

Mr. Machen Alchemizes in Print

"Ornaments in Jade" a Subtle and Flusive Literary Exotic

ORNAMENTS IN JADE. By Arthur Machen. 48 pp. (large). Edition limited to 1,000 copies. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

IT will be recalled that Arthur Machen is one of England's recent literary discoveries, although the bulk of Mr. Machen's work was done during the last decade of the preceding century. And we say "discoveries" advisedly. It would have been possible to say re-discoveries, but it would not have been accurate. At the time Mr. Machen was at the height of his literary endeavors he was known to but very few. England as a whole, and likewise America, knew him not at all. And the reason was that Machen's many likenesses to Stevenson—although there were as many and as sharply pronounced points of difference—caused him to be completely obscured by his greater contemporary. Thus it is only of late years that Machen has come to his own and has reaped any part of the honor that was his due.

But Arthur Machen has not been entirely content with late garnered fame, and in a little book to which he gives the cryptic title "Ornaments in Jade" we have a slender sheaf of what we must take to be mellowed and matured grain. Never was there a book more difficult to place, never a book more difficult fairly to appraise. Varying the author's own figure of ornaments in Jade, the several pieces comprising the contents of the book are of such fine texture that, re woven into the coarse homespun of a review, they lose every lustral quality which makes them notable. And what of the author's title, to go back to that? There is no help there. The title itself is one of those rare felicities which an author may realize once in a lifetime, but not oftener. And fortunate is he who can realize such a title once. But "Ornaments in Jade" is misleading in its connotation. There is a warmth, a sentient undercurrent to the book which the title absolutely belies. At the same time, one cannot conceive of any collocation of words which would in any way catch and convey the utterly elusive quality of the several disconnected objects which form this unique collection. What is the key? If the author has furnished any that will unlock the cabinet door it is here:

And we talk of absurd dreams
And these are wilder than the
wildest visions. And our sins:
but these are the sins of night-
mare. And every day we lead two
lives, and the half of our soul is
madness, and half heaven is lit by
a black sun. I say I am a man,
but who is the other who hides in
me?

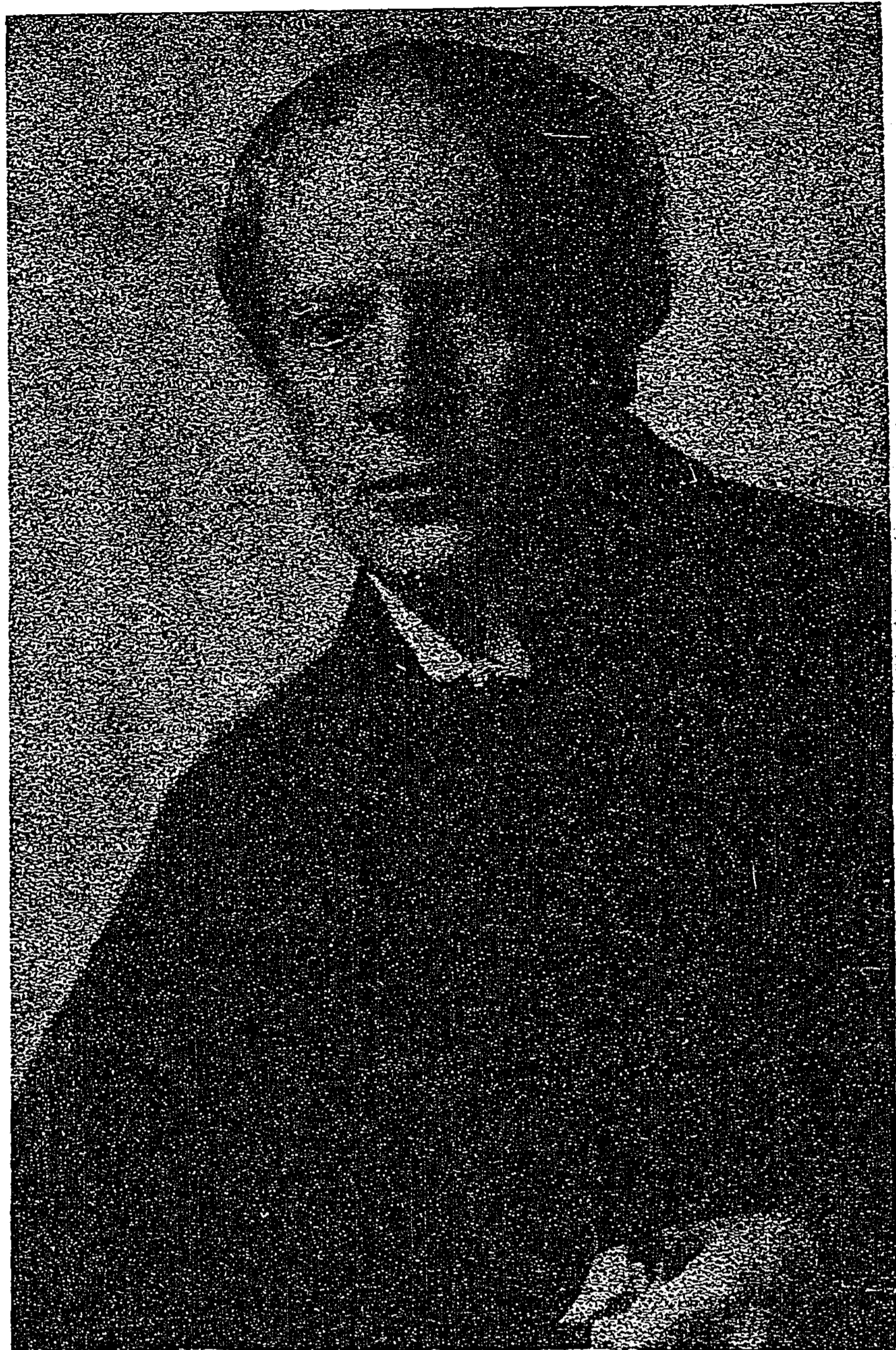
Just who the "he" of the above soliloquy is does not matter—for nothing matters in these queer pages, neither the characters talking nor the rose garden in which they may happen to be walking, nor the black sun, nor the evening star. Not even does the Druid altar matter, the mystical stone on which an equally mystical "she" lays "white bothouse lilies, and orchids of dying purple, and crimson, exotic flowers." In a way the book is a new "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," yet not in any precise sense. Not in anything like so precise a sense as Machen's "The Three Impostors." What Arthur Machen in "Ornaments in Jade" has tried to do, if we comprehend him at all, is so to transmute emotions, mental states, into something else that the psychic phenomena are no longer recognizable as such, although the reader is consciously, if not vividly, aware that he has been put into psychic touch with these phenomena. Thus the book, although thoroughly objective in manner, is in reality completely subjective both as to material and purpose. The piece called "Nature," itself but four pages long, makes this clear in its closing passages.

