

An Attempt at a Biography of William Somerset Maugham

— From his Birth up to the Making of the Masterpiece —

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Many biographical matters and materials by and on William Somerset Maugham have been in print in different contexts as the occasion arose. However, there has been brought out none of the type of his biography in which his total activities as a young man and a budding writer are integrated in a coherent chronological sequence.

This paper is an attempt at the type of all-embracing chronological biography of William Somerset Maugham from his birth up to the making of his autobiographical masterpiece, *Of Human Bondage*.

The present writer was able to get an access to the materials of biographical nature by and on William Somerset Maugham that follow.

1. The materials by Maugham

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2. A Writer's Notebook. London: Heinemann, 1949. x+349 pp.
3. Vagrant Mood. London: Heinemann, 1952. 241 pp.
4. Books and You. Anot. by Masao, T., Tokyo: Kinseido, 1957, 1962. 114 pp.
5. "Preface", *Liza of Lambeth*. London: Heinemann, 1897, 1951. pp. v-xxv (xxv+171 pp.).
6. "A Fragment of Autobiography", *The Magician*. New York: Pocket Books, 1958, 1960. pp. v-x (x+209 pp.).
7. "Author's Preface", *Cakes and Ale*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1948. pp. 5-8 (221 pp.).
8. "Introduction", *Cakes and Ale*. New York: Random House, 1950. pp. v-xii (xii+272 pp.).
9. "Foreword", *Of Human Bondage*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963. pp. 5-7 (607 pp.).
10. "Chapter One", *The Razor's Edge*. New York: Pocket Books, 1946, 1960. pp. 1-3 & passim. (350 pp.).

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11. "Note", Don Fernando. London: Heinemann, 1950, 1955. pp. 5-7 (vii+251 pp.).
12. "Preface", The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham (vol. 1). London: Heinemann, 1951, 1953. pp. vii-viii (viii+528 pp.).
13. "Preface", vol. 2. 1951, 1953. pp. vii-viii (viii+518 pp.).
14. "Preface", vol. 3. 1951, 1953. pp. vii-viii (viii+528 pp.).
15. "Preface", The Collected Plays of W. Somerset Maugham (vol. 1). London: Heinemann, 1931, 1952. pp. vii-xxi (xxi+310 pp.).
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18. "Preface to the Collected Edition", First Person Singular. abridged & anot. by Takeshi, G., Tokyo: Shohakusha, 1963 pp. 1-9. (145 pp.).
19. "The Author Excuses Himself", Creatures of Circumstance. selected & anot. by Nakanishi, N. and Moriyasu, Y., Tokyo: Nan'undo, 1954, 1962. pp. 1-5 (155 pp.).

2. The Materials on Maugham

1. Fadiman, C., "Introduction", Creatures of Circumstance. selected & anot. by Kohei, T., Tokyo: Nan'undo, 1953, 1963. pp. i-v (v+143 pp.).
2. J. H., "Introduction", Cakes and Ale. London: Everyman's Library, 1936. pp. v-vi (vi+280 pp.).
3. Jonas, K. W., (ed). The World of Somerset Maugham. Tr. by Mutsuo, T., Tokyo: Eihosha, 1957. 309 pp.
4. Pfeifer, K. G., W. Somerset Maugham. London: Victor Gollancz, 1954. 214 pp.
5. Shuji, Y., "Introduction", Our Betters and the Circle. anot. by Shuji, Y., Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1935. pp. i-lxii (lxii+421 pp.).
6. Tsutomu, U., Somerset Maugham. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956. 191 pp.
7. Yoshi, N., et. al., The Study of Somerset Maugham. Tokyo: Eihosha, 1946, 1957. 309 pp.

*1. 1874-1884: Paris ; Childhood.

William Somerset Maugham was born on January 25, 1874 when Victorian reign has another twenty seven years to go, and there were such literary figures still living and working as George Eliot, Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Mathew Arnold and Walter Pater.

Quite apart from his contemporaries, his native ground is Paris where his father was solicitor to British Embassy; his mother, who was twenty years younger than her husband, was remarkably beautiful, while the husband was an ugly little man. This couple, therefore, were known to their circle as *la Bell et le Bête*.

The precocious son, who dearly loved his mother, might well wonder how that much-thought-after mother should have married and could remain faithful to his ugly little father.

Maugham's father was as great a traveller as his son was to be, and naturally he has a large library of travel books. The sign against the Evil Eye, which Maugham began to use at about 1935, as a kind of monogram and appears on the cover of all his books was one of souvenirs of the solicitor's travel to Morocco.

His mother had contracted tuberculosis and was long suffering from it, and, like those whom God love, this beautiful and dear mother died young when she was thirty eight, and has six sons left behind. Willie, the sixth and youngest son of the Somerset, was eight at that time.

Maugham's father died from cancer two years after his mother's death when he had just build a sommer house outside Paris.

*2. 1884-1890 : Witstable, Kent, England.

Then he was made to leave the French school he had been attending and was taught English by an English clergy man attached to the British Embassy. And before long he was sent to England to live with his uncle, his godfather, Henry Macdonald Maugham, vicar of Whitstable, and he attended the preparatory school there for three years.

