



Maurice Magnus: A Biography

Louise E. Wright

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Maurice Magnus's *Memoirs of the Foreign Legion* was published in 1924, several years after his death. In the introduction, D. H. Lawrence presents the author as a scoundrel and a cheat, an assessment that has had a lasting influence on Magnus's reputation. *Maurice Magnus: A Biography* is the first full-length study of the expatriate American writer, translator and businessman. It takes the reader from his youth in New York City and suspected Hohenzollern connections to his last impoverished days on Malta and desperate decision to avoid imprisonment by committing suicide. Early chapters focus on his personal and professional associations with Isadora Duncan and Edward Gordon Craig, in whose careers he remained interested until his death. Later chapters highlight his business dealings, Foreign Legion experience and relationships with Norman Douglas and Lawrence. The book emphasizes the value Magnus placed on his friendships, the importance he accorded his literary endeavors and the perseverance with which he met adversity. Relying heavily on unpublished letters, manuscripts and documents, the biography presents a portrait of an individual frequently at odds with the circumstances in which he found himself, of a gentleman ill-suited to the changing times in which he was living. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the early twentieth-century worlds of literature, publishing and the performing arts. 'Until Wright's biography, no account had ever been written of Magnus's life. Her tireless research has now illuminated Magnus so fully that we finally can know what transpired between this man and the likes of Lawrence and Duncan. This kind of basic research is far from glamorous labor, but it represents the highest ideals of literary scholarship by clearing up mysteries once and for all in a thoroughly professional and engaging manner.' - John W. Crowley, Professor of English, University of Alabama Wright's 'researches . . . have produced a rich filling of memoirs, reminiscences and in particular letters (for it was in his friendships that Magnus always believed that he most strongly lived) that successfully bring this strange, at times comic, always fascinating and in the end tragic figure back to life.' - John Worthen is Emeritus Professor, University of Nottingham.

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