CHAPTER III

EARLY NOVELS AND PLAYS

The early novels and plays of Maugham already show the twin strains of cynicism and humanitarianism at work, and in this chapter these early works will be examined from this point of view.

(A) EARLY NOVELS:

Of the early novels, eight in all (listed below in the footnote), Maugham thought only two worth including in the collected edition of his works, and rightly so, for only Liza of Lambeth and Mrs. Craddock of these early novels were successful and their success has been well-deserved, because

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they attain a level of achievement which the other six novels, for one reason or the other, as will be shown in this discussion, fail to reach. Of these six novels, two can be dismissed at the outset by mentioning that they were novelizations of two of Maugham's plays which were rejected by theatre-managers when they were first written. The two novels are *The Bishop's Apron* (1906) which was a novelization of the play *Loaves and Fishes* written in 1902 and rejected several times by managers until at last it was staged in 1911; and *The Explorer* (1908) — the novelization of a play of the same name written in 1907. About these novelizations Maugham says, "for long they lay on my conscience like a discreditable action. I would have given much to suppress them".  

The tale of the other four novels is also soon told. *The Making of a Saint* (1898) was written when its author was fresh from the success of his first novel *Liza of Lambeth*.

In *The Making of a Saint* Maugham sought to write a historical romance set against the background of the Italian Renaissance. He did so because, as he tells in *The Summing Up*, he thought at that time that "the historical novel was the only one that the young author could hope to write with

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success, for he could not have sufficient experience of life
to write of contemporary manners."\(^3\) The Making of a Saint
does not succeed, for an adventure-novel full of hair-breadth
escapes was not, and never could be Maugham's province. But
as R. H. Ward points out, if The Making of a Saint was the
making of 'an honest mistake', The Magician (1908) was
'a dishonest mistake'; for this latter novel is "an insincere
book ..... a deliberate piece of sensationalism, an attempt to
give the public what it wants ..... a sin against inspiration"\(^5\).
The Merry-Go-Round (1904) fails because of an unsuccessful
technical experiment which Maugham attempted here — that of
devising four or five separate plots connected with one another
by a very thin thread, an elderly woman who knew at least one
person in each group. The result was diffusion of interest
among many characters and actions. To make matters worse,
the book was written, as Maugham himself confesses, "in a
tight and affected manner" after the preciosity of the
Aesthetic School of the Eighteen Nineties.\(^6\) The Hero, (1901)
the last of these unsuccessful novels has, like the more
successful Mrs Craddock, Kent as its setting, and Kent is the
country of Maugham's childhood. Yet The Hero is a book that

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3. The Summing Up, p. 112.
4. R. H. Ward : W. Somerset Maugham ( G. Bles, 1937 ), p. 120.
really never becomes alive" for it wants living characters like Bertha and Miss Ley which galvanize Mrs. Craddock into life.

_Liza of Lambeth_ (1897) and _Mrs. Craddock_ (1902) are both rich in compassion. Their settings differ widely, for _Liza_ is set against the background of Lambeth-slums and the low-class factory-life there, whereas Bertha Craddock is the daughter of a country-squire in a quiet provincial town on the sea-coast in Kent. But Liza and Bertha are both women who love passionately and suffer, and the picture of their suffering is drawn with deep understanding, tenderness and compassion.

From the point of view of technical excellence and artistic skill _Liza of Lambeth_ is a work which shows definite signs of immaturity. Maugham himself has very modest claims to make for the novel: "If I may judge by its continuing sales", he observes, "_Liza of Lambeth_ is still readable, but any merit it may have is due to the luck I had in being, by my work as a medical student, thrown into contact with a side of life that at that time had been little exploited by novelists. Arthur Morrison with his _Tales of Mean Street_ and _A Child of the Jago_ had drawn the attention of the public

to what were then known as the lower classes and I profited by the interest he had aroused." And again, "such success as the book had was due to a lucky chance." Considered from the standpoint of fiction, *Liza* is indeed more of a transcript from slum-life rather than a novel. Yet its strength lies in the portrait of Liza and in the picture of slum-life, both of which are done with restraint and realism, and yet with understanding and compassion.