*3. 1887- : King's school.

In 1887 when he was thirteen he entered King's college in Canterbury, a few miles from Whitstable, where Christopher Marlow had attended.

*4. 1890 : To the south of France.

While in school, in 1890, he contracted tuberculosis, of which his mother and her only sister had died, and was sent to the south of France for nine months.

When he returned to King's school to continue his schooling, he was obliged to face with the choice of a profession and with the preparation for it.

By the way, he was a stammerer, and all his life Maugham has been afflicted with a stammer, though later years have found him a fairly good public speaker. His affliction of this stammer was so real and deep that it was not until 1938 that he did refer to it in print.

So that his choice of becoming barrister was naturally out of question, while the Civil Service has the wrong class of persons got into it owing to competitive examinations, and was no longer regarded as fit profession for a gentleman.

Maugham himself had always wanted to be a writer, though he did not breathe a syllable of it. Uncle Henry, who are well-meaning but not sensible, decided that the boy should become a vicar.

*5. 1891-1892 : Heidelberg University.

He managed to escape the dull and gray vicarage life into Heidelberg when he was seventeen and finished King's college. This is his first step towards self realization and towards the profession of a writer.

In Heidelberg, the unlikeable boy, fastidious in taste and timid but determined observer of the riotous life there, lived a temperate life with a German family who has been an acquaintance with his aunt, a German.

Maugham was a precocious child and in the city of Heidelberg his mental and emotional developments are prodigious. The air was full of new ideas. The charm of Ibsen and the new music of Wagner were clamorously praised and damned. Origin of Species and Ernst Reman's *Vie de Jésus* were avidly read and discussed.

Maugham was not an enrolled student of the University, but to some lectures he attended as regularly as the most assiduous student would have done. For instance, he listened to Kuno Fisher's lectures on philosophy with interest.

In these days he wrote a biography of Meyerbeer, though he knew nothing of music and had never heard any of his operas. Besides he wrote several pieces of one act play, including *Schiffbruechig* under the influence of Ibsen.

*6. 1892: London, accountancy.

When he returned from Heidelberg he refused to prepare for the ministry and after a six weeks' futile apprenticeship to the chartered accountant office, he decided to become a physician, and in the autumn of 1892 he entered the medical school attached to St. Thomas Hospital in London, partly because he had rather interested in living in London, and partly because his father had been a student there.

In London, where he entered the medical school, Maugham started to live in a boarding house at 11 Vincent Square, Westminster. His landlady was a cockney woman named Mrs. Foreman. Maugham occupied two rooms on the ground floor, for which he paid a pound a week.

We are told earlier that he was determined to become a writer when he finished King's college and that he wrote several pieces of one act play as well as a biography of Meyerbeer, which, however, was thrown into fire after one humiliating rejection.

Now the stage was reached when the man in Maugham was overshadowed by the writer in Maugham. He had entertained a wish to be a writer when he was seventeen, yet a certain native timidity and caution, linked with a sense of propriety he had, while living in the vicarage of Henry Macdonald Maugham, dissuaded him from being a rebel until he could be independent enough to afford to be one.

Maugham did not fail his medical exam like Philip Carey in *Of Human Bondage*, in spite of the fact that he had not been very attentive to lectures. And he gave as much time as he could manage to reading and writing.

He read far and wide through English, French, Italian and Spanish literature, and also read a great deal of philosophy, history and science.

In connection with these readings and the various experiences that he was undergoing at St. Thomas Hospital, Maugham began to write his famous *Writer's Notebook*, which by 1949 filled fifteen large volumes. This notebook was intended as raw material for his writing, much of material in it being personal and revelatory of his creation.

In his days at St. Thomas medical school he filled these notebooks with ideas for stories and plays, scraps of dialogue and reflections on what his reading and multifarious experiences had suggested to him.

*7. 1894 : Trip to Italy.

Besides these readings and writings travels are to be mentioned in deference to the writer in Maugham as well as to the man in Maugham who has had a rambling propensity bequeathed from his father. In 1894 when he was twenty Maugham made his first trip to Italy, taken during the six weeks' Easter holidays. In Florence he read Dant's *Purgatorio*.

*8. 1895 :

In 1895, living alone in a dingy house in which he had taken lodgings, he began writing seriously and with more devotion than ever, when he was twenty one. He was mostly writing frightfully realistic one-act plays under the influence

of Ibsen of his Leideiberg days.

The only trouble was that no manager would accept these plays. In this year he went again to Italy as far as Capri.

*9. 1896.

In 1896 he made his third trip to Italy and returned again to Capri in summer. He enjoyed himself and argued about art and literature with a friend of his Heidelberg days, Brown and others.

In the same year of 1896 when he was in his fourth years of his medical study, Maugham worked as an obsteric clerk for three weeks in the Lambeth slum near the hospital. During this period he was out on call day and night. He attended sixty-three confinements, a precious experience with the writer of *Human Bondage* as a young man. This experience, along with reflections in his notebooks, provided the material for his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*.

