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GORDON STEWART
Reviews the week's novels

Maugham in Melodrama

Heinemann's re-issue of one of Somerset Maugham's lesser known novels, "The Magician," as one of the collected edition of his works may not have wide appeal, but should certainly provide great interest to readers of the old master.

The style, as he says himself, in the current preface to this very early example of his writing, is certainly "lush and turgid."

In fact, it is completely unlike any other Maugham story I have read.

You could be forgiven for thinking you had picked up "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," or strayed into Baker st. to chat with Sherlock Holmes over some of the strictly formal shockers of the gaslight era.

What makes the story doubly interesting is the central character, Oliver Haddo, who, Mr. Maugham affirms in his preface, is based almost completely on that Beelzebub of Edwardian evil, Allister Crowley.

Haddo, by his repulsive charm, irresistibly attracts a beautiful young girl.

She deserts her very English, very public school, very upright lover to marry the evil Haddo.

In the best melodramatic tradition she is done to death, most mysteriously, with more than a suspicion of some human vampire work. Needless to say, Arthur, the true-blue lover, eventually rubs out Haddo.

Mr. Maugham's detailed knowledge of the occult, satanism and black magic adds a suitably macabre note to the book, which most of us of the Maugham vintage will want to read.