared in *THE WAVE*, Chicago, 1922.
- MARTINMAS, an essay, first appeared in the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
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- MERRY MONTH OF MAY, THE, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, A, an essay first appearing in the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- MODERNISM, an essay, first published (?) in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- MORDUCK THE WITCH, an essay first published in the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MORE INNS, an essay first published in the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MORNING LIGHT, THE, an essay, first published (?) included in Starrett collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- MR. LUTTERLOH, an essay first published in the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- MY MURDERER, an essay, first appearance in London, included in collection by Vincent Starrett, *ET CETERA*, Chicago, 1922.
- MYSTIC SPEECH, THE, an essay, first delivered as a lecture in London, between 1915 and 1920. Included in Knopf's edition of *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, 1922.

- NEW LAMPS FOR OLD, an essay, first published (?), included by Starrett in *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- OLD DR. MOUNSEY, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included also in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- ON HOLIDAYS, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- ON SIMMEL CAKES, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- ON VALENTINES AND OTHER THINGS, an essay published in *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- ONLY WAY, THE, an article, first published (?), appeared also in *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, New York, Feb. 16, 1924 and *THE FLYING HORSE*, 1924.
- PAGANISM, an essay included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923, first publication (?).
- POE, EDGAR ALLEN, an essay, first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- POLITE CORRESPONDENCE, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- POOR VICTORIANS, THE, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- POWER OF JARGON, THE, an essay first published in the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- REALISM AND SYMBOL, an essay first published (?) in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- ROAST GOOSE, an essay first published in the *LYONS MAIL*, also included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- SAD HAPPY RACE, an essay, reminiscent of Machen's days on the stage, first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- SANCHO PANZA AT GENEVA, an essay, first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- SANGRAAL, THE, the title of at least two essays on the Grail, one of them a reply to Alfred Nutt's "Reply to Arthur Machen," included in Starrett's *GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924, also in Knopf's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, 1925.
- SECRET LANGUAGE, A, an essay, part of the book that became *THE SECRET GLORY*, published in whole or part in *THE ACADEMY* (1907?) London, included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.



- SECRET OF THE SANGRAAL, THE**, an essay written in 1907, possibly first published by A. E. Waite, included in Knopf's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, New York, 1925.
- SEVEN-B, CONEY COURT**, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- SIR BENJAMIN, THE BARON**, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926 and Knopf, 1927.
- SIR WALTER SCOTT**, an essay contributed to W. J. Turner's collection, *GREAT NAMES*, New York, 1926.
- SIX DOZEN OF PORT**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- SOME FEBRUARY STARS**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924 and Knopf, 1924.
- SPLENDID HOLIDAY, THE**, an essay, first published (?), included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- SPLENDOR**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924; Knopf, 1924.
- ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, 1924.
- STRANGE CASE OF EMILY WESTON, THE**, an essay written for the *GRAPHIC*, included in *DREADS AND DROLLS*, Secker, 1926; Knopf, 1927.
- STRANGE ROADS**, an essay published by The Classic Press, London, 1923. Limited Edition, sketches by J. Simpson, R.B.A.
- STUFF AND SCIENCE**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape, 1924; Knopf, 1924.
- TAIK FOR TWELFTH NIGHT, A**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape and Knopf, 1924.
- THOROUGH CHANGE, A**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape and Knopf, 1924.
- THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS, THE**, an essay, first publication (?) in *THE REVIEWER*, Richmond, Virginia, 1924.
- TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE**, an essay, first publication (?), in *THE REVIEWER*, Richmond, Virginia, 1924.
- UNCONSCIOUS MAGIC**, an essay, first publication (?) included in *AMONG MY BOOKS*, by H. O. Traill, London, 1898. Also in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- VICE OF COLLECTING, THE**, an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape and Knopf, 1924.

VISION IN THE ABBEY, an essay included in *CENOTAPH*, edited by Moulton, published in London by Cape, 1923.

WHERE ARE THE FOGS OF YESTERYEAR? an essay, written for the *LYONS MAIL* and included in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape and Knopf, 1924.

WHY NEW YEAR? an essay written for the *LYONS MAIL*, included also in *DOG AND DUCK*, Cape and Knopf, 1924.

WITH THE GODS IN SPRING, an essay, rather an autobiographical sketch, published along with *STRANGE ROADS* by The Classics Press, London, 1923.

