

Chapter 1 : Arthurian Miscellany: The Great Return, by Arthur Machen []

Arthur Machen was a leading Welsh author of the s. He is best known for his influential supernatural, fantasy, and horror fiction. His long story "The Great God Pan" made him famous and controversial in his lifetime, but The Hill of Dreams is generally considered his masterpiece.

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Chapter 2 : Arthur Machen - Wikipedia

the great return by arthur machen (london: faith press,) contents chapter i. the rumour of the marvellous 9 ii. odours of paradise 19 iii. a secret in a secret place

I was not sure you could spare the time. But have you no misgivings, Raymond? Is it absolutely safe? The sun still hung above the western mountain-line, but it shone with a dull red glow that cast no shadows, and all the air was quiet; a sweet breath came from the great wood on the hillside above, and with it, at intervals, the soft murmuring call of the wild doves. Below, in the long lovely valley, the river wound in and out between the lonely hills, and, as the sun hovered and vanished into the west, a faint mist, pure white, began to rise from the hills. Raymond turned sharply to his friend. Of course it is. In itself the operation is a perfectly simple one; any surgeon could do it. You are always timid, Clarke, always; but you know my history. I have devoted myself to transcendental medicine for the last twenty years. I have heard myself called quack and charlatan and impostor, but all the while I knew I was on the right path. Five years ago I reached the goal, and since then every day has been a preparation for what we shall do tonight. Raymond stopped in his walk and turned sharply. He was a middle-aged man, gaunt and thin, of a pale yellow complexion, but as he answered Clarke and faced him, there was a flush on his cheek. You see the mountain, and hill following after hill, as wave on wave, you see the woods and orchard, the fields of ripe corn, and the meadows reaching to the reed-beds by the river. You see me standing here beside you, and hear my voice; but I tell you that all these things-- yes, from that star that has just shone out in the sky to the solid ground beneath our feet--I say that all these are but dreams and shadows; the shadows that hide the real world from our eyes. You may think this all strange nonsense; it may be strange, but it is true, and the ancients knew what lifting the veil means. They called it seeing the god Pan. I suppose the knife is absolutely necessary? But I suppose you have read, casually, in out-of-the-way corners of your paper, that immense strides have been made recently in the physiology of the brain. Where they are standing now, I stood fifteen years ago, and I need not tell you that I have not been standing still for the last fifteen years. It will be enough if I say that five years ago I made the discovery that I alluded to when I said that ten years ago I reached the goal. After years of labour, after years of toiling and groping in the dark, after days and nights of disappointments and sometimes of despair, in which I used now and then to tremble and grow cold with the thought that perhaps there were others seeking for what I sought, at last, after so long, a pang of sudden joy thrilled my soul, and I knew the long journey was at an end. You will think this all high-flown language, Clarke, but it is hard to be literal. And yet; I do not know whether what I am hinting at cannot be set forth in plain and lonely terms. For instance, this world of ours is pretty well girded now with the telegraph wires and cables; thought, with something less than the speed of thought, flashes from sunrise to sunset, from north to south, across the floods and the desert places. 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 uttermost space lie open before the current, and words of men flash forth to the sun and beyond the sun into the systems beyond, and the voice of articulate-speaking men echo in the waste void that bounds our thought. As analogies go, that is a pretty good analogy of what I have done; you can understand now a little of what I felt as I stood here one evening; it was a summer evening, and the valley looked much as it does now; I stood here, and saw before me the unutterable, the unthinkable gulf that yawns profound between two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit; I saw the great empty deep stretch dim before me, and in that instant a bridge of light leapt from the earth to the unknown shore, and the abyss was spanned. That group is, as it were, land to let, a mere waste place for fanciful theories. I am not in the position of Browne Faber and the specialists, I am perfectly instructed as to the possible functions of those nerve-centers in the scheme of things. With a touch I can bring them into play, with a touch, I say, I can set free the current, with a touch I can complete the communication between this world of sense and--we shall be able to finish the sentence later on. Yes, the knife is necessary; but think what that knife will effect. It will level utterly the solid wall of sense, and probably, for the first time since man was made, a spirit will gaze on a spirit-world. Clarke, Mary will see the god Pan! Indeed, it is better

