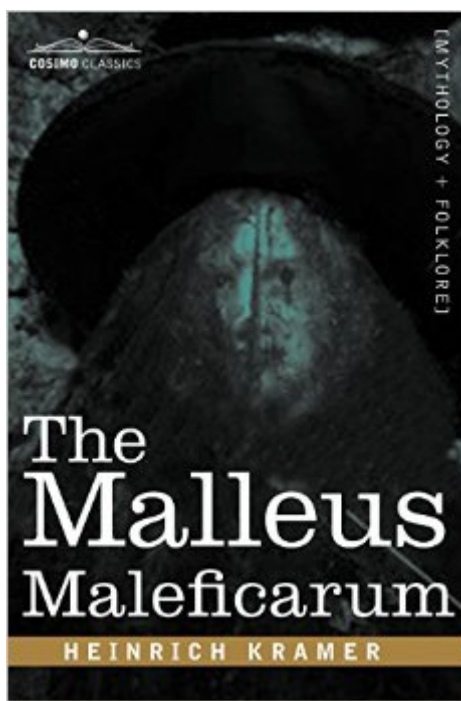


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The Malleus Maleficarum



Synopsis

Also known as "The Witch Hammer," The *Malleus Maleficarum* was a handbook for hunting and punishing witches-written by Inquisitors HEINRICH KRAMER (c. 1430-1505), an Alsatian clergyman, and JAMES SPRENGER (c. 1436-1494), a Swiss monk-to assist the Inquisition and Church in exterminating undesirables. Mostly a compilation of superstition and folklore, the book was taken very seriously at the time it was written in the 15th century and became a kind of spiritual law book used by judges to determine the guilt of the accused. While some of the articles covered in "The Witch Hammer" are humorous to modern audiences, they were a matter of life and death in the mid-1400's. Anyone interested in religion, the Inquisition, or the witch hunts that ravaged Europe will find this 1928 translation, by MONTAGUE SUMMERS (1880-1948), an unbelievable and enlightening read.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (102 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Rating the *MALLEUS MALEFICARUM* is an exercise in frustration. One cannot "enjoy" this book; like *MEIN KAMPF*, one reads it for its historical importance. This book should form a part of every thinking person's library as a warning beacon, if for no other reason that it is a seminal textbook on the inhumanity of humanity. First written in 1484 by the Friars Kramer and Sprenger, (and reprinted endlessly), the *MALLEUS* was immediately given the imprimatur of the Holy See as the most important work on witchcraft, to date. And so it remains. The *MALLEUS MALEFICARUM* is a compendium of fifteenth century paranoias, all the more frightening for its totalitarian modernity.

("Anything that is done for the benefit of the State is Good.") In form, it is a "how to" guide on recognizing, capturing, torturing, and executing witches. In substance, it is a diatribe against women, heretics, independent thinkers, romantic lovers, the sensitive passions, human sexuality, and compassion. "Vanity of vanities" indeed. In writing the MALLEUS, Kramer and Spenger claimed to be doing "God's work"; these men, and those who followed them worshiped only their own arrogance. Read it and Be Afraid, my friends. Forming a portion of every working law library for 300 years, there is no estimate of how many women and men were put to death through the mechanism of this benighted book. Some historians estimate that the numbers may run into the millions. The text is rife with "caselaw" examples of witchcraft, some of which are clearly delusional and some downright silly, or would be, if they hadn't ended in gruesome deaths for the accused.

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