WORLD TO COME, THE, an essay, first published (?), included in Vincent Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.

### THE TALES:

The Tales of Arthur Machen including, of course, the novels, in whole and in part, are listed alphabetically below. Their appearance in various papers, journals, editions, collections and anthologies is presented as accurately as possible, in chronological order. It must be admitted that there are some matters on which even the experts differ, and some on which Machen himself differs with the experts. In such cases we have assumed an almost arbitrary attitude.

ANGELS OF MONS, THE, the tale known also as *THE BOWMEN*, title used in the Simpkin, Marshall, (London) 1915 edition; also the Putnam, New York, 1915 edition.

AWAKENING: A CHILDREN'S STORY, a tale in the manner of 1915 but written in 1930. Published in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.

BOWMEN, THE, the story of the Angels of Mons, first appeared in the London *ILLUSTRATED NEWS*, Sept. 29, 1914. Published by Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., London, 1915; Putnam, New York, 1915; also included in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* (?); in the collection *PAUSE TO WONDER*, Random House, N. Y., 1945, and *TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL*, Knopf, 1948.

BRIGHT BOY, THE, a comparatively recent tale, included in *CHILDREN OF THE POOL*, Hutchinson, London, 1936; also *TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL*, Knopf, 1948.

CANNING WONDER, THE, book-length treatment of the case of Elizabeth Canning. Published first by Chatto & Windus, London, 1925; Knopf, 1926.

- CAPITAL LEVY, THE, a tale of the period of World War I, first published in Vincent Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- CEREMONY, THE, fragment of one of the novels, written in 1897, published in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- CHANGE, one of the more recent tales, included in *CHILDREN OF THE POOL*, Hutchinson, London, 1936. Also included in *TERROR BY NIGHT*, Avon Publishing Co., 1947.
- CHILDREN OF THE POOL, title story of collection published by Hutchinson, London, 1936. Also appears in *TALES*, Knopf, 1948.
- CHRONICLE OF CLEMENDY, THE, The History of the IX Joyous Journeys; first privately printed in 1888, included in Secker's New Adelphi Library, Vol. 28; published by Knopf in 1926.
- COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON, a Christmas story included in Rich & Cowan's collection, *THE COSY ROOM*, 1936.
- COSY ROOM, THE, title story of Rich & Cowan's collection, 1936. This story is dated 1929. Also appeared in a collection of "suspense" stories edited by Will Cuppy.
- DAZZLING LIGHT, THE, one of the legends of the war written for the London *EVENING NEWS*, also in the 1915 edition of *THE BOWMEN*.
- DOUBLE RETURN, A, one of the earliest tales, appeared first in the *ST. JAMES GAZETTE*, London, 1890; included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, 1936.
- DRAKE'S DRUM, one of the legends of the War, written in 1919, first appeared in *THE OUTLOOK*, London, 1919. Included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923 and *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- EXALTED OMEGA, THE, published in Hutchinson's 1936 collection, *CHILDREN OF THE POOL*, also included in August Derleth's anthology, *WHO KNOCKS*, Farrar & Rhinehart, New York, 1947.
- FRAGMENT OF LIFE, A, first called *RESURRECTIO MORTUORUM* and published in a London newspaper in the 1890's. Re-written and published in *HORLICK'S MAGAZINE* in 1904; included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Grant Richards, London, 1906, and in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS* by Knopf, New York, 1922. F. B. Millett, *CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LITERATURE*, (N.Y. 1935) mentions this title with date 1928.
- GARDEN OF AVALLAUNIUS, THE, original title of *THE HILL OF DREAMS*. First published under this title in *HORLICK'S MAGAZINE*, London, 1904, issued by Grant Richards in 1907. May have appeared in a French publication sometime between 1902 and 1907.
- GIFT OF TONGUES, THE, a recent title (1927) included in *STRANGE ASSEMBLY*, edited by Gawsorth, London, 1932. Rich & Cowan's *THE COSY ROOM*, London, 1936.