When she first appears on the scene, Liza is just a youthful, energetic, good-natured and cheerful girl of eighteen, with her proper share of feminine vanity which she shows in swaggering through the street in her new dress on Saturday afternoon, proud of the sensation she is creating. "Every one liked her", we are told, "and was glad to have her company. 'Good old Liza', they would say, as she left them, 'she is a rare good sort, ain't she?' She asked after the aches and pains of all the old people and delicately inquired after the babies, past and future; the children hung on her skirts and asked her to play with them, and she would hold one end of the rope while tiny little girls skipped, invariably entangling themselves after two jumps." She rejects Tom who

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loves her, but noticing that she has pained him, —

"She could not see the look upon his face, but she heard the agony in his voice; and moved with sudden pity, she bent out, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him on both cheeks." "Never mind, old chap!" she said, "I am not worth troublin' abaat."\textsuperscript{11} But for all this, Liza is by no means an angel of goodness and innocence. She is a shrewd and practical young girl — for once she realizes that if she tells her mother where she puts her week's money, it gets "perspired like" (i.e. evaporated), she coolly tells Mrs. Kemp next time that the money has been put away 'where it will be safe'!

This young woman with abundant zest for life requires a strong man with an animal vitality to rouse the springs of love within her. Tom, shy and unassuming, is therefore dismissed by Liza with the words — "I don't want him slobberin' abaat me; it gives me the sick, all this kissin' and cuddlin'!"\textsuperscript{12} Love enters into Liza's life with Jim Blakeston, tall, broad and bearded, and she surrenders herself whole-heartedly to her whirlwind of a passion for a man who is forty and is the father of half-a-dozen children. "I couldn't help it", she confesses to Tom, "I did love 'im so"!\textsuperscript{13} The inevitable happens, Liza gets into trouble and

\textsuperscript{11} Liza of Lambeth, p. 19. \textsuperscript{12} op. cit., p. 49.\textsuperscript{13} op. cit., p. 138.
dies of abortion. Maugham makes no attempt to whitewash Liza, nor is there any cry of 'a pure woman' over the fallen girl. Her death is described in a quiet, restrained way and no tears are shed over 'one more unfortunate'. Yet the author's deep sympathy for the Lambeth girl saves the picture from becoming sordid in the Zolaesque manner.

The picture of slum-life in the novel is also done with understanding and compassion. It is a thoroughly realistic picture completely devoid of any glossing over or sentimentalizing. But Maugham avoids the pit-fall of looking only at sordidness and revelling in it — a weakness of Zolaesque realism. Both the humour and the pathos of slum-life are shown. Liza's mother, a martyr to "rheumatics", and Mrs. Hodges the mid-wife with whom she discusses the advantages of insuring one's children, and the relative merits of oak and elm coffins while Liza is on the death-bed, represent the rough humour of the slums. But misery is the 'daily food' of the people of Lambeth. Maugham tells us in the preface to a new edition of Liza (1951) that the Lambeth of 1897 has vanished now. Marriage there means six days of sobriety followed by drunkenness, so that Saturday night is "the time when women in the Vere street weep".  

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14. Liza of Lambeth, p. 119-120.
(husbands) is all alike; they're arright when they're sober — sometimes — but when they've got the liquor in 'em, they're beasts, an' no mistake."¹⁵ The philosophy of wife-beating seen through the eyes of a wife is: "I can stand a blow as well as any woman. I don't mind that, an' when 'e don't tike (take) a mean advantage of me I can stand up for myself an' give as good as I like."¹⁶ The coming of babies is the most usual topic of conversation there, for a wife is always either nursing a baby or carrying, and often doing both. Apart from the humour and the pathos of Lambeth-life, the sports and pleasures of the people are likewise described with gusto and understanding. The outing on Bank holiday where one of the sports is a contest in spitting; the dancing at the street-corner when the Italian organ-grinder comes; the delights of the penny-melodrama at the theatre; the street-fights; and the improvised cricket in the lanes with coats as stumps — all these are described clearly, and vividly.