This novel he sent to Fisher Unwin, the publisher. Three months later he was told that his novel had been accepted for publication. And on the strength of that he began his second novel, *The Making of a Saint*. It was in 1896 and he was twenty two when he wrote these two novels.

*10. 1897.

In 1897 Maugham got his medical degree, when he was twenty three, and *Liza of Lambeth* was published in October of this year. The merit of the novel derives chiefly from Maugham's exact observation of people and place, which is one of his native equipments.

Elated with his first success he was rash enough to abandon medicine and devote himself to writing. He went to Seville, and settled down there.

Maugham's plan was to spend a year there till he had learnt Spanish, but he fell in love with Seville and the life one led there. He grew a moustach, smoked a cigar, learned to play the guitar and bought a broad brimmed hat, in which he swaggered down Sierpes. He hankered for a flowing cape lined with green and red velvet, but couldn't afford it. He wandered through the white and silent streets and strolled along the Guadalquivir. He dwadled about the cathedral.

However the legacy he had been given ran short, and Maugham entered upon his lean years, into the writer's classic period of apprenticeship. He had to struggle in picturesque surroundings.

In Seville he wrote his third novel which was called "*The Artistic Temperament of Stephen Carey*". Fortunately for Maugham and the literature of our era, Fisher Unwin refused to give him the hundred pounds he wanted for it, and no other

publisher would have it at any price. For had this novel been brought out Maugham would have wasted the material from which he later wrought *Of Human Bondage*. He was then too young to make proper use of it.

He spent eight months in Spain and wrote also some short stories which was to form part of *orientations*, his first volume of short stories.

*11. 1898.

Eight months after *Liza of Lambeth* appeared, his second novel *The Making of a Saint* was published in 1898 by the same Fisher and Unwin under the subtitle of A Romance of Medieval Italy. *The Making of a Saint* had been written in Capri during his summer vacation when he was strenuous and enthusiastic and started to work at six in the morning.

This was a failure because, contrary to *Liza of Lambeth*, the novel was a product of Maugham's readings rather than his observation and experiences. It was based on a story he had read in Machiavelli's History of Florence. It has, therefore, none of the realism of his first novel which based on his experience in the wards of St. Thomas Hospital.

However, as in *Liza of Lambeth*, the best thing about it is its dialogue.

The Making of a Saint is also the first example of Maugham's use of the first person singular, his masterly device for telling a story. Nevertheless, the narrator of this novel is a colourless person, unrelated to the worldly detached tellers of later tales as Dr. Saunders in *the Narrow Corner*.

In the same year of 1898 he went to Rome to perfect his superficial knowledge of Italian, and it was there that he wrote his first full-length play, *A Man of Honour*.

In this year his second novel, *The Making of a Saint*, which he had written in Capri, was published. As it was a failure, the critics received it with coolness and the public with indifference.

From Italy he planned to go to Greece to learn the vernacular as an approach to ancient Greek, and to Cairo to learn Arabic. He did not, however, carry out this ambitious programme, and he returned to Seville, a heavenly city to live, he said, in the flower of one's youth.

The result is that he has never read the Odyssey but in English and he has never achieved his ambition to read A Thousand Nights and a Night in Arabic.

*12. 1899 : London.

Before long in 1899 he was back to London and with a friend of his own age took a small flat at Carlisle Mansion near Victoria Station, and lived there until

1908, with the exception of two years' stay in Paris from 1904 to 1905.

In this year Fisher Unwin brought out a volume called *Orientations*, which contains six short stories, four of which had been written during his stay in Spain.

The title of this first volume of short stories of his has an interesting story to go with. The word *Orientations* was at the time not very familiar to the general public. Wanting an aphorism or a maxim to explain why he was using it, he looked about for something to his purpose in the French moralists and critics, but finding nothing, he coined an imaginary quotation himself, which was generally attributed to Joseph Jubert.

C'est surtout par les nouvelles d'une jeune écrivain qu'on peut se rendre compte du tour de son esprit. Il y cherche la voie qui lui est propre dans une série d'essais de genre et de style différents, qui sont comme des orientations pour trouver son moi littéraire.

The title very aptly described what he had in mind, and so the stories it contains did, in fact, in a crude and fumbling way suggest the direction in which he was afterwards to make further experiments. He meant the title merely to show how immature and tentative his work was. The stories were highly praised by the critics and brought him some commission.

*13. 1901.

In 1901 he published his third novel, *the Hero*, which happened to be his fourth book. It was suggested to him by the Boer War and influenced by his study of the French novelists. It was grim and uncompromising. His admiration for Flaubert led him to write long descriptions of scenery, which were generally reduced to three lines in his later novels.

The book, just like *Orientations*, was very well and respectfully reviewed, but neglected by the public. Consequently he made out of it only seventy five pounds.

It was, however, an honest piece of work, and he took a great deal of trouble to make it as good as he could, though he still knew very little of his art.

*14. 1902.

In 1902 *Mrs. Craddock*, which Maugham had written some time before but had been unable to get anyone to accept, was published. It was his first novel since *Liza of Lambeth*, and also his most important work during the first ten years after he became a professional writer.