as it is; I am quite certain of that. Something might go wrong; you would be a miserable man for the rest of your days. As you know, I rescued Mary from the gutter, and from almost certain starvation, when she was a child; I think her life is mine, to use as I see fit. Raymond led the way into the house, through the hall, and down a long dark passage. He took a key from his pocket and opened a heavy door, and motioned Clarke into his laboratory. It had once been a billiard-room, and was lighted by a glass dome in the centre of the ceiling, whence there still shone a sad grey light on the figure of the doctor as he lit a lamp with a heavy shade and placed it on a table in the middle of the room. Clarke looked about him. Scarcely a foot of wall remained bare; there were shelves all around laden with bottles and phials of all shapes and colours, and at one end stood a little Chippendale book-case. Raymond pointed to this. That is a strange saying of his: The table in the centre, a stone slab with a drain in one corner, the two armchairs on which Raymond and Clarke were sitting; that was all, except an odd-looking chair at the furthest end of the room. Clarke looked at it, and raised his eyebrows. It looked comfortable enough, and Clarke passed his hand over the soft green velvet, as the doctor manipulated the levers. The doctor had a small hand-lamp, shaded as the larger one, on a ledge above his apparatus, and Clarke, who sat in the shadows, looked down at the great shadowy room, wondering at the bizarre effects of brilliant light and undefined darkness contrasting with one another. Clarke found himself idly endeavouring to analyse the sensation, and half conscious, he began to think of a day, fifteen years ago, that he had spent roaming through the woods and meadows near his own home. It was a burning day at the beginning of August, the heat had dimmed the outlines of all things and all distances with a faint mist, and people who observed the thermometer spoke of an abnormal register, of a temperature that was almost tropical. He could only think of the lonely walk he had taken fifteen years ago; it was his last look at the fields and woods he had known since he was a child, and now it all stood out in brilliant light, as a picture, before him. His fancies made him wander, as he had wandered long ago, from the fields into the wood, tracking a little path between the shining undergrowth of beech-trees; and the trickle of water dropping from the limestone rock sounded as a clear melody in the dream. Thoughts began to go astray and to mingle with other thoughts; the beech alley was transformed to a path between ilex-trees, and here and there a vine climbed from bough to bough, and sent up waving tendrils and drooped with purple grapes, and the sparse grey-green leaves of a wild olive-tree stood out against the dark shadows of the ilex. And in that moment, the sacrament of body and soul was dissolved, and a voice seemed to cry "Let us go hence," and then the darkness of darkness beyond the stars, the darkness of everlasting. When Clarke woke up with a start he saw Raymond pouring a few drops of some oily fluid into a green phial, which he stoppered tightly. It is done now. I am going to fetch Mary; I shall be back in ten minutes. It seemed as if he had but passed from one dream into another. He half expected to see the walls of the laboratory melt and disappear, and to awake in London, shuddering at his own sleeping fancies. But at last the door opened, and the doctor returned, and behind him came a girl of about seventeen, dressed all in white. She was so beautiful that Clarke did not wonder at what the doctor had written to him. She was blushing now over face and neck and arms, but Raymond seemed unmoved. You are quite free. Are you willing to trust yourself to me entirely? You are my witness. Here is the chair, Mary. It is quite easy. Just sit in it and lean back. Give me a kiss before you begin. The girl closed her eyelids, as if she were tired, and longed for sleep, and Raymond placed the green phial to her nostrils. Her face grew white, whiter than her dress; she struggled faintly, and then with the feeling of submission strong within her, crossed her arms upon her breast as a little child about to say her prayers. The bright light of the lamp fell full upon her, and Clarke watched changes fleeting over her face as the changes of the hills when the summer clouds float across the sun. And then she lay all white and still, and the doctor turned up one of her eyelids. She was quite unconscious. Raymond pressed hard on one of the levers and the chair instantly sank back. Clarke saw him cutting away a circle, like a tonsure, from her hair, and the lamp was moved nearer. Raymond took a small glittering instrument from a little case, and Clarke turned away shudderingly. When he looked again the doctor was binding up the wound he had made. There was an old clock in the passage. Clarke felt sick and faint; his knees shook beneath him, he could hardly stand. Clarke quailed before them. They shone with an awful light, looking far away, and a great wonder fell upon her face, and her hands stretched out as if to touch what was invisible; but in an instant the wonder faded, and gave place to the most awful terror. The muscles of her face were hideously convulsed,

she shook from head to foot; the soul seemed struggling and shuddering within the house of flesh. It was a horrible sight, and Clarke rushed forward, as she fell shrieking to the floor. She was lying wide-awake, rolling her head from side to side, and grinning vacantly. However, it could not be helped; and, after all, she has seen the Great God Pan.

Arthur Machen wrote of black magic and of white magic. The Great Return is one of his few "white magic" books. Unexplained, seeming supernatural events occur which I found very interesting.

I often think that the most extraordinary item of intelligence that I have read in print appeared a few years ago in the London Press. It came from a well-known and most respected news agency; I imagine it was in all the papers. The circumstances necessary--not to the understanding of this paragraph, for that is out of the question--but, we will say, to the understanding of the events which made it possible, are these. We had invaded Thibet, and there had been trouble in the hierarchy of that country, and a personage known as the Tashai Lama had taken refuge with us in India. He went on pilgrimage from one Buddhist shrine to another, and came at last to a holy mountain [10] of Buddhism, the name of which I have forgotten. And thus the morning paper: His Holiness the Tashai Lama then ascended the Mountain and was transfigured. And from that day to this I have never heard a word of explanation or comment on this amazing statement. Nobody, so far as I know, ever wrote to any paper asking what Reuter meant by it, or what the Tashai Lama meant by it. I suppose the fact was that nobody cared two-pence about the matter; and so this strange event--if there were any such event--was exhibited to us for a moment, and the lantern show revolved to other spectacles. This is an extreme instance of the manner in which the marvellous is flashed out to us and then withdrawn behind its black veils and concealments; but I have known of other cases. Now and again, at intervals of [11] a few years, there appear in the newspapers strange stories of the strange doings of what are technically called poltergeists. Some house, often a lonely farm, is suddenly subjected to an infernal bombardment. Great stones crash through the windows, thunder down the chimneys, impelled by no visible hand. The plates and cups and saucers are whirled from the dresser into the middle of the kitchen, no one can say how or by what agency. Upstairs the big bedstead and an old chest or two are heard bounding on the floor as if in a mad ballet. Now and then such doings as these excite a whole neighbourhood; sometimes a London paper sends a man down to make an investigation. He writes half a column of description on the Monday, a couple of paragraphs on the Tuesday, and then returns to town. Nothing has been explained, the matter vanishes away; and nobody cares. The tale trickles for a day or two through the Press, and then instantly disappears, like an Australian stream, into the bowels of darkness. It is possible, I suppose, that this singular incuriousness as to marvellous events and reports is not wholly unaccountable. It may be that the [12] events in question are, as it were, psychic accidents and misadventures. They are not meant to happen, or, rather, to be manifested. They belong to the world on the other side of the dark curtain; and it is only by some queer mischance that a corner of that curtain is twitched aside for an instant. Then--for an instant--we see; but the personages whom Mr. Our business is with things higher and things lower, with things different, anyhow; and on the whole we are not suffered to distract ourselves with that which does not really concern us. The Transfiguration of the Lama and the tricks of the poltergeist are evidently no affairs of ours; we raise an uninterested eyebrow and pass on--to poetry or to statistics. For all I know, the Lama, in spite of Reuter, was not transfigured, and the poltergeist, in spite of the late Mr. Andrew Lang, may in reality be [13] only mischievous Polly, the servant girl at the farm. And to go farther: I do not know that I should be justified in putting either of these cases of the marvellous in line with a chance paragraph that caught my eye last summer; for this had not, on the face of it at all events, anything wildly out of the common. Indeed, I dare say that I should not have read it, should not have seen it, if it had not contained the name of a place which I had once visited, which had then moved me in an odd manner that I could not understand. Indeed, I am sure that this particular paragraph deserves to stand alone, for even if the poltergeist be a real poltergeist, it merely reveals the psychic whimsicality of some region that is not our region. There were better things and more relevant things behind the few lines dealing with Llantrisant, the little town by the sea in Arfonshire. Not on the surface, I must say, for the cutting--I have preserved it--reads as follows: Remarkable [14] occurrences are supposed to have taken place during the recent Revival. The lights have not been observed lately. And these poor men are often hurried; but what did those "lights" mean? What strange matters had the vehement blue pencil blotted out and brought to naught? That was my first