Then I saw the sky was blossoming in the north. Rose gardens appeared there, with golden hedges and bronze gates, and the great purple wall caught fire as it grew leaden. The earth was lit again, but with unnatural jeweled colors; the palest light was sardonyx, the darkness was amethyst. And then the valley was aflame. Fire in the level fields, a great burning in the north, and vehement flame to the south, above the town. And in the still river the very splendor of fire yes, as if all the precious things were cast into the furnace pool: as if gold and roses and jewels became flame.

And then?
Then the shining of the evening star.
"And you," said his friend,
"perhaps without knowledge, have

Arthur
Machen.

A Camera
Portrait
by
E. O. Hopps.



told me the story of a wonderful and incredible passion."

Julian stared at him in amazement.
"You are quite right," he said at length.

Thus, gradually, the reader who approaches "Ornaments in Jade" with a mind receptive and swept bare of all previously conceived no-

tions of what a book should be, and how one ought to write, will find the subtleties and the refinements of Machen's alchemy have a meaning. And this meaning is "passion"—that is, if a single word may be used to stand for the multitudinous meanings packed into these few pages. In the piece quoted is a vast passion, embracing all things; in

others it is clearly brought down to the passion of the two sexes for each other. But only superficially is there any hint of this; and the hint itself all but eludes one. Passion, as all things else for Machen, although he talks of it in color terms of red and purple, becomes—rather, is—a white and not a red flame. For him, all things are holy—even in Holborn:

As far as eye could see, there were two processions of the omnibuses, cabs and vans that went east and west, and west and east. The horses' feet rattled and pattered on the asphalt, the wheels ground and jarred. * * * Close to the pavement a coster pushed his barrow and proclaimed flowers in an odd intonation, reminding one of the Gregorian chant. Away in the west, where the houses seemed to meet, the play of sunlight on the haze made, as it were, golden mighty shapes that paused and advanced and paused again. * * *

The tears fell from his eyes, in his weeping the tears poured a rain on his cheeks. But he saw in the distance, in the far distance, the carved tabernacle, golden and mighty figures moving slowly, imploring arms stretched forth.

There was the noise of a great shout; the choir sang in the tongue of his boyhood that he had forgotten.

Sant . . . Sant . . . Sant.
Then the silvery bell tinkled anew; and again, and again. He looked and saw the holy, white and shining mysteries exhibited—in Holborn.

This is Mr. Hyde; Dr. Jekyll we have not touched on, for there are no passages easily quotable to bring him forth. But he will be found, ugly visaged and snarling, in "Witchcraft," and glimpses of his evil grin will be caught even in the rose garden and amid the orchids.