It was his best novel, so he confessed, before *Of Human Bondage*. With the

exceptions of *Liza of Lambeth* and *Mrs. Craddock*, the books he wrote during this period were the exercise by which he sought to learn his business.

And also in this year *Schiffbruechig*, his first one act-play, written in German while he was non-matriculated student in Heidelberg University, was produced in Berlin.

Mrs. *Craddock*, like *Liza of Lambeth* had something of substantial success. Oeuvre de jeunesse that it may, it is, in fact, a far more mature work than any he had so far produced, and anticipates his later novels in style and theme. In this novel, like in *Liza of Lambeth*, he used the country side of Kent near Whitstable.

The novel concerns the birth and death of a high-born lady's passion for her low-born, physically attractive tenant farmer, whom she had been rash enough to marry. *Mrs. Craddock* is Maugham's first use of a theme that became one of his favorites later, the death of love.

Mrs. Craddock is more autobiographical than it appears to be, for its two chief characters, Bertha and Miss Ley, embody two sides of Maugham's characters; the passionate, over-sensitive side, and the ironic sceptical side.

Miss Ley, aunt of Bertha Craddock, is also the first of a series of wise, tolerant, ironic, middle-aged women who appear in Maugham's fiction.

His religious view was already descried in Bertha Craddock's word. "And who is goint to forgive God", the phrase was to appear in the mouth of Mrs. Littlewood in *The Unknown*, his play in 1920.

As early as in 1894, when he was twenty and student of medical school attached to St. Thomas Hospital in London, Maugham made his first trip to Italy. It was a cultural pilgrimage undertaken during the Easter holidays and the summer vacation. He had twenty pounds to spend and took Ibsen's *Ghost* with him on his first journey to Florence.

He was at the time seriously studying Dante, and he was reading him with the Landlady's daughter, while by way of relaxation, he translated *the Ghost* into English from a German version so that he might acquire a knowledge of technique.

And it was in 1898 when he went to Rome after a year in Spain that he wrote *A Man of Honour*. During the next two or three years he finished several curtain raisers and sent them to various managers.

At that time he had already had a couple of novels, such as *Liza of Lambeth* and *Mrs. Craddock* to his credit; nevertheless, the theatre managers continued to reject *the Man of Honour*.

At the beginning of the century, and for long after, though the managers as now were complaining of the dearth of plays, it is much more difficult than it is now for an unknown dramatists to get a production. Runs were long, and expenses were small.

Sir Arthur Pinero, Henry Arthur Jones and R. C. Carton held the stage. And for the rest the managers were content to depend upon boulderized adaptations from the French or German.

So that, after having been rejected by half a dozen managers, rewriting *The Man of Honour* he sent it desperately to the Stage Society, a high-brow organization which produced plays thought too good for the commercial theatre.

*15. 1903.

Thus in 1903 *A Man of Honour* which Maugham had written in Italy in 1898 was produced by the stage Society and given two performances on February 23 and 24.

The critics of the Sunday Times stated that it showed no sign of any talent for the stage, but the critics who had succumbed to the influence of Ibsen were sympathetic and encouraging, and treated it as a work of worthy consideration.

On the whole it was very well received, though its end, a little grim for the time, disconcerted the audience.

However, written five years before it was produced, *A Man of Honour* is a pretty weak stuff, but although irrevocably tragic, the play is clearly Maugham's. Its theme is the havoc wrought by a man who honourably marries a low-class girl whom he had made pregnant.

He did not make the most of this theme as Percy Lubbock makes the point. So that the protagonists of the play he made to appear again with no disguise even of their names, in his fourth novel *the Merry Go Round*, which was brought out in the next year.

During the rehearsal of the play he came in contact with the people who were interested in the society and with such eminent actors, Dennis Eadie, Granville Barker, O. B. Clarence and later Sir Nigel Playfair, who, however, played the smallest of the four parts at the time, while Cranville Barker, who lacked spiritual vitality and had a fear of life, played the leading part in the play.

Moreover, these rehearsals of *A Man of Honour* induced him to find that some scenes of flirtatious badinage in the first act were amusing. He decided that he would try his hand at a comedy.

He wrote one in the same year and called it *loaves and Fishes*. But no managers would not consider it because its hero was a worldly ambitious parson who courts a rich widow, intrigues to get bishopric and finally captures a pretty heirness. The managers thought it impossible to produce a play that held a clergy man to ridicule. A few years later he turned the play into novel published as *The Bishop's Apron*.

In order to find out what public wanted, he studied the plays that were

drawing the crowds, and came to conclude that he would most likely to succeed when he would write a comedy in which a big part would be given to an actress. For she might induce a manager to give trial to the play.

Then he tried to find out what sort of part would be likely to appeal to the leading actress. Leading ladies, he thought, are human. He asked himself what sort of woman the average woman would like to be. The answer was obvious: 'the adventuress with a heart of gold; titled, for the sex is peculiarly susceptible to the glamour of romance; the charming spendthrift and the wanton of impeccable virtue; the clever manager who twists all and sundry round her little finger and the kindly and applauded wit'.