thought, and then, thinking still of Llantrisant and how I had first discovered it and found it strange, I read the paragraph again, and was saddened almost to see, as I thought, the obvious explanation. I had forgotten for the moment that it was war-time, that scares and rumours and terrors about traitorous signals and flashing lights were current everywhere by land and sea; someone, no doubt, had been watching innocent farmhouse windows and thoughtless fanlights of lodging-houses; [15] these were the "lights" that had not been observed lately. I found out afterwards that the Llantrisant correspondent had no such treasonous lights in his mind, but something very different. Still; what do we know? He may have been mistaken, "the great rose of fire" that came over the deep may have been the port light of a coasting-ship. Did it shine at last from the old chapel on the headland? I have had wonderful opportunities lately of analysing the marvels of lying, conscious and unconscious; and indeed almost incredible feats in this way can be performed. If I incline to the less likely explanation of the "lights" at Llantrisant, it is merely because this explanation seems to me to be altogether congruous with the "remarkable occurrences" of the newspaper paragraph. After all, if rumour and gossip and hearsay are crazy things to be utterly neglected and laid aside: The girl was a mass of tuberculosis, she was within a few hours of death; she is now full of life. I have not dated the paragraph, so I cannot give the exact day of its appearance, but I think it was somewhere between the second and third week of June. I cut it out partly because it was about Llantrisant, partly because of the "remarkable occurrences. But in the meantime, as a temporary measure, I hold what I call the doctrine of the jig-saw puzzle. Coincidence and chance and unsearchable [17] causes will now and again make clouds that are undeniable fiery dragons, and potatoes that resemble Eminent Statesmen exactly and minutely in every feature, and rocks that are like eagles and lions. All this is nothing; it is when you get your set of odd shapes and find that they fit into one another, and at last that they are but parts of a large design; it is then that research grows interesting and indeed amazing, it is then that one queer form confirms the other, that the whole plan displayed justifies, corroborates, explains each separate piece. So; it was within a week or ten days after I had read the paragraph about Llantrisant and had cut it out that I got a letter from a friend who was taking an early holiday in those regions. I went into the church the other day, and instead of smelling like a damp vault as usual, it was positively reeking with incense. The old parson was a firm Evangelical; he would rather have burnt sulphur in his church than in- [18] cense any day. So I could not make out this report at all; and went down to Arfon a few weeks later determined to investigate this and any other remarkable occurrence at Llantrisant. In London there was no such weather; it rather seemed as if the horror and fury of the war had mounted to the very skies and were there reigning. In the mornings the sun burnt down upon the city with a heat that scorched and consumed; but then clouds heavy and horrible would roll together from all quarters of the heavens, and early in the afternoon the air would darken, and a storm of thunder and lightning, and furious, hissing rain would fall upon the streets. Indeed, the torment of the world was in the London weather. The city wore a terrible vesture; within our hearts was dread; without we were clothed in black clouds and angry fire. It is certain that I cannot show in any words the utter peace of that Welsh coast [20] to which I came; one sees, I think, in such a change a figure of the passage from the disquiets and the fears of earth to the peace of paradise. A land that seemed to be in a holy, happy dream, a sea that changed all the while from olivine to emerald, from emerald to sapphire, from sapphire to amethyst, that washed in white foam at the bases of the firm, grey rocks, and about the huge crimson bastions that hid the western bays and inlets of the waters; to this land I came, and to hollows that were purple and odorous with wild thyme, wonderful with many tiny, exquisite flowers. And the ears, torn with jangle and racket and idle, empty noise, were soothed and comforted by the ineffable, unutterable, unceasing murmur, as the tides swam to and fro, uttering mighty, hollow voices in the caverns of the rocks. Evans, the rector, looked upon coloured stoles as the very robe of Satan and his angels, as things dear to the heart of the Pope of Rome. But as to incense! As I have already familiarly observed, I knew better. But as a hard matter of fact, this may be worth noting: He was a most courteous and delightful old man, and on my last visit he had come across me in the churchyard, as I was admiring the very fine Celtic cross that stands there. Besides the beauty of the interlaced ornament there is an inscription in Ogham on one of the edges, concerning which the learned dispute; it is altogether one of the more famous crosses of Celtdom. But then I happened to put a question as to the sort of stone of which the cross was [23] made, and the rector brightened amazingly.

