

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

The Terror by Arthur Machen. McBride, New York.

I have always maintained that Arthur Machen was one of the most original and excellent minds of England. The distinction of his thought and style is one of the most unmistakable of contemporary literary phenomena. He failed somewhat to come to his full stature because of an unfortunate obsession. His reverence for antiquity is so great that he has been compelled to follow the great masters in what I may call the framework of their art. Thus he began by telling Stevenson stories, and he was obliged to give them Stevenson's sections, so that "The Three Impostors" reads like a new episode of "The Dynamiter." In particular, "Miss Leicester" or "Miss Lally" makes a very fair duplicate of Stevenson's one successful attempt to portray a woman. I was rather sorry to see Mr. Machen adventure himself in the province of scientific romance. It was only too clear that he would adopt the manner of Mr. H. G. Wells. However, his distinction has saved him from too margarine an effect. One is able to say with clear conscience that this is an excellent story, admirably written.

At the same time, one must say that this is not at all the time to have written it. The story is grossly seditious and openly pro-German. Mr. Machen, as his name implies, is, of course, himself a pure German. It is impossible to understand the stupidity of the British authorities in not having him interned, or indeed executed. It will be remembered that he furnished the basis for the fable of the "Angels of Mons," which did so much to discourage recruiting in the early days of the war. This book is equally pernicious. The catastrophe is caused, according to him, by the fact of the animals having lost their fear of and respect for man, owing to the wickedness of man, the abdication of his human sovereignty. Now, Mr.

Machen caused his catastrophe to take place in England. His characters blame the wicked Germans for everything that happened when it is really their own fault. That Satanic Teutonic subtlety! Mr. Machen's book elaborates this thesis. "In England, men have become the equivalent of beasts. In Germany, however, there are no troubles of any kind. Germany has not lost its moral superiority to the lower animals."

We are unfortunately not in possession of the checks which must have been paid to Mr. Machen by the Huns, but it is not a case where one needs to wait for further evidence. He should be shot at sunrise and no more ado about it. — C. M. (of the Supervigilantes).