- GREAT GOD PAN, THE**, possibly the most famous of the tales, first published in *WHIRLWIND*, London, 1890. Appeared in John Lane's *KEYSTONE SERIES* as Volume V, London, 1894. A second edition in 1895, translated into the French in 1901. Included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Richards, 1906 and reprinted by Richards in 1910. Published by Simpkin, Marshall of London in 1916. Included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Knopf, 1922. Included in the *CAERLEON EDITION*, Secker, 1923. Included in *The New Adelphi Library*, Vol. 24, Secker; also appears in *GREAT TALES OF THE SUPERNATURAL*, Random House, 1941 and *TALES*, Knopf, 1948. Roberts Brothers of Boston also published it in 1894.
- GREAT RETURN, THE**, written in 1915 and first appeared as a serial in the London *EVENING NEWS*. Published by The Faith Press, London, 1915. Included in the *CAERLEON EDITION*, Secker, 1923. Also in *TALES*, Knopf, 1948.
- GREEN ROUND, THE**, a novel published by Benn, London, 1933. Has been announced for publication by August Derleth's *ARKHAM HOUSE* for 1950.
- HAPPY CHILDREN, THE**, a tale of the War period, included in *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Knopf, 1925. Also in the *TALES*, Knopf, 1948.
- HILL OF DREAMS, THE**, best known novel of Arthur Machen. See also *THE GARDEN OF AVALLAUNIUS*. Published by Grant Richards in London, 1907. Issued by Secker, 1916, reprinted 1922, 1924. Included in *The New Adelphi Library*, Vol. 32, by Secker, Dana Estes, 19-? Also by Knopf, New York, 1922.
- HOLY TERRORS, THE**, Machen's last book, published in England, 1946.
- HOLY THINGS, THE**, an early tale, written in 1897, included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924, also in Rich & Cowan's *THE COSY ROOM*, 1936.
- INMOST LIGHT, THE**, first appeared with *THE GREAT GOD PAN* in the Keynote edition, 1894. Included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Richards, London, 1906. Knopf's *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, 1922, Knopf's *TALES*, 1948.
- IRON MAID, THE**, an early tale, first appeared in the *ST. JAMES GAZETTE*, 1890, published with *THE THREE IMPOSTORS* in Keynote Series, Volume XIX, London, 1895. Included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- LOST CLUB, THE**, a tale in the Stevensonian manner, first appeared in *THE WHIRLWIND*, 1890. Included also in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923 and *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.

- MARTYR, THE, a fragment of *THE SECRET GLORY*, first appeared in *THE ACADEMY*, London (1907?). Included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.
- MIDSUMMER, a fragment of one of the Great Romances, written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- MONSTRANCE, THE, another of the legends of the War, probably written for the London *EVENING NEWS*, included in Simpkin, Marshall edition and Putnam's edition of *THE BOWMEN*, 1915.
- MUNITIONS OF WAR, written in 1915, probably for the London *EVENING NEWS*, included in *THE GHOST BOOK*, Scribners, New York, 1927. Also in *THE COSY ROOM*, London, 1936.
- N, one of the more recent tales, written about 1935. Included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936. Also in *TALES*, Knopf, 1948.
- NATURE, a fragment written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- NEW CHRISTMAS CAROL, A, a Christmas story written in 1920. Appears under this title in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936. Appears also under the title *SCROOGE: 1920*, in Starrett's collection, *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924.
- NOVEL OF THE BLACK SEAL, an episode in *THE THREE IMPOSTERS*, sometimes published separately as in Dorothy Sayer's *OMNIBUS OF CRIME* (1929); *THE TRAVELERS LIBRARY*, Somerset Maugham's anthology, Doubleday, Doran, 1933, and Knopf's *TALES*, 1948.
- NOVEL OF THE WHITE POWDER, an episode in *THE THREE IMPOSTORS*, sometimes published separately as in *TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL*, Knopf, 1948.
- OPENING THE DOOR, a story, dated 1931, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936. Also in *TRAVELLERS IN TIME*, edited by Philip Van Doren Stern, Doubleday, 1947.
- OUT OF THE EARTH, a story of the "Bowmen" period, included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923. Also in Knopf's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, 1925 and Knopf's *TALES*, 1948.
- OUT OF THE PICTURE, a tale included in *THE CHILDREN OF THE POOL*, Hutchinson, 1936. Also included in August Derleth's *THE SLEEPING AND THE DEAD*, Pellegrini & Cudahy, Chicago, 1947.
- PSYCHOLOGY, a fragment written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.