He began to talk geology, and, I think, demonstrated that the cross or the material for it must have been brought to Llantrisant from the south-west coast of Ireland. This struck me as interesting, because it was curious evidence of the migrations of the Celtic saints, whom the rector, I was delighted to find, looked upon as good Protestants, though shaky on the subject of crosses; and so, with concessions on my part, we got on very well. Thus, with all this to the good, I was emboldened to call upon him. I found him altered. Not that he was aged; indeed, he was rather made young, with a singular brightening upon his face, and something of joy upon it that I had not seen before, that I have seen on very few faces of men. We talked of the war, of course, since that is not to be avoided; of the farming prospects of the county; of general things, till I ventured to remark that I had been in the church, and had been surprised to find it perfumed with incense. You use incense now? I use no incense in the church. I should not venture to do so. I was born and brought up in Glamorganshire, and old men have wept as they told me of the weeping and contrition [25] that there was when the Red Priest broke the Bread and raised the Cup. But you are a railer, and see nothing but the outside and the show. You are not worthy of this mystery that has been done here. It is curiously true that the Welsh are still one people, one family almost, in a manner that the English cannot understand, but I had never thought that this old clergyman would have known anything of my ancestry or their doings. And as for my articles and such-like, I knew that the country clergy sometimes read, but I had fancied my pronouncements sufficiently obscure, even in London, much more in Arfon. But so it happened, and so I had no explanation from the rector of Llantrisant of the strange circumstance, that his church was full of incense and odours of paradise. I crossed a causeway which parts the outer harbour from the inner harbour, and settled down on a rocky beach hidden under a leafy hill. The tide was going out, and some children were playing on the wet sand, while two ladies--their mothers, I suppose--talked together as they sat comfortably on their rugs at a little distance from me. At first they talked of the war, and I made myself deaf, for of that talk one gets enough, and more than enough, in London. Then there was a period of silence, and the conversation had passed to quite a different topic when I caught the thread of it again. I was sitting on the further side of a big rock, and I do not think that the two ladies had noticed my approach. However, though they spoke of strange things, they spoke of nothing which made it necessary for me to announce my presence. Her friend came from the Midlands, and it turned out that they had only known each other for a few days. Theirs was a friendship of the beach and of bathing; such friendships are common at small seaside places. But you think there really is something a little queer? You know where I am at Mrs. And I hear them saying the most alarming things! Old Morgan begins it, and the wife and children answer.

Chapter 4 : The Great Return by Arthur Machen - Free at Loyal Books

Arthur Machen (-) was a Welsh author and mystic of the s and early 20th century. He is best known for his influential supernatural, fantasy, and horror fiction. His novella The Great God Pan (;) has garnered.

Inspiration and encouragement for those who hope for a new Spiritual Christianity in England Tuesday, 27 February The Great Return The Welsh writer and mystic, Arthur Machen , has become without doubt a highly influential figure. Artists as varied as H. He is also famous for his short story, The Bowmen , which tells the tale of a phantom squadron of bowmen saving the British Army from destruction in France. Machen was a fine journalist, and he wrote the story in a journalistic style, which was taken as fact by many readers and gave rise to the legend of the Angels of Mons, who were said to have appeared to retreating British forces in September In this respect, as in others, Machen can be considered a precursor to Charles Williams. Like Williams, he was a High Anglican with a deeply mystical bent and a fascination with occult lore. His father was a clergyman, and the young Machen would have followed the same path but for a financial crisis which necessitated him leaving the family home and relocating to London to earn a meagre living through a variety of odd-jobs. Machen writes exceptionally well, as does Williams, about that city. Before me was the long suburban street, its dreary distance marked by rows of twinkling lamps, and the air was poisoned by the faint, sickly smell of burning bricks, deserted as that of Pompeii. I knew pretty well what direction to take, so I set out wearily, looking at the stretch of lamps vanishing in perspective: I have spoken of systems of thoroughfare,, and I assure you that walking alone through these silent places I felt fantasy growing on me, and some glamour of the infinite. Machen was born in Caerleon, South-East Wales. In my view, however, it is passages like this which show why he is so compelling and influential. There is a real sense of the British Mysteries in his writing, and he has the ability like Williams again to bring those mysteries alive in a memorable and evocative manner. In The Great Return, the Holy Grail appears in Arfon, bringing healing, transformation, joy and peace to all who come into its presence. The Grail comes and the lives of men and women are transformed. I think this is also how it will be at the end of time. Our difficulty, here and now, is that we do not know how much further the Dark Age has to run. We are not in charge of the timescales. The world grows increasingly materialised until it is as far from its spiritual source as mid-winter is from mid-summer. Then the switchback occurs and the spiritual becomes once again the dominant paradigm. It will be as spectacular and comprehensive as the fall of Numenor or Atlantis. The signs of His approach, as with His first advent, are likely to reveal themselves in a manner we have not anticipated and at a time and place we do not expect - a provincial backwater, not unlike Nazareth, perhaps - a place passed over and left to rot by the shifting tides of politics, finance and fashion - a run-down industrial estate, let us say, on a ring road just outside Middlesborough. People turn up for work on a Monday morning, and already by lunchtime a thousand unobtrusive miracles have taken place. Old feuds are forgotten, horizons are widened, workplace politics are recognised as irrelevant, broken families are made whole, and faces shine with light, laughter and joy. No-one knows how or why this change has happened. All the workers know is that it feels good, right, natural and true. We just forgot it for a while. She said she woke up in the deep darkness, and she knew the life was fast going from her. She could not move so much as a finger, she tried to cry out, but no sound came from her lips. She felt that in another instant the whole world would fall from herâ€™her heart was full of agony. And as the last breath was passing her lips, she heard a very faint, sweet sound, like the tinkling of a silver bell. It came from far away, from over by Ty-newydd. She forgot her agony and listened, and even then, she says, she felt the swirl of the world as it came back to her. And the sound of the bell swelled and grew louder, and it thrilled all through her body, and the life was in it. And as the bell rang and trembled in her ears, a faint light touched the wall of her room and reddened, till the whole room was full of rosy fire. And then she saw standing before her bed three men in blood-coloured robes with shining faces. And one man held a golden bell in his hand. And the second man held up something shaped like the top of a table. It was like a great jewel, and it was of a blue colour, and there were rivers of silver and of gold running through it and flowing as quick streams flow, and there were pools in it as if violets had been poured out into water, and then it was green as the sea near the

shore, and then it was the sky at night with all the stars shining, and then the sun and the moon came down and washed in it. And the third man held up high above this a cup that was like a rose on fire; "there was a great burning in it, and a dropping of blood in it, and a red cloud above it, and I saw a great secret. It is also the way the world ends, not with a whimper, nor with a bang, but with a high and holy chant, the ringing of a bell, a vision of goodness and purity, and a soft, warm light which grows and swells until the whole world, from the North Pole to the South, is suffused with its radiance. The fetters of the Iron Age snap and fall asunder. The Great Restoration is at hand. The dream, as Lewis writes in *The Last Battle*, is ended. This is the morning.