But one thousand copies of "Ornaments in Jade" have been printed; and the book work is notable. One does not recommend the book, for one does not recommend orchids. A person either is sensitive to orchids or he is not. To recommend them to the former would be wasted breath; and a superfluous expenditure of breath in the second case. "Ornaments in Jade" is a mystery, white and shining—in Holborn.

English Hopes of Church Unity

ENGLAND'S REAWAKENING. By Aylmer Hunter. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. \$1.25.

THIS little book is frankly written for the promotion of the Anglo-Catholic Movement. It is by its very nature propaganda—unavoidably and inescapably partisan however sincere in its outlook—and as such it will at once be looked upon by the average layman. That, within the limits of its premises, it is a clear and trenchant setting forth of the history of Anglo-Catholicism and its attitude toward the prospect of a future reunion of the Church of England and the Church of Rome is undeniable.

The author's contention is—and of his sincerity there can be no question—that the Catholicism of Anglicans is not a compromise with doctrine but a conformity with truth; not a breach with the traditional Christianity of England but a continuation of the tradition of her baptism by St. Augustine. The Reformation in England, he claims, was mainly a domestic affair—the work of kings and statesmen rather than divines—a national protest against national grievances rather than part of a cosmopolitan movement toward doctrinal change. Its effect was to make the Church in England the Church of England—a national Church. Then follows a comparison of the method of Protestantism with that of Romanism. "The one, while doing lip-service to unity, renounces that authority which alone can preserve

it; and the other checks all approach to unity by maintaining that an authority usurped in 1571 was imposed on all Christendom by Christ himself."

In the last half century or more, declares the writer, a realization of the Catholic nature of the Church has been steadily gaining ground. Churchmen feel, he continues, that although in the last four hundred years it has been impossible always to use Christian and Catholic as synonymous terms, the great historical truth remains that "the fullness of Christianity must always be synonymous with Catholicism." For fifteen hundred years Catholicism was understood to mean the unity and universality of Christendom. Then came the disruption of Christendom. Some think it was due to the corrupt state of the Church from the fourteenth century onward—others that it was due to the arrogance of the reformers in precipitating a breach. The writer admits that the primary cause was the errors creeping into the Roman Hierarchy but it is not possible, he declares, to discount the "impatient precipitancy of the Reformers." He admits the very good cause of the Reformers, but deplors that "not content with reforming they tried to create"—that they "left the Church and founded sects, thus committing the sin of apostasy."

Followers of the Oxford Movement disagree, we are told, with those Catholics of the Church of England who deny they are Catholics and

question the existence of authority just as they disagree upon the seat of authority with those Catholics who owe their allegiance to Rome. This movement denies that special authority is vested in the person of the Pope. It affirms that the only true authority resides in the Church as a whole, of which the Pope may be considered the official mouthpiece.

On the question of authority Anglo-Catholicism joins issue with both Romanism and Protestantism, claiming that its attitude is in conformity with unadulterated Catholic tradition. Agreement in the future the writer contends, depends on recapitulation of ancient controversies.

"Otherwise," he declares, "two great rival churches in Christendom will continue—Anglicans hoping vainly for concessions from Rome and Rome hoping equally vainly that all Anglicans will make submission to her. Anglicans desire reunion with Rome but not over their Church's dead body. Far from being the moribund Church Rome would like to believe, it receives in one year over ten million pounds from a people impoverished by a great war. Anglicans seek reunion not only with Rome but with the great Orthodox Church of the East. They want it also with the Scotch Presbyterians and with the English and American dissenting bodies. They want unity all round. Would not all Christendom and Rome herself be immeasurably the gainer if the gifts of the British people could be placed

as unreservedly at the council tables of a united Church as they are being placed today at the council tables of European politics?"

The basis of future reunion may be found, the author hopes, in a joint revision of the past definitions of doctrine. There is nothing, it is pointed out, in the de fide teachings of Rome herself to stand in the way of such revision. A Pope has power actually to alter what another Pope has decreed. "Anglo-Catholicism concludes the author, "has a great history and a great heritage. The Catholic Faith, uncorrupted by Rome, existed in this country for centuries before the reverberations of the Continental Reformation, the tyranny of a Roman Catholic Queen and the instability caused by political vicissitudes nearly succeeded in consigning it forever to the limbo of things. * * * Just imagine what it would mean to Christendom if the present Pope should see fit to take the courageous step of summoning a conference to discuss the possibility of such a revision and invite the Anglican bishops to take part in it; and it is clearly within his power and province to do so.

"In such a consummation the author sees 'one great universal reunited Church, one great interdenominational Moral Tribune; one ever-living voice of authority, explaining and expounding God's purpose with regard to the destinies of mankind'."