**MRS. CRADDOCK**:

Bertha, the heroine of *Mrs. Craddock* is also a victim on the altar of love, but her mind differs substantially

¹⁵. op. cit., 121. ¹⁶. op. cit., 71.
from that of the simple Liza. She is a sophisticated young woman whose childhood has been spent in wandering about the continent, and she has been "educated in half a dozen countries." In her peculiar upbringing she has never felt the restraints which normally shape the personality of the daughter of a country-squire. She has grown up into an independent and self-willed young woman. The birth of love in her heart has a strange effect on this strong woman. It becomes a consuming hunger and thirst for her — a hunger to body and soul surrender herself to a strong male. Bertha thinks that she has found her mate in the massive and big-boned gentleman-farmer, Edward Craddock. She "inhales voluptuously" the pleasant odour of the farmyard, the mingled perfume of strong tobacco, of cattle and horses" which he always brings with him. Bertha brooks no opposition to her desire to marry Edward, ignores murmurs of 'mésalliance' and declares to her guardians — "I care nothing for his reputation. If he were drunken and idle and dissolute, I'd marry him because I love him." 17

...... "She wanted to abase herself before the strong man, to be low and humble before him. She would have been his handmaiden, and nothing could have satisfied her so much as to

perform for him menial services. She knew not how to show
the immensity of her passion.\footnote{\textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.} Hence, "Bertha gave herself
over completely to the enjoyment of her love.\ldots love was a
great sea into which she boldly plunged, uncaring whether she
would swim or sink."\footnote{\textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.} \ldots. "He was the man and she was the
woman, and the world was a garden of Eden conjured up by the
power of passion."\footnote{\textit{op. cit.}, p. 83.} "My love will never alter", she is sure,"It is too strong. To the end of my days I shall \textit{always} love
you with all my heart."\footnote{\textit{op. cit.}, p. 55.} Even Edward's limitations are
transmuted into virtues in Bertha's powerful imagination —
his ignorance and naivety into simplicity and innocence, and
his vulgarity in taste into freedom from sophistication. The
first few months of married life are "an exquisite dream" for
Bertha.

Then comes suddenly the rude awakening. It is the old
story which Byron expressed so well in those famous lines of
his —

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart
'Tis woman's whole existence".

19. \textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.
20. \textit{op. cit.}, p. 83.
Bertha realizes that a yawning gulf separates her passionate self from her cold and prosaic husband. "Love to her was a fire, a flame that absorbed the rest of life; love to him was a convenient and necessary institution of Providence, a matter about which there was as little need of excitement as about the ordering of a new suit of clothes."\(^{22}\) As Miss Ley puts it, "For Bertha the book of life is written throughout in italics; for Edward it is all in the big round hand of the copy-book heading."\(^{23}\)

Now begin Bertha's tribulations. She tries to inspire Edward with her own fire, fails and feels humiliated. Then a cold fear seizes her that Edward neither loved her nor had ever loved her. "She told herself that she could not do things by halves, she must love or detest, but in either case, fiercely." She now "wavered uncertainly between the old passionate devotion and a new equally passionate hatred."\(^{24}\) The knowledge that she is with child brings new hopes of securing a worthier object on which Bertha can bestow her affection, — but the child is still-born and what is worse, Bertha is told that she can never have another child. She once more turns to Edward, transferring to him "the tenderness that she had lavished on her dead child, and all...

\(^{22}\) Mrs. Craddock, p. 199.  
\(^{23}\) op. cit., p. 106.  
\(^{24}\) op. cit., p. 120.
Once more she is disappointed, but this time the disappointment is as great as her new yearning has been fierce. Under the blow, "suddenly she abhorred him; the love that had been a tower of brass, fell like a house of cards ... Bertha found a bitter fascination in stripping her idol of the finery with which her madness had bedizened him." But hate and love are twins, and in the extreme physical and mental exhaustion which follows her delivery, Bertha's moods alternate suddenly between the two. Thus, she decides to leave her husband for good and goes away to London, but after a stay of six weeks, comes back, because in the struggle in her heart, "Pride, anger, reason, everything had been on one side and only love on the other; and love had conquered." But the six-week-long separation does a miracle for Bertha. When she meets Edward again, it is not the slender, manly youth whom she loved that she sees before her — it is a heavy and coarse country farmer. The see-saw of hate and love ends, and "Bertha's love, indeed, had finally disappeared as suddenly as it had arisen, and she began to detest her husband." Each of his faults now becomes magnified in her eyes, and she wonders how she ever loved this man, and humbled herself.

27. op. cit., p. 194. 28. op. cit., p. 198.
so abjectly before such a creature. To be free from love of him, and indifferent is a great satisfaction.