Chapter 5 : The Great Return, by Arthur Machen : CHAPTER II

The story of miraculous events at a Welsh fishing village are eventually pieced together by a skeptical Londoner. It's a story that is slow to develop and different for Machen, in that it's not so much a ghost story as the account of the Arthurian legends of the Fisher King coming true in Wales.

I often think that the most extraordinary item of intelligence that I have read in print appeared a few years ago in the London Press. It came from a well known and most respected news agency; I imagine it was in all the papers. The circumstances necessary not to the understanding of this paragraph, for that is out of the question but, we will say, to the understanding of the events which made it possible, are these. We had invaded Thibet, and there had been trouble in the hierarchy of that country, and a personage known as the Tashai Lama had taken refuge with us in India. He went on pilgrimage from one Buddhist shrine to another, and came at last to a holy mountain of Buddhism, the name of which I have forgotten. And thus the morning paper. His Holiness the Tashai Lama then ascended the Mountain and was transfigured. And from that day to this I have never heard a word of explanation or comment on this amazing statement. There was no more, it seemed, to be said. Nobody, so far as I know, ever wrote to any paper asking what Reuter meant by it, or what the Tashai Lama meant by it. I suppose the fact was that nobody cared two pence about the matter; and so this strange event if there were any such event was exhibited to us for a moment, and the lantern show revolved to other spectacles. This is an extreme instance of the manner in which the marvellous is flashed out to us and then withdrawn behind its black veils and concealments; but I have known of other cases. Now and again, at intervals of a few years, there appear in the newspapers strange stories of the strange doings of what are technically called poltergeists. Some house, often a lonely farm, is suddenly subjected to an infernal bombardment. Great stones crash through the windows, thunder down the chimneys, impelled by no visible hand. The plates and cups and saucers are whirled from the dresser into the middle of the kitchen, no one can say how or by what agency. Upstairs the big bedstead and an old chest or two are heard bounding on the floor as if in a mad ballet. Now and then such doings as these excite a whole neighbourhood; sometimes a London paper sends a man down to make an investigation. He writes half a column of description on the Monday, a couple of paragraphs on the Tuesday, and then returns to town. Nothing has been explained, the matter vanishes away; and nobody cares. The tale trickles for a day or two through the Press, and then instantly disappears, like an Australian stream, into the bowels of darkness. It is possible, I suppose, that this singular incuriousness as to marvellous events and reports is not wholly unaccountable. It may be that the events in question are, as it were, psychic accidents and misadventures. They are not meant to happen, or, rather, to be manifested. They belong to the world on the other side of the dark curtain; and it is only by some queer mischance that a corner of that curtain is twitched aside for an instant. Then for an instant we see; but the personages whom Mr

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The Great Return, by Arthur Machen. and all the regions about became possessed either by an extraordinary set of hallucinations or by a visitation of great.

The house of his birth, opposite the Olde Bull Inn in The Square at Caerleon, is adjacent to the Priory Hotel and is today marked with a commemorative blue plaque. The beautiful landscape of Monmouthshire which he usually referred to by the name of the medieval Welsh kingdom, Gwent, with its associations of Celtic, Roman, and medieval history, made a powerful impression on him, and his love of it is at the heart of many of his works. Gwyn, of Llanfrechfa Rectory. Family poverty ruled out attendance at university, and Machen was sent to London, where he sat exams to attend medical school but failed to get in. Machen, however, showed literary promise, publishing in a long poem "Eleusinia" on the subject of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Hogg had introduced Machen to the writer and occultist A. Machen also made the acquaintance of other literary figures, such as M. Shiel and Edgar Jepson. Soon after his marriage, Machen began to receive a series of legacies from Scottish relatives that allowed him to gradually devote more time to writing. This led to his first major success, *The Great God Pan*. It was published in by John Lane in the noted Keynotes Series, which was part of the growing aesthetic movement of the time. Machen next produced *The Three Impostors*, a novel composed of a number of interwoven tales, in Thus, though he would write some of his greatest works over the next few years, some were published much later. This had a devastating effect on Machen. He only gradually recovered from his loss over the next year, partially through his close friendship with A. This led in to a second marriage, to Dorothie Purefoy Hudleston, which brought Machen much happiness. Machen managed to find a publisher in for his earlier written work *Hieroglyphics*, an analysis of the nature of literature, which concluded that true literature must convey "ecstasy". He also published a satirical work, *Dr Stiggins: His Views and Principles*, generally considered one of his weakest works. Machen was also attending literary gatherings such as the New Bohemians and the Square Club. In February his son Hilary was born, followed by a daughter Janet in The coming of war in saw Machen return to public prominence for the first time in twenty years due to the publication of "The Bowmen" and the subsequent publicity surrounding the "Angels of Mons" episode. He published a series of stories capitalizing on this success, most of which were morale-boosting propaganda, but the most notable, "The Great Return" and the novella *The Terror*, were more accomplished. He also published a series of autobiographical articles during the war, later reprinted in book form as *Far Off Things*. During the war years Machen also met and championed the work of a fellow Welshman, Caradoc Evans. Wyndham Lewis, and Jerome K. Machen, however, was recognized as a great Fleet Street character by his contemporaries, and he remained in demand as an essay writer for much of the twenties. The Machen boom of the s[edit] Cover of the U. That year also saw the publication of a recently completed second volume of autobiography, *Things Near and Far*—the third and final volume, *The London Adventure*, being published in In he issued a collection of bad reviews of his own work, with very little commentary, under the title *Precious Balms*. In , he became a manuscript reader for the publisher Ernest Benn, which brought in a much-needed regular income until In , Machen and his family moved away from London to Amersham in Buckinghamshire, but they still faced financial hardship. The success of the appeal allowed Machen to live the last few years of his life, until , in relative comfort. Philosophy and religion[edit] From the beginning of his literary career, Machen espoused a mystical belief that the humdrum ordinary world hid a more mysterious and strange world beyond. His gothic and decadent works of the s concluded that the lifting of this veil could lead to madness, sex, or death, and usually a combination of all three. Machen loved the medieval world view because he felt it manifested deep spirituality alongside a rambunctious earthiness. Machen was a great enthusiast for literature that expressed the "rapture, beauty, adoration, wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown" that he summed up in the word ecstasy. Those writers who failed to achieve this, or far worse did not even attempt it, received short shrift from Machen. Similarly, some of his propagandistic First World War stories also have little appeal to a modern audience. Machen, brought up as the son of a Church of England clergyman, always held Christian beliefs, though accompanied