- RED HAND, THE, first appeared in *CHAPMAN'S MAGAZINE* as *THE TELLING OF MYSTERY*, London, 1895. Included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Grant Richards, London, 1906. Also in Knopf's *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, 1922 and 1928.
- RESURRECTIO MORTUORUM, a source of *A FRAGMENT OF LIFE*. First published in a "forgotten paper" in London, 1890.
- ROSE GARDEN, THE, first appearance in the *NEOLITH*, London, 1918. Also included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, Chicago, 1924. Knopf's *ORNAMENTS IN JADE* New York, 1924. Published in a limited edition by Nathan Van Patten, Stanford University. Also included in Gawsforth's *STRANGE ASSEMBLY*, London, 1932. Included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- SCROOGE: 1920, a Christmas story included in Starrett's *THE GLORIOUS MYSTERY*, 1924. See also *A NEW CHRISTMAS CAROL*.
- SECRET GLORY, THE, published by Secker, London, 1922; Knopf, New York, 1922. Two chapters appeared in *THE GYPSY*, London, 1915. Other chapters and a number of essays (In *Convertendo*, *The Martyr*, *The Hidden Mystery*) appeared also in *THE ACADEMY*, London, 1906.
- SHINING PYRAMID, THE, a story first published in *THE UNKNOWN WORLD*, London, 1895. Also in Starrett's 1923 collection, in Secker's 1925 edition and Knopf's 1925 collection of that title. Appeared also in *GREAT WEIRD STORIES*, by Neale, Duffield, 1929. Included in Knopf's *TALES*, 1948.
- SOLDIER'S REST, THE, one of the "legends of the War," written in 1915 for the London *EVENING NEWS*, included in London and New York editions of *THE BOWMEN*, 1915.
- TELLING OF A MYSTERY, THE, original title of *THE RED HAND*. Appears under that title in *CHAPMAN'S MAGAZINE*, London, 1895.
- TERROR, THE, novel first published serially in the London *EVENING NEWS* in 1917. Published by Duckworth, London, 1917, and McBride in New York, 1917. Appeared in abbreviated form in the *CENTURY MAGAZINE*. Also included in the *CAERLEON EDITION*, London, 1923. In Viking's *SIX NOVELS OF THE SUPERNATURAL*, New York, 1946. Also included in Knopf's *TALES*, 1948.
- THREE IMPOSTORS, THE, published by John Lane, Volume XIX of the Keystone Series, London, 1895; Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1895. Included in *The New Adelphi Library*, Vol. 15, Secker, London. Also by Alfred Knopf, 1922. Pocket Edition, 1928. Caerleon Edition, 1923.
- TORTURE, a fragment written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.
- TRANSMUTATIONS, THE, subtitle of *THE THREE IMPOSTORS*.

**TREE OF LIFE, THE**, a story included in *THE CHILDREN OF THE POOL*, Hutchinson, London, 1936.

**TURANIANS, THE**, a fragment written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.

**UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE, AN**, an early tale, appeared in *THE WHIRLWIND*, London, 1890.

**WHITE PEOPLE, THE**, one of the early tales, first published in *HORLICK'S MAGAZINE*, London, 1899. Included in *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, Richards, 1906. Knopf's *THE HOUSE OF SOULS*, 1922 and 1928. Also in *THE HAUNTED OMNIBUS*, edited by Alexander Laing, 1937 and the *TALES*, Knopf, 1948. Caerleon Edition, 1923.

**WITCHCRAFT**, a fragment, written in 1897, included in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, 1936.

**WONDERFUL WOMAN, A**, one of the earliest tales, written for *THE WHIRLWIND*, London, 1890, included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923. Also in *THE COSY ROOM*, Rich & Cowan, London, 1936.

### TRANSLATIONS:

The translations made by Arthur Machen must certainly be listed among his major works, although they are not the most important. All of them are from the French, all of them were made early in his career as a writer (and some of them under unusual circumstances). Of these, the most important is his translation of the *Memoirs of the redoubtable Casanova*. The listing that follows is not complete, I am quite sure that *Heptameron* and the *Memoirs*, at least, have appeared in many editions of which I have not heard and which may not be credited to Machen.

**CASANOVA, MEMOIRS OF**, translation made by Machen as part of his "duties" while working for a London bookseller. Privately published in London, 1894. Also published by L. C. Page, Boston, 1903; Knopf, New York, 1929.

**CASANOVA'S ESCAPE FROM THE LEADS**, published in London in 1925 and by Knopf, New York, 1925.

**FANTASTIC TALES**, Machen's translation of Beroalde de Verville's "Le Moyen de Parvenir." Privately printed at "Carbonnek" (James Wade, London), 1890.