Having made up his mind upon this, he wrote *Lady Frederick*. However 'the rest was not so easy' as he had thought, Maugham had made a mistake in underrating the vanity of woman. For Lady Frederick had a scene in the third act in which in order to disillusion a young lover Lady Frederick let him come in to her dressing-room and show herself without make-up and with her hair dishevelled. But no prominent actress of the day would consent to let an audience see her in this condition. The managers, again, refused to consider it.

In this year Maugham edited with Laurence Housman, *The Venture*, an Annal of Art and Literature for 1903, and The English version of his *Shiffbruechig* was included in it.

Shortly after the two night run of *A Man of Honour* Maugham felt he was in rut, and he went to live in Paris in 1903.

*16. 1904.

In 1904 He took a tiny fifth-floor flat near the Lion de Belfort which afforded a spacious view of the cemetery of Montparnasse.

He used to dine every evening at a restaurant called the Chat Blanc in the rue d'Odessa, where Arnold Bennett, also, living in Paris at this time, used to come once a week. A number of painter, illustrators, sculptors and writers were in the habit of dinning there, and they had a little room to themselves. They were of various nationalities and the conversation was carried on indifferently in English and French. They discussed every subject under the sun, generally with heat.

In 1904 while he was staying at Paris and *Lady Frederick* was being refused by manager after manager, he wrote another play called *Mrs. Dot*, a pleasant little play which no one could find anything to object to, as he had learned from his experience with his *Lady Frederick*.

He made use of the same principles that had served him in *Lady Frederick*, but he made his heroine even more virtuous; her reputation was unblemished and she did nothing that was not perfectly nice. In short he did everything to make

the play innocuous.

It suffered the same fate as its predecessors, and was refused as uniformly as *Lady Frederick*.

The managers praised the dialogue, but thought it too slight, complaining that there was not enough action. Miss Mary Moore, then a popular actress, suggested that he should insert a burglary scene to liven things up. But he did not see his way to this revision.

In this year he wrote novel called *The Merry Go Round*. Maugham confessed that this was a failure but that the experiment was interesting enough to have him think of its repetition.

The experience of life he was forever seeking suggested to him that the novelist's usual method of taking two or three persons and treating them as though the world moved round them, bringing others only in so far as the protagonists were concerned with them, gave a very false impression of the multifariousness of life.

In general the novelists write as though his hero and heroine dwell in a vacuum. He tried, then, to give a much fuller effect of life by taking a number of people, loosely connected as people are who live in the same world, and giving their stories with equal fulness, and telling all he knew about all of them.

He chose the necessary number of persons and devised four series of events that occurred simultaneously. These persons were attached to one another by a very thin thread, an elderly woman Miss. Ley, who knew at least one person in each group.

This Miss. Ley who had appeared in *Mrs. Craddock* in 1902, sees just as Mr. Maugham would do, the futility and absurdity of everyone, including herself.

Maugham intended *The Merry Go Round* like one of these huge frescos in an Italian cloister in which all manner of people are engaged in all manner of activities, but which the eye embraces in a single look. The scheme, however was too ambitious for his powers. The novel was suffered into the bargain, from the pernicious influence on him of easthetic school of the nineties. He made every one incredibly beautiful; the man inanely handsome, and the woman peerlessly lovely. The book was written with affectation.

But its chief defect was that it lacked the continuous line that direct the reader's interest. Perhaps this idea of 'whole truth' realism could be carried out if the intertwined stories and the persons who acted them were seen through the eyes of one of the characters in the book.

*17. 1905.

In 1905 He published *The Land of the Blessed Virgin* (also called *Andalusia*)

This book is important. *The Land of the Blessed Virgin* is the first of the four travel books by Maugham. This book shows the impact of his travel to Spain. Of the other three, by the way, *Don Fernando* is also about Spain; *On a Chinese Screen* is the fruit of his first trip to China; and *The Gentleman in the Parlour* is a record of a journey from Rangoon to Haiphong.

When he wrote *The Land of the Blessed Virgin*, Maugham was misled to believe what his common sense had asserted itself against. Intoxicated by the colours and rareness of the fantastic worlds that thickly stud the pages of *Salome*, and shocked by the poverty of his own vocabulary he sought to enrich his style with elaborate simile and quaint allusions. The intelligent young read Walter Pater with enthusiasm.

He read *Intentions* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in spite of himself. He found it hard, as it were, to breathe that dead, heavily scented atmosphere and sit in those hushed rooms in which it was indecorous to speak above a whisper, but he persuaded himself that this was the height of culture, and turned a scornful shoulder on the outside world where men shouted and swore, played the fool, wenched and got drunk.

He studied Jeremy Taylor's *Holy dying*. In order to assimilate his style Maugham even copied down passages and then tried to write them down from memory. As an exercise in style, he managed to make elaborate sentences of a jewelled phrase and sentences with exotic epithets.

The first fruit of this labour was a little book about Andalusia called *The Land of the Blessed Virgin*. The specimen of the wistful, allusive and elaborate sentences of Andalusia follows.