by a fascination with sensual mysticism ; his interests in paganism and the occult were especially prominent in his earliest works. Machen was well read on such matters as alchemy , the kabbalah , and Hermeticism , and these occult interests formed part of his close friendship with A. Machen, however, was always very down to earth, requiring substantial proof that a supernatural event had occurred, and was thus highly sceptical of Spiritualism. Unlike many of his contemporaries, such as Oscar Wilde and Alfred Douglas, his disapproval of the Reformation and his admiration for the medieval world and its Roman Catholic ritualism did not fully tempt him away from Anglicanism – though he never fitted comfortably into the Victorian Anglo-Catholic world. The death of his first wife led him to a spiritual crossroads, and he experienced a series of mystical events. After his experimentation with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn , the orthodox ritual of the Church became ever more important to him, gradually defining his position as a High Church Anglican who was able to incorporate elements from his own mystical experiences, Celtic Christianity , and readings in literature and legend into his thinking. In the sixties, a paperback reprint in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series brought him to the notice of a new generation. He is also usually noted in the better studies of Anglo-Welsh literature. Lovecraft , who in his essay " Supernatural Horror in Literature " named Machen as one of the four "modern masters" of supernatural horror with Algernon Blackwood , Lord Dunsany , and M. Klein , to name but a few. Jorge Luis Borges recognized Machen as a great writer, and through him Machen has had an influence on magic realism. He was one of the most significant figures in the life of the Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman , who attributed to Machen his conversion to High Church Anglicanism, an important part of his philosophy and poetry. His strange wanderings in Wales and London recorded in his beautiful prose make him of great interest to writers on this subject, especially those focusing on London, such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd. Other occultists, such as Kenneth Grant , also find Machen an inspiration. Smith of The Fall also found Machen an inspiration. It is an interest also shared by film directors like Guillermo del Toro and Richard Stanley. It publishes two journals: Faunus, which reprints rare Machen articles and criticism of his work, and Machenalia. It fosters interest not only in Machen but in events in which he played a key part, such as the Angels of Mons affair, and organises psychogeographic excursions. Selected works[edit] In approximate order of composition, with date of publication: The Chronicle of Clemendy – Fantasy tales within a frame story of a rural Welsh drinking fraternity with mystical roots. The Great God Pan written –; published – Short horror novel. He and a friend attempt to decipher their meaning before it is too late. The Three Impostors – A horror novel incorporating several short stories, including "The Novel of the White Powder" and "The Novel of the Black Seal", which have often been anthologised separately. Centers on the search for a man with spectacles. Lovecraft in its subject matter – the protagonist gradually uncovers the secrets of a hidden pre- and non-human race hiding in the Welsh hills, and the true nature of a hybrid, idiot child fathered by one of them. It focuses on a murder performed with an ancient stone axe. The Hill of Dreams written –; published – A novel delineating the dark and mystical spiralling madness, awe, horror and ecstasy of an artist. Ornaments in Jade written ; published – Prose poems, some of which hint at dark pagan powers. Often described as one of the greatest of all horror short stories. A Fragment of Life written –; published – Short novel. A young couple repudiate the banalities of material life in favour of the spiritual. Only 3 copies were published. Reprinted in an edition of copies by Tartarus Press , – A book of coded and mystical correspondence. The Secret Glory written –; published – Novel. A public-school boy becomes fascinated by tales of the Holy Grail and escapes from his repressive school in search of a deeper meaning to life. This is cited as the origin of the Angels of Mons legend. The Great Return – Short story. The Holy Grail returns to a Welsh village. The Terror – Short novel. Rural supernatural horror set in wartime Britain, where a series of unexplained murders occur with no sign of who or what is responsible. Far Off Things – First volume of autobiography. Things Near and Far – Second volume of autobiography. The London Adventure – Third and final volume of autobiography. Dog and Duck – Essays. The Glorious Mystery – Essays and vignettes. The Canning Wonder – Non-fiction study of the eighteenth-century mystery of the disappearance of Elizabeth Canning. Machen concludes that Canning was lying about some or all of her exploits. Dreads and Drolls – Essays expanded edition, Tartarus Press: Notes and Queries – Essays. The Green Round – Novel. A man is haunted by a dwarf after visiting the "green round" on a beach. An

encounter in London of a hidden fairyland. *Bridles and Spurs* — Essays.

Chapter 7 : Review: Ritual and Other Stories by Arthur Machen | Books | The Guardian

Author: Arthur Machen. Arthur Machen was a Welsh writer and mystic who was best known for supernatural, fantasy, and horror fiction. Publish date: Feb We answer within 48 hours!