FORTUNATE LOVERS, THE, described by Machen as a "drawing room edition" of the *HEPTAMERON*. Published by Redway, London, 1887.

HEPTAMERON, THE, translation of the memoirs of Marguerite, Queen of Naarre. Privately printed by the Dryden Press, 1886. Issued by Knopf, New York, 1924. There are other editions.

WAY TO ATTAIN, THE, a portion of Broalde de Verville's "Le Moyen de Parvenir" or *FANTASTIC TALES*, published in 1889 by Dryden Press.

REMARKS UPON HERMODACTYLUS, translated by Machen from the French of Lady Hester Stanhope. Published in 1933.

### MISCELLANEOUS:

The man of letters, the practicing man of letters that is, finds himself doing all sorts of things in the practice of his trade. Machen was a working man of letters for most of his eighty-odd years. He wrote articles and "leaders" and "turn-overs" and "fills" and many another journalistic oddity. He composed calendars and catalogues in his time and, I daresay, book reviews. To attempt to collect or to list all of this material would be to display the Machen-mania in its most advanced stages.

This classification seems to me a proper one in which to include, for example, Machen's first published work, the elusive *Eleusinia*, the classic *Hieroglyphics*, the autobiographical books and the collections of his works, certain prefaces and introductions and one or two of the better known catalogues and "fugitive pieces," to use a rather pedantic term. I am being, I suppose, rather arbitrary here too, but I do not consider that every "fugitive piece" is worthy of the chase.

ANATOMY OF TOBACCO, THE, by Leolinus Siluriensis, published by George Redway, London, 1884 and Knopf, New York, 1925.

CADBY HALL, important mostly as a curiosity, an advertising booklet written for a London Confectioner.

COLLECTOR'S CRAFT, THE, written as a supplement for a catalogue of rare books issued by First Edition Bookshop, London, 1923. Afterwards reprinted in limited edition as a booklet. Appeared also in *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, New York, October, 1923.



- CONFESSIONS OF A LITERARY MAN, articles appeared serially in the London *EVENING NEWS*, March to June, 1915. Published by Secker, 1922 and Knopf, 1922, as *FAR OFF THINGS*.
- DOG AND DUCK, title of a collection of essays and sketches, originally written for the *LYONS MAIL* and published in 1924 by Cape of London and Knopf of New York. Contents listed separately under "Essays."
- DR. STIGGINS, a book subtitled: His Views and Principles. Published by Griffiths, London, 1906 and Knopf, 1925.
- DREADS AND DROLLS, title of a collection of essays originally written for the London *GRAPHIC*. Published in London by Secker, 1926 and in New York by Knopf, 1927.
- ELEUSINIA: By a Former Member of H.C.S. This is Machen's first published work, a 16-page poem written when he was seventeen, published at Hereford in 1881. Only one copy known to exist.
- FAR OFF THINGS, one of Machen's three autobiographical books. Published serially as "Confessions of a Literary Man." Secker of London issued large paper and ordinary editions in 1922. Later reprinted by Secker in New Adelphi Library, Vol. 2. Also published by Knopf in 1922.
- GLORIOUS MYSTERY, THE, a collection, published in Chicago in 1924 by Covici-McGee. Contained material from old newspapers, periodicals and manuscripts. Authorized, according to Vincent Starrett by Machen.
- GRAND TROUVAILLE, THE, subtitled: A Legend of Pentonville. 3-page introduction to a catalogue of rare books issued by the First Edition Bookshop of London, 1923. Subsequently issued as a pamphlet in a limited edition.
- HIEROGLYPHICS, a book, subtitled: A Note On Ecstasy in Literature. First published by Grant Richards in London, 1902. Re-issued by Secker in 1910. Published in New York by Knopf, 1923. Later included in The New Adelphi Library, Vol. 19, Secker, London.
- HOUSE OF SOULS, THE, a collection of Machen's best-known tales. First Published by Grant Richards in 1906, issued also by Dana Estes. Published in New York by Knopf, 1922, Pocket Edition by Knopf, 1928. London and New York collection differ in contents.
- LONDON ADVENTURE, THE, Machen's autobiographical account following the pattern set by *FAR OFF THINGS* and *THINGS NEAR AND FAR*. First published by Secker in London, 1924, Knopf of New York, 1924.
- NOTES AND QUERIES, a collection published by Spurr & Swift, 1926.
- ORNAMENTS IN JADE, title of a collection of Machen's essays and stories published in New York in a limited edition by Knopf, 1924.
- PRECIOUS BALMS, a collection of criticisms of the work of Arthur Machen, collected by Machen and published in London in a limited edition in 1924.