But Mrs. Craddock is a woman cut out for intense love. She soon finds another object which she feels is worthy of receiving the springs of love in her. She meets her young scamp of a cousin — Gerald — in London, where she has once more fled from Edward and the country. Gerald, nineteen and happy-go-lucky, flirts with her, little knowing that he is playing with fire. The fires of passion rekindled in Bertha are about to consume both her and Gerald, but the watchfulness of her aunt and the inexperience of Gerald save Bertha.

Baulked again and broken in spirit, Bertha returns to the monotony of country-life. A murky pall of ennui settles on her soul, and like Hardy's Viviette in Two on a Tower, placed against a similar background, she is "a walking weariness". Nothing can dispel it, not even the sudden death of Edward through an accident.

But Bertha's passionate nature threatens to bring on her a curious revenge; left alone, she turns back to the past — to the Edward of the first few days of their association. She now begins to fear that all her love for him will return and gnaw at her heart for ever. In a wild frenzy she seeks
to shatter the past in order to begin a new life. She burns all his letters and photographs, gives up their home and becomes a wanderer. Her struggles are now over, the fires in her heart are burnt out. Well might she say with Byron —

"My days are in the yellow leaf
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone." 29

Exhausted and world-weary, her only desire is now for —

'Calm of mind, all passion spent.' "Her apathetic eyes said that she had loved and found love wanting, that she had been a mother and that her child had died, and that now she desired nothing very much but to be left in peace." 30

Such is the story of Bertha, the woman who loved 'not wisely but too well'. The analysis of Bertha's changing moods is done with great subtlety; but what is more significant is the fact that Bertha herself, though abnormal, never loses our sympathy even when we realize that the demands she makes on her pedestrian but honest husband are unjustified.

In Liza and Bertha Maugham painted two women swept off their feet by passion. In Kitty (The Painted Veil, 1925).

29. On this Day I complete my thirty-sixth Year. Byron (Poems).
and Julia (The Theatre, 1937) he was to return virtually to the same theme. But in the meantime cynicism has won, and to sympathise with Kitty and Julia is as impossible as not to sympathise with Liza and Bertha is. The contrast will be fully illustrated in later chapters (Chapters V and VII).

Another significant aspect of the novel Mrs. Craddock is that it also shows the other strain in Maugham—the cynical strain, or something very near to it. It is in the portrait of Miss Ley, the maiden aunt of Bertha, that this other self of Maugham is fully revealed. In fact, Miss Ley is an early portrait of the cynical propensities in Maugham. She is a middle-aged, well-to-do spinster, with thin lips and a tightly compressed mouth. "She had a habit of fixing her cold eyes on people with a steadiness that was not a little embarrassing. They said Miss Ley looked as if she thought them great fools and as a matter of fact that usually was precisely what she did think."31 She has a disconcerting habit of "saying rather absurd things in the gravest and most decorous manner." Human beings interest her because, as she puts it, "they are so stupid." But though she is interested in human nature, she also believes that "one's greatest duty

in this world is to leave people alone." She wishes nothing more than "to leave people alone and be left alone by them."

Miss Ley is a sentimentalist at war with her own sentimentalism. "Like the Red Indian who will suffer the most horrid tortures without wincing, Miss Ley would have thought it highly disgraceful to display feeling at some touching scene. She used polite cynicism as a cloak for sentimentality, laughing that she might not cry ... she felt that tears were unbecoming and foolish."32 Love and marriage are summed up for her in two phrases - 'the instinct of reproduction' and 'the female attracted to the male'. Her whole attitude to life is "a shrug of shoulders and a well-bred smile of contempt;" her idea of a happy life is "to gather the roses — with gloves on, so that the thorns should not prick me." It is significant to note that Miss Ley's favourite author is Montaigne, and that she quotes Rochefoucauld.

There is much that can be said for Miss Ley's philosophy of life. It helps her eminently in preserving her liberty and in dealing with people in general. But it is in dealing with Bertha that the limitations of Miss Ley's attitude to life are revealed. Bertha's struggles interest her, but she can hardly comprehend their true significance. Even when she

saves Bertha from getting into mischief with Gerald, her motive in doing so is not so much love for her niece as the desire to avoid complications which might upset the even tenor of her own life! But it is in the last episode in which she figures, in the story, that the limitations of her philosophy of life are fully expressed. When