The Great Return, by Arthur Machen Chapter 2 Odours of Paradise I went down to Arfon in the very heat and bloom and fragrance of the wonderful summer that they were enjoying there. In London there was no such weather; it rather seemed as if the horror and fury of the war had mounted to the very skies and were there reigning. In the mornings the sun burnt down upon the city with a heat that scorched and consumed; but then clouds heavy and horrible would roll together from all quarters of the heavens, and early in the afternoon the air would darken, and a storm of thunder and lightning, and furious, hissing rain would fall upon the streets. Indeed, the torment of the world was in the London weather. The city wore a terrible vesture; within our hearts was dread; without we were clothed in black clouds and angry fire. It is certain that I cannot show in any words the utter peace of that Welsh coast to which I came; one sees, I think, in such a change a figure of the passage from the disquiets and the fears of earth to the peace of paradise. A land that seemed to be in a holy, happy dream, a sea that changed all the while from olivine to emerald, from emerald to sapphire, from sapphire to amethyst, that washed in white foam at the bases of the firm, grey rocks, and about the huge crimson bastions that hid the western bays and inlets of the waters; to this land I came, and to hollows that were purple and odorous with wild thyme, wonderful with many tiny, exquisite flowers. And the ears, torn with jangle and racket and idle, empty noise, were soothed and comforted by the ineffable, unutterable, unceasing murmur, as the tides swam to and fro, uttering mighty, hollow voices in the caverns of the rocks. For three or four days I rested in the sun and smelt the savour of the blossoms and of the salt water, and then, refreshed, I remembered that there was something queer about Llantrisant that I might as well investigate. Evans, the rector, looked upon coloured stoles as the very robe of Satan and his angels, as things dear to the heart of the Pope of Rome. But as to incense! As I have already familiarly observed, I knew better. But as a hard matter of fact, this may be worth noting: Now I happened to have a slight acquaintance with the rector. He was a most courteous and delightful old man, and on my last visit he had come across me in the churchyard, as I was admiring the very fine Celtic cross that stands there. Besides the beauty of the interlaced ornament there is an inscription in Ogham on one of the edges, concerning which the learned dispute; it is altogether one of the more famous crosses of Celtdom. Evans, I say, seeing me looking at the cross, came up and began to give me, the stranger, a resume – somewhat of a shaky and uncertain resume, I found afterwards – of the various debates and questions that had arisen as to the exact meaning of the inscription, and I was amused to detect an evident but underlying belief of his own: But then I happened to put a question as to the sort of stone of which the cross was made, and the rector brightened amazingly. He began to talk geology, and, I think, demonstrated that the cross or the material for it must have been brought to Llantrisant from the south-west coast of Ireland. This struck me as interesting, because it was curious evidence of the migrations of the Celtic saints, whom the rector, I was delighted to find, looked upon as good Protestants, though shaky on the subject of crosses; and so, with concessions on my part, we got on very well. Thus, with all this to the good, I was emboldened to call upon him. I found him altered. Not that he was aged; indeed, he was rather made young, with a singular brightening upon his face, and something of joy upon it that I had not seen before, that I have seen on very few faces of men. We talked of the war, of course, since that is not to be avoided; of the farming prospects of the county; of general things, till I ventured to remark that I had been in the church, and had been surprised, to find it perfumed with incense. You use incense now? I use no incense in the church. I should not venture to do so. I was born and brought up in Glamorganshire, and old men have wept as they told me of the weeping and contrition that there was when the Red Priest broke the Bread and raised the Cup. But you are a railer, and see nothing but the outside and the show. You are not worthy of this mystery that has been done here. It is curiously true that the Welsh are still one people, one family almost, in a manner that the English cannot understand, but I had never thought that this old clergyman would have known anything of my ancestry or their doings. And as for my articles and such-like, I knew that the country clergy

sometimes read, but I had fancied my pronouncements sufficiently obscure, even in London, much more in Arfon. But so it happened, and so I had no explanation from the rector of Llantrisant of the strange circumstance, that his church was full of incense and odours of paradise. I went up and down the ways of Llantrisant wondering, and came to the harbour, which is a little place, with little quays where some small coasting trade still lingers. A brigantine was at anchor here, and very lazily in the sunshine they were loading it with anthracite; for it is one of the oddities of Llantrisant that there is a small colliery in the heart of the wood on the hillside. I crossed a causeway which parts the outer harbour from the inner harbour, and settled down on a rocky beach hidden under a leafy hill. The tide was going out, and some children were playing on the wet sand, while two ladies – their mothers, I suppose – talked together as they sat comfortably on their rugs at a little distance from me. At first they talked of the war, and I made myself deaf, for of that talk one gets enough, and more than enough, in London. Then there was a period of silence, and the conversation had passed to quite a different topic when I caught the thread of it again. I was sitting on the further side of a big rock, and I do not think that the two ladies had noticed my approach. However, though they spoke of strange things, they spoke of nothing which made it necessary for me to announce my presence. Her friend came from the Midlands, and it turned out that they had only known each other for a few days. Theirs was a friendship of the beach and of bathing; such friendships are common, at small seaside places. But you think there really is something a little queer? You know where I am at Mrs. And I hear them saying the most alarming things! Old Morgan begins it, and the wife and children answer. It is nothing but madness. You know some Dissenters are very queer in their ways.

Chapter 8 : The Great Return, by Arthur Machen : CHAPTER V

The Great Return by Arthur Machen starting at \$ The Great Return has 11 available editions to buy at Alibris.