**PREFACES**, written especially for the Knopf editions in the early 1920s. Most of them are rather autobiographical, all of them are authentic "firsts". The Knopf books containing these prefaces are: *The Three Impostors*, *The House of Souls*, *The Hill of Dreams*, *Dr. Stiggins*, *The Anatomy of Tobacco* and possibly one or two others. The Introduction to *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, which refers to the Starrett collection of the same name, was presumably written for the London Edition, published in London by Secker, 1925.

**PREFACES**: Machen wrote a number of introductions, prefaces and forewords for various books, translations, etc. The professional collector and bibliographer would be inclined, no doubt, to treat these in a different manner. For our purpose we find it sufficient to list them as follows under this heading:

**GHOST SHIP, THE**, by Richard Middleton, London, 1912.

**PAGEANT OF ENGLISH LANDSCAPE**. G. A. Dewar, London, 1924.

**AFTERGLOW: PASTELS OF GREECE & EGYPT**, M. S. Buck, London, 1924.

**ONE HUNDRED MERRIE AND DELIGHTFUL TALES**, translated by R. B. Douglas, Carbonnek, 1924.

**HALT IN THE GARDEN, THE**, by Robert Hillyer, London, 1925.

**PHYSIOLOGY OF TASTE, THE**, by Brillat-Savarin, London, 1925.

**DRAGON OF THE ALCHEMISTS, THE**, by Frederic Carter, London, 1926.

**MAINLY PLAYERS: BENSONIAN MEMORIES**, by Lady Benson, London, 1926.

**HUMPHRY CLINKER**, by Tobias Smollett, Modern Library, New York, 1929.

**CASANOVA LOVED HER**, by Bruno Brunelli, London, 1929.

**OUR FATHER SAN DANIEL**, by Gabriel Miro, London, 1930.

**WAY TO SUCCEED**, translation of Beroalde de Verville's *Le Moyen Parvenir* by Oliver Stonor, London, 1930.

**ABOVE THE RIVER**, by John Gawsworth, London, 1931.

**WITCHES AND WARLOCKS**, by Philip Seargeant, London, 1936.

**PRIEST AND THE BARBER, THE**, introductory matter to a pamphlet written for a bookseller (George Redway) of occult literature. Published 1887. Published in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923. The pamphlet is also known as *Don Quijote De La Mancha*.

**SHINING PYRAMID, THE**, a collection of stories and essays compiled and published by (A) Vincent Starrett and published by Covici-McGee, Chicago, 1923. (B) by Arthur Machen, differing in content, published by Secker in London, 1925 and (C) the same, published by Knopf in New York, 1925.

**SPAGYRIC QUEST OF BEROALDUS COSMOPOLITA, THE**, this is an introduction to a catalogue of books on alchemy and magic, published by Wyman & Sons, London, in 1888. Included in Starrett's *THE SHINING PYRAMID*, Chicago, 1923.

**TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL**, a collection of the best known of Machen's tales, published in 1948 by Knopf. Edited and with an Introduction by Philip Van Doren Stern. Also contains Robert Hillier's article on Machen.

**THESAURUS INCANTATUS**, title of a pamphlet, issued in 1888, catalogue of books sold by a London firm. Also known as the "Spagyric Quest" see above.

**THINGS NEAR AND FAR**, title of one of Machen's three autobiographical books. Published in London by Secker, 1923, also in *The New Adelphi Library*, Vol. 8; in New York by Knopf, 1923.

**TOM O'BEDLAM AND HIS SONG**, written for "an American gentleman" and published by the Appelicon Press in Westport, Conn., 1930.

**WAR AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**, first appeared as articles in the London *EVENING NEWS*, published by Skeffington in London, 1918.

## MORE ABOUT MACHEN

The admirers of Arthur Machen, as we have remarked before, will want to read as much about him as they possibly can. There are not too many articles or studies of Machen available. Standard reference books list Machen, of course, but few of them present more than a brief sketch. Many standard critical works mention Machen in connection with his period, the 1890's, or his genre, the supernatural tale. Book reviews have, of course, appeared by the hundreds. These might be interesting to read again, but they are unavailable. The general reader, meaning in this case, the admirer of Machen, will wish to check this listing:

## SPECIFIC

ARTICLE in "The Bookman" for July, 1925.

