

A book review by Aleister Crowley from the December 1917 edition of The International.

The Americans by Professor Hugo Münsterberg.

It is with a somewhat sardonic smile that one reflects upon the fact presented by the existence of this book. It is not the Englishman who stretches "hands across the sea" and portrays the character and destiny of his greatly beloved cousin. It is a Prussian who gives America a patient and sympathetic understanding and elaborate study. It is difficult for an Englishman even to do so much as to read a book of this kind. I am acquainted with a number of distinguished Englishmen at the present resident in these States; and from no one of them have I ever heard a single good word for America. One went so far as to say that the sole pleasure of Englishmen in this country was to get together and abuse it. I have heard it said by one of them that the strongest passion of his lifetime of strong passions has been hatred or rather loathing for America, that this passion eats up the soul, destroys the memory of all other things and with such violence that the body itself in turn becomes sick. I have heard one master of language say that he is being irritated beyond all measure hourly by the impossibility of finding any words to express the intensity of his disgust. Yet it is to England that America innocently looks for friendship and alliance! It is against Germany that she fulminates every day in her (very-largely-English-owned) press. It is really painful to read Professor Münsterberg's book at the present juncture. He is abominably fair. Even the most glaring abuses of America, abuses which are admitted by all its own citizens he refuses to condemn. He always finds a psychological reason to explain the apparent wrong, on fundamental grounds which are in themselves profoundly and beautifully right. Similarly, in what seem to the ordinary observer to be blank spots in American culture, art, lit-

erature, pure science, and philosophy, Professor Münsterberg finds achievement even as well as promise. He must have been devoured by passionate love for the people among whom he lived and worked. One cannot say much for the quality of the gratitude displayed in return, but I feel, however, that Professor Münsterberg himself were he alive would say that this ingratitude did not matter, that his book would remain a classical investigation of American conditions, and that its influence would ultimately lead to a true assimilation between the American and Teutonic temperaments. One might say, if one wished to be epigrammatic, that the Germans are all brains and the Americans all nerves. There is surely something wrong with the world when these two organs of a microcosm are in apparent conflict. In fact, one cannot believe that it is so. The more one studies the matter from a philosophical standpoint, the more certain it becomes that the present breach of the peace is an artificial and fictitious lesion, a quarrel which does not represent even for a single moment the truth of the matter. It is unnecessary to dilate further upon the extraordinary thoroughness of Professor Münsterberg's great work. The depth of insight displayed is only what one would expect from one of the greatest psychologists of his period. The thoroughness is characteristically German. But the point of view is more than German: it is human.