The Great Return, by Arthur Machen Chapter 5 The Rose of Fire It was during the next nine days, counting from that Saturday early in June the first Saturday in June, as I believe " that Llantrisant and all the regions about became possessed either by an extraordinary set of hallucinations or by a visitation of great marvels. This is not the place to strike the balance between the two possibilities. The evidence is, no doubt, readily available; the matter is open to systematic investigation. But this may be said: The ordinary man, in the ordinary passages of his life, accepts in the main the evidence of his senses, and is entirely right in doing so. In any event, it is solidly agreed that, supposing a real existence, this much is certain " it is not in the least like our conception of it. The ant and the microscope will quickly convince us that we do not see things as they really are, even supposing that we see them at all. Now, there is nothing that I know much more unconvincing than the stories of the red light on the sea. Two of those sailormen are precise as to the time of the apparition; they fix it by elaborate calculations of their own as occurring at A red light, a burning spark seen far away in the darkness, taken at the first moment of seeing for a signal, and probably an enemy signal. Then it approached at a tremendous speed, and one man said he took it to be the port light of some new kind of navy motor-boat which was developing a rate hitherto unheard of, a hundred or a hundred and fifty knots an hour. And then, in the third instant of the sight, it was clear that this was no earthly speed. At first a red spark in the farthest distance; then a rushing lamp; and then, as if in an incredible point of time, it swelled into a vast rose of fire that filled all the sea and all the sky and hid the stars and possessed the land. And then, an instant more, and it was gone from them, and four of them say that there was a red spark on Chapel Head, where the old grey chapel of St. Teilo stands, high above the water, in a cleft of the limestone rocks. And thus the sailors; and thus their tales are incredible; but they are not incredible. I believe that men of the highest eminence in physical science have testified to the occurrence of phenomena every whit as marvellous, to things as absolutely opposed to all natural order, as we conceive it; and it may be said that nobody minds them. But the men, whether or no the fire had ever been without them, there was no doubt that it was now within them, for it burned in their eyes. They were purged as if they had passed through the Furnace of the Sages, governed with Wisdom that the alchemists know. They spoke without much difficulty of what they had seen, or had seemed to see, with their eyes, but hardly at all of what their hearts had known when for a moment the glory of the fiery rose had been about them. For some weeks afterwards they were still, as it were, amazed; almost, I would say, incredulous. If there had been nothing more than the splendid and fiery appearance, showing and vanishing, I do believe that they themselves would have discredited their own senses and denied the truth of their own tales. And one does not dare to say whether they would not have been right. Men like Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge are certainly to be heard with respect, and they bear witness to all manner of apparent evasions of laws which we, or most of us, consider far more deeply founded than the ancient hills. They may be justified; but in our hearts we doubt. The so-called law is just the sum of common observation and nothing more; yet I say, in our hearts we do not believe that the tables rise; much less do we believe in the rose of fire that for a moment swallowed up the skies and seas and shores of the Welsh coast last June. And the men who saw it would have invented fairy tales to account for it, I say again, if it had not been for that which was within them. They said, all of them, and it was certain now that they spoke the truth, that in the moment of the vision, every pain and ache and malady in their bodies had passed away. He was horribly ill; he had crawled up from his bunk for a little fresh air; and in an instant his horrors and his deadly nausea had left him. Another man was almost desperate with the raging hammering pain of an abscess on a tooth; he says that when the red flame came near he felt as if a dull, heavy blow had fallen on his jaw, and then the pain was quite gone; he could scarcely believe that there had been any pain there. And they all bear witness to an extraordinary exaltation of the senses. It is indescribable, this; for they cannot describe it. They are amazed, again; they do not in the least profess to know what happened; but there is no more possibility of shaking their evidence than there is a possibility of shaking the evidence of a man who says that water is wet and fire hot.

But I suppose we can all agree that to the man in average health, the average impact of the external world on his senses is a matter of indifference. But so far as I could judge from the talk of these sailors, the average impact of the external world had become to them a fountain of pleasure. Their nerves were on edge, but an edge to receive exquisite sensuous impressions. The touch of the rough mast, for example; that was a joy far greater than is the joy of fine silk to some luxurious skins; they drank water and stared as if they had been fine gourmets tasting an amazing wine; the creak and whine of their ship on its slow way were as exquisite as the rhythm and song of a Bach fugue to an amateur of music. And then, within; these rough fellows have their quarrels and strifes and variances and envyings like the rest of us; but that was all over between them that had seen the rosy light; old enemies shook hands heartily, and roared with laughter as they confessed one to another what fools they had been. It is so grotesquely untrue that almost every county, let alone every country, has its distinctive style in Gothic architecture. Arfon is in the west of Wales; its churches have marks and features which distinguish them from the churches in the east of Wales. The Llantrisant church has that primitive division between nave and chancel which only very foolish people decline to recognise as equivalent to the Oriental iconostasis and as the origin of the Western rood-screen. A solid wall divided the church into two portions; in the centre was a narrow opening with a rounded arch, through which those who sat towards the middle of the church could see the small, red-carpeted altar and the three roughly shaped lancet windows above it. On the inner side were the pews of certain privileged houses of the town and district. On the Sunday morning the people were all in their accustomed places, not without a certain exultation in their eyes, not without a certain expectation of they knew not what. The bells stopped ringing, the rector, in his old-fashioned, ample surplice, entered the reading-desk, and gave out the hymn: They took what places they could find up and down the church, and the rest of the congregation looked at them in amazement. Nobody knew what had happened. Those whose seats were next to the aisle tried to peer into the chancel, to see what had happened or what was going on there. But somehow the light flamed so brightly from the windows above the altar, those being the only windows in the chancel, one small lancet in the south wall excepted, that no one could see anything at all. But there were few in the church who did not hear now and again voices speaking beyond the veil.

Chapter 9 : The Great God Pan - I. THE EXPERIMENT

Arthur Machen (/ ˈ ɛ ː m ˈ ɑː k ɛ ɪ ʃ n /; 3 March - 15 December) was a Welsh author and mystic of the s and early 20th century. He is best known for his influential supernatural, fantasy, and horror fiction.