"And I think of Andalusia, my mind is suddenly ablaze with its sunshine, with its opulent colour, luminous and soft; I think of the cities, the white cities bathed in light; of the desolate wastes of sand, with their dwarf palms, the broom in flower. And in my ears I hear the twang of the guitar, the rhythmical clapping of hands and the castanets, as two girls dance in the sunlight on a holiday. I see the crowds going to the bull-fight, intensely living, many coloured, And a thousand scents are wafted across my memory; I remember the cloudless nights, the silence of sleeping towns, and the silence of desert country; I remember old-white-washed taverns, and the perfumed wines of Malaga, of Jerez, and of Manzanilla. The rain pours down without stay in oblique long lines, the light is quickly failing, the street is sad and very cheerless. I feel on my shoulder the touch of dainty hands, of little hands with tapering fingers. and on my mouth the kisses of red lips, and I hear a joyous laugh. I remember the voice that bade me farewell that last night in

Seville, and the gleam of dark eyes and dark hair at the foot of the stairs, as I looked back from the gate. "Feliz viage, mi Inglesito."

Of this exercise in ornate high-flown style Maugham decrees that this has neither ease nor spontaneity and that there are great many melodious adjectives with sentimental vocabulary.

Maugham's life among the artists and writers of Paris, from 1903 to 1905 supplied him the material for some chapter of *Human Bondage*, and contributed to his own profound knowledge of painting.

However, before the end of 1905 he returned to London, still poor and unknown.

*18. 1906.

In 1906 *The Bishop's Apron* was published. This is the novelization of *Loaves and Fishes* he had failed to get produced. This novel, he said, lay on his conscience for long, and only the serious student trouble to read it. He confessed frankly that he wrote this novel because he was at the time attached to a young person and he had to fight with her more opulent admirers to provide the luxuries with this frivolous soul.

He had taken it for granted that when his *A Man of Honour* had been performed the success he had with the Stage Society would impress managers in his favour. To his mortification he found that his very connection with the Society put them against him. For they had been under the impression that he could only write gloomy and unprofitable plays with none of commercial value.

After his two failures with a woman's play, *Lady Frederick* in 1903 and *Mrs. Dot* in 1903, he began to think that he should never be able to write a piece that an eminent actress would like well enough to insist on playing and so made up his mind to try his hand at a man's play. He employed the same method that he did with *Lady Frederick* but merely changed the sex of his principal character.

*19. 1907.

In 1907 he wrote *Jack Straw*, a play with a big part for an actor, not for an actress, but he had no better success with this.

But at last came the bit of luck. Otho Stuart, manager of the Court Theatre in London needed a play to fill in an odd six weeks while he was casting another play, and he took a chance on *Lady Frederick* through Golding Bright, who had thought Maugham's plays marketable and had taken them in hand and had so far submitted them manager after manager in vain.

Lady Frederick opened on October 26, 1907, and was an immediate success,

the objectionable scene where an actress has to show her naked face to the public becoming the hit of the show. *Lady Frederick* ran for eighteen months to solid houses.

In this year he wrote also the play called *the Explorer*. The result of the success with *Lady Frederick* was that in a very little while other managers accepted the plays they had consistently refused.

In this year his portrait was painted by Gerald Kelly, the English painter he had known during his stay in Paris.

*20. 1908.

Within six months, in march, 1908 *Jack Staw* was being played at the Vaudeville; in April *Mrs. Dot* at the Comedy. In June of the same year Lewis Waller put on the Lyric *The Explorer* which Maugham had written the year before. The First three had long runs while *the Explore* was only just not a failure.

With four plays running simultaneously in London, Maugham was the talk of the town. He had achieved what he had wanted though he did not, he said, make a great deal of money. In those days the takings of popular plays were much less than they are now and his royalties were small. However Maugham, who for ten years past had earned an average of one hundred pounds a year found himself earning as much as five hundred pounds a week. As a result he was completely relieved from financial anxiety.

This Byronic success in which he awoke one morning to find his four plays running at once in London brought him great fame as well as notriety.

Punch published a cartoon drawn by Bernard Partridge in which Willaim Shakespeare was shown biting his nails before a poster advertising Maugham's plays. He was much photographed and much interviewed. Distinguished people sought his acquaintance. His success was spectacular and unexpeced. He was by nature more relieved than excited and he thought his future would be sure.

An entry for 1908 of his Writer's Notebook struck a more personal tone and state that the net value of his success was that it freed him from financial uncertainties. He hated having to scrape and save to make both ends meet. He wanted money because he thought it would provide independence with him. It enabled him to tell the whole world to go to hell and figuratively, occasionally literally, he has been doing so ever after.

With his new wealth Maugham was able to indulge his bent for travel, and it was in this year of 1908 when he was twenty three that he visited Greece.

In Athens he had an experience or rather an anecdote. He was in the theatre of Dionysus, and from where he was sitting he was able to get a spacious view over the blue of Aegean. He thought of the great plays that had been acted on

that stage before him, just as his favourite Edward Gibbon had done before the ruins of Roman capitol. And cold shivers ran down his spine, when a group of Greek students came by, and one of them asked Maugham if he would like to hear him recite something from the stage.

