

**FANTAZIUS
MALLARE: A
MYSTERIOUS OATH**

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Fantazius Mallare: a mysterious oath by Ben Hecht

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BEN HECHT

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FANTAZIUS
MALLARE

A Mysterious Oath

BEN HECHT



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Drawings

WALLACE SMITH

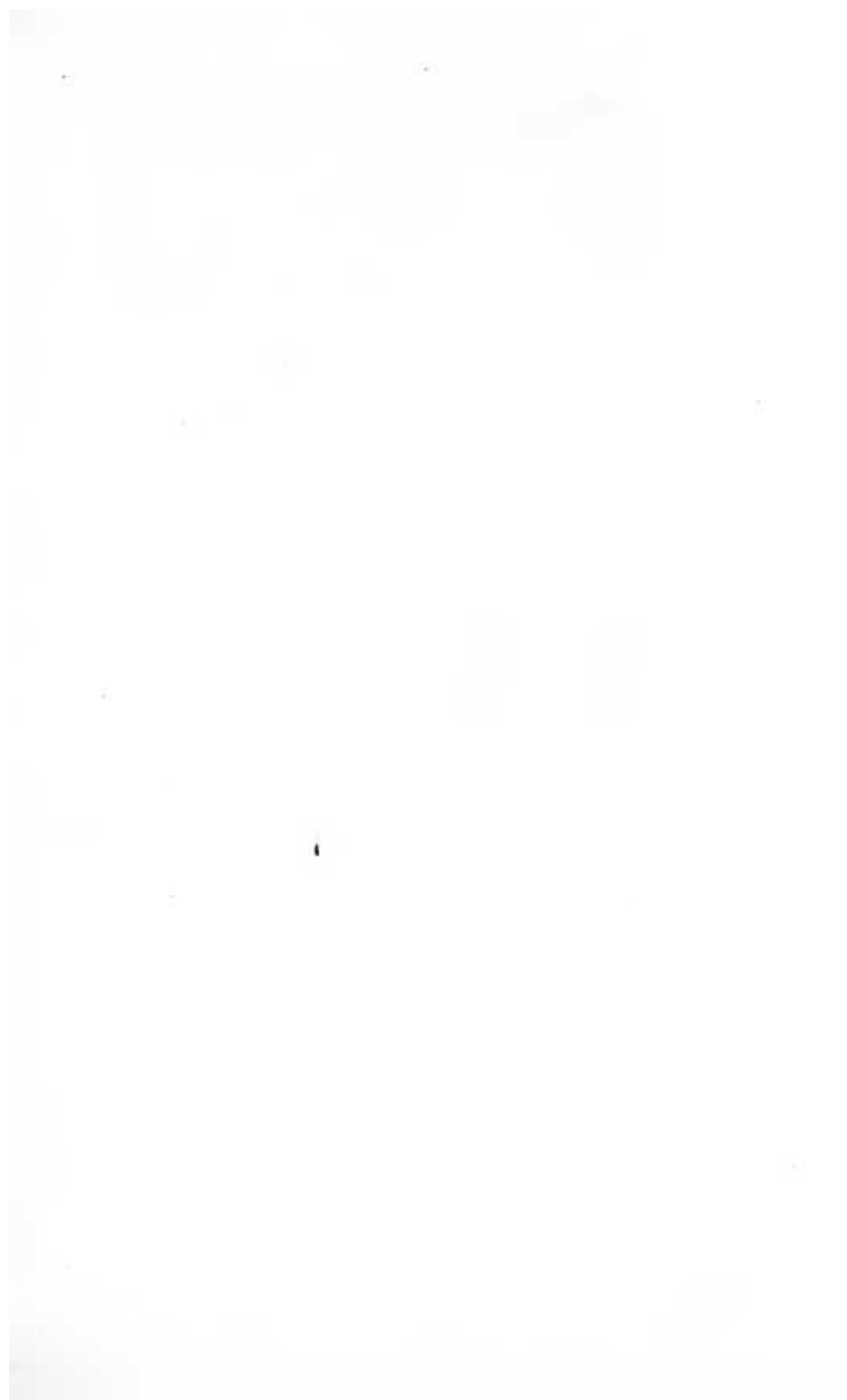
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Drawings



	Opposite Page
First Drawing	20
Second Drawing	42
Third Drawing	58
Fourth Drawing	74
Fifth Drawing	88
Sixth Drawing	94
Seventh Drawing	106
Eighth Drawing	132
Ninth Drawing	168
Tenth Drawing	174





DEDICATION



HIS dark and wayward book is affectionately dedicated to my enemies—to the curious ones who take fanatic pride in disliking me; to the baffling ones who remain enthusiastically ignorant of my existence; to the moral ones upon whom Beauty exercises a lascivious and corrupting influence; to the moral ones who have relentlessly chased God out of their bedrooms; to the moral ones who cringe before Nature, who flatten themselves upon prayer rugs, who shut their eyes, stuff their ears, bind, gag and truss themselves and offer their mutilations to the idiot God they



have invented (the Devil take them, I grow bored with laughing at them); to the anointed ones who identify their paranoic symptoms as virtues, who build altars upon complexes; to the anointed ones who have slain themselves and who stagger proudly into graves (God deliver Himself from their caress!); to the religious ones who wage bloody and tireless wars upon all who do not share their fear of life (Ah, what is God but a despairing refutation of Man?); to the solemn and successful ones who gesture with courteous disdain from the depth of their ornamental coffins (we are all cadavers but let us refrain from congratulating each other too courteously on the fact); to the prim ones who find their secret obscenities mirrored in every careless phrase, who read self accusation into the word sex; to the prim ones who wince adroitly in the hope of being mistaken for imbeciles; to the prim ones who