ARTICLE in "The Sewanee Review," July, 1924.

ARTICLE in "The Saturday Review of Literature" by Basil Davenport, "The Devil Is Not Dead," February 15, 1936.

ARTICLE in "Harper's Bazaar" by Meyer Berger, "Legends of The War," January, 1944.

ARTICLE by August Derleth in "Reading and Collecting," Ben Abramson's delightful monthly, Chicago, November, 1937.

ARTICLE in "Atlantic Monthly" by Robert Hillyer, May, 1947.

BIBLIOGRAPHY by Henry Danielson, published in London, 1923. Contains sketch of Machen by Savage, notes by Machen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY by Nathan Van Patten, appended to Derleth's article in "Reading and Collecting," Chicago, 1937.

BIBLIOGRAPHY by Nathan Van Patten, published in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 1928.

BIBLIOGRAPHY by Paul Jordan-Smith, published in "For The Love of Books," Oxford Press, New York, 1934.

SKETCH of Machen in "More Authors and I" by C. Lewis Hind, London, 1922 and Dodd, Mead, New York, 1922.

SKETCH of Machen in "Buried Caesars" by Vincent Starrett, Chicago, 1923.

SKETCH of Machen in "Excavations" by Carl Van Vechten, Knopf, New York, 1922.

SKETCH of Machen by Paul Jordan-Smith, in "On What Strange Altars," New York, 1924.

SKETCH of Machen in the Danielson Bibliography, written by Henry Savage, London, 1923.

SKETCH of Machen by St. John Adcock in "Glory That Was Grub Street" and "Gods of Modern Grub Street," London, New York, 192-?

SKETCH of Machen by Vincent Starrett, appears under title "Arthur Machen: Novelist of Ecstasy and Sin," published along with two poems by Machen, Chicago, 1918. Sketch also appears in "Buried Caesars," Covici-McGee, 1922.

### GENERAL

AFTER THE GENTEEL TRADITION, symposium edited by Malcolm Cowley.

ASYLUM by William Seabrook, contains material quoted here-in.

AUTHOR HUNTING by Grant Richards, mere mention of Machen.

BOOKS AND BATTLES, Irene and Allen Cleaton, Boston, 1937.

BEYOND LIFE by James Branch Cabell, contains Cabell's famous tribute.

CAVALCADE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL by Wagenknecht, contains several passages relating to Machen.

CENTURY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL by Cornelius Weygandt, contains a brief study of Machen and his works. Harcourt-Brace, N. Y.

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LITERATURE by Fred B. Millett, contains a brief sketch of Machen and a short bibliography. Harcourt-Brace, N. Y.

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LITERATURE by Manly and Rickert, brief sketch, bibliographical notes. Numerous references.

HOUSEMANS by Grant Richards, brief mention of Machen, quoted here-in.

INNOCENCE ABROAD by Emily Clark, Knopf, 1931. The history of "The Reviewer" (Richmond) to which Machen contributed while it was edited by Cabell, 1924-25.

LOST CHORDS by Arthur Rickett, contains a parody of Machen, "The Yellow Creeper," London, 1895.

MEN OF THE NINETIES by Bernard Muddiman, brief mention.

ON NATIVE GROUNDS by Alfred Kazin, mention of Machen in the Twenties.

ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS by Harold Begbie, an "answer" to *THE BOWMEN*, London, 1915.

SMOKE RINGS AND ROUNDELAYS, edited by Wilfred Partington, London, 1924. Contains several contributions by Machen.

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**SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE** by H. P. Lovecraft, Abrahamson, New York, 1945. Studies of most of Machen's works.

**SUPERNATURAL IN MODERN ENGLISH FICTION** by Dorothy Scarborough, New York, 1917.

**OLD GODS FALLING** by Malcolm Elwin, r ere mention, MacMillan, 1939.

**TWENTIETH CENTURY AUTHORS** by Kun z and Haycraft, a sketch and brief bibliography, New York, 19(?)

**MAINLY VICTORIAN** by S. M. Ellis, men ons Machen, London, 1925.

**SOME MODERN AUTHORS** by S. P. Mais, nentions Machen, 1923.

**WHEN I WAS A CHILD**, anthology edited by Edward Wagenknecht, contains portion of Machen's autobiography nder the title: *BOY OF CAERLEON*.

# NOTES

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