Taking it for granted that the young student would recite a noble and sonorous passage of Sophocles or Euripedes, Maugham asked him to do so. The boy clambered on to the stage, posed as an actor, and spouted forth a bombastic lines from *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

In this year of his rich harvest, *The Magician* and *The Explorer* was brought out. One was cherished immediately after *The Man of Honour* and was given its final form in 1907. The other was, like *The Bishop's Apron* in 1906, was another novelization of his unproduced play.

The magician did not find its way in the collected Heineman edition of his works. However, this was the only novel about which he had hesitated to the last and finally omitted from the edition. It was, therefore, natural that *the Magician* was re-issued in February, 1957.

The Magician was written during the first six months of 1907 and was published in 1908. This book, he said, would never have written except for the great regard he had for Joris Karl Huysmans who was then at the height of his vogue. His *La Bas*, which anyone probably could not read now with more than a languid interest, was at that time suggestive and mysterious. To Maugham this book had palpitating horror and a strange fascination. It was a new sort of shocker written in a curious, vivid and unusual French.

Maugham later assessed Huysmans' works and came to conclude that his three most important works will be remembered for sometime hereafter as a picture of a certain side of French feeling at a certain period. He added that Huysmans' influence on current literature, though ephemeral, was widespread, and that he had a cardinal advantage over his imitators. Huysmans sincerely believed what he wrote. He was a man insanely superstitious who was convinced of the real existence of maleficent powers of which he treated.

Maugham has been and is enamoured with the mysticism of the East, and believed in craven terror of spells, charms and incantations of black arts at the time as well as at present. The world of Huysmans was, therefore, anything but moonshine for him. And it is very probable that Maugham believed almost every word of his tale.

The Magician was not a game he was playing. If it was a game, as Maugham would have us believe, how do we explain or how does he want us to explain the fact that he began to read it with disinclination, but it held his interest, while two of his early novels which for the sake of re-issue he had been obliged to read did not. One of these two novels which failed to interest its author is *The Making*

of *a Saint* written in 1898 and the other is *The Hero* written in 1901.

As for *The Making of a Saint*, he could not read it through indeed, and *The Hero*, he thought, had some dramatic scenes but the humours filled him with mortification. Maugham passed his verdict on these two novels that he should have been ashamed to see them published.

On the other hand not only did Maugham read *The Magician* with interest after the passage of nearly fifty years, but he wondered also how on earth he could have come by all the material concerning the black arts which he wrote of. He added pensively that he must have spend days and days reading in the library of the British Museum.

The style of the novel is not sort of style he later adopted in his masterpiece, *Of Human Bondage*. And he would not approve it now. But the style was not unsuited to the subject of the book. There are a great many more adverbs and adjective used than he should use today. He was at the time impressed by the *écriture artiste* which the French writers of the time had not yet entirely abandoned, and not unwisely did Maugham seek to imitate them.

Of *The Magician* metion must be made concerning one of the principal characters who pervades and permeate through the book with ominous imminence.

He is the enormously fat and eccentric Oliver Haddo, the magician, who, enraged with the insult and violence of Arthur burdon, the surgeon on the staff of St. Luke's, seduces his beautiful fiancée, Margaret Dancey, by his acclaimed black arts.

This Oliver Haddo was suggested to Maugham partly by the portrait of Alexandre del Borro in the Museum at Berlin, and partly by an acquaintance he made when he was spending a year in Paris. This model for Oliver Haddo is one Aleister Crowley who, like Arnold Bennet and Clive Bell, was one of occasional visitors to the Chat Blanc where Maugham was out dinning almost every night.

Maugham do not remember now how he came to think Aleister Crowley might serve as the model for Oliver Haddo, nor how he came to think of writing *The Magician*.

At any rate like Arthur Burdon in the novel, Maugham took an immediate dislike to Aleister Crowley, but he interested and amused him. He was a liar and boastful, but he actually done some of the things he claimned to have done. As a mountaineer, he made an ascent of K² in the Hindu Kush without the elaborate equipment, the cylinders of oxgen and so forth. He did not reach the top, but got nearer to it than anyone had done before.

Crowley was a voluminous writer of verse. He had a gift for rhyming and his verse is not entirely without merit. Some of his verse is good enough to be mistaken for bad Swineburne or Browning. Maugham says of him what he said of Bennet, that he enjoyed his company but did not much like him.

At the time Maugham knew him Aleister Crowley was dabbling in satanism, magic and the occult. There was just then something of a vogue in Paris for that sort of thing occasioned by the interest that was at the time taken in *La Bas*, the book of Huysmans referred to.

At any rate he served as the model for Oliver Haddo in *The Magician* and of Cronshaw in *Of Human Bondage*. However Oliver Haddo is by no means a portrait of Aleister Crowley. Maugham made his character more striking in appearance, more sinister and more ruthless than Crowley ever was. Maugham gave magical powers to Haddo which Crowley, though he claimed them, certainly never possessed.

Though *The Magician* is not a transcription of the facts, Crowley recognized himself in the character when the book was published, and wrote a full page review of the novel in *Vanity Fair*, which he signed Oliver Haddo.

Maugham, as had been his habit with the writings on him, did not read the review, of which he was to repent later when he wrote a fragment of autobiography as a preface to the re-issued edition of *The Magician*.

During the winter of 1904 Maugham saw Crowley several times, but never after he left Paris early in 1905 to return to London. Once in a long afterwards Maugham received a telegram from him which ran as follows: "Please send twenty-five pounds at once. Mother of God and I am starving. Aleister Crowley." Maugham did not send the money and Crowley lived on for many disgraceful years as Wilson did in *The Lotus Eater*, one of Maugham's short stories.

The Explorer was the novelization of his play which Maugham had started immediately after *A Man of Honour* and had written in 1907. In the next year this play got produced at the Lyric in June thanks to the sudden and immediate success of *Lady Frederick* in the previous year.

The chief character of the novel is Alec Mackenzie, a strong silent man, who was suggested to Maugham by H. M. Stanley whose exploits had long fascinated his young fancy. Owing to Kipling this type of hero was then very much in vogue.

The Hero refuses to clear himself of abominable accusations in order to save the honour of his fiancée's brother, who is not the gallant one she fondly believed but a worthless dog.

No audience would not appreciate this self-sacrifice of the hero and the original play was of mediocore success, while Maugham had finished and sent *The Magician* to the publishers.

However, he had his *Magician* returned when one of publishing partners had by chance read *The Magician* in proof and had been shocked by its hair-raising fantasy.

Maugham had always smugly assumed that publishers should never learn to

read, but that they had only to sign their names. But this bit of ill luck left him without much money. And he confessed frankly that he made the novel out of *the Explorer* hurriedly in a month in order to get enough money to carry him for the following year.

Accordingly he found the novelization very tedious, and should have suppressed it unless the public can not be trusted to forget far more completely than the author the books he would prefer not to have written. Indeed for long this novel, along with *The Bishop's Apron*, irked his conscience like the recollection of a discreditable action.

*21. 1909.

In 1908 we see four plays of successful Maugham running simultaneously in London and a cartoonist showed him as the object of Shakespeare's jealousy.

The success of these plays made the managers eager to take other plays. Early in this year they got produced *Penelope* which he had written on commission to suit Miss Marie Tempest, leading actress in the play.

Penelope had been married Dr. O'Farrell for five years and loved him so dearly and devotedly that when she found her husband flirting with Ada Fergusson she made up her mind to divorce him straight away. Her father Golightly, mathematician by profession, came over and dissuade her from the resolution, into indulgence towards her husband.

"My dear, you've loved him, morning, noon and night. You've loved him when he talked, and you've loved him when he was silent. You've loved him walking, you've loved him eating, you've loved him sleeping. He's never been able to escape from your love."

This play was good enough to be successfully revived years later.

Smith which he had written also on commission to suit Miss Marie Lohr, leading actress in the play, got a production in september of this year. Suffice it to say that this four-act comedy was his best play before the first World War, its theme being about the antithesis of high-born Tom against low-born Flecher courting and competing for Miss Smith. Tom interests us when he is found the prototype of Teddie in Maugham's later and matured masterly play, *The Circle*.

Thus he had an uninterrupted series of successes, when he thought it time to try his hand at more serious works, for he wanted very much to see what he could do with more complicated subjects.

He wanted to make one or two small technical experiments relevant of theatrical performances, and he wanted to see how far he was able to drive the public

forward. He wrote *The Tenth Man* and *Landed Gentry*.

*22. 1910.

Landed Gentry was produced in this year in February. The play portrayed the narrow self-complacent life of country gentlefolk.

The Tenth Man, on the other hands was concerned with the political and financial world. Maugham had had some acquaintance with both world by the time he wrote these plays.

So keenly was he conscious that he must interest, move and amuse the public that he heightened the note. As a consequence they were neither simply realistic nor theatrical. His indecision was fatal. The audiences found them rather disagreeable and not quite real. They fell between two stools. They were neither success nor failure.

*22. 1911.

Maugham now felt rich enough to have a home of his own, and in this year he bought a Georgian house at 6 Chesterfield Street in Mayfair.

Here for the first time he played the role in which he was to become famous, that of host to the international celebrities.

Loaves and Fishes was produced in this year which had been lying in his desk for the dozen years, which had been written as early as in 1903, and also had provided the original with *The Bishop's Apron* in 1906.

This play failed to have a long run because, as the manager had sagaciously foreseen, the public of that day did not feel at ease at seeing a clergyman made fun of. Written somewhat extravagantly, the play suggests farce rather than comedy, and it has some amusing scenes in it.

*23. 1912.

In this year at the zenith of his fame and fortune, and he was contentedly making the most luxurious pattern of his life, The demon of a force within was steadily driving him into the dale of the damned creation, into the writing down and off the teeming memories of his past life and all.

Of Human Bondage and the making of it we are yet to know, for legions of books of novel criticism came out only to pass on and about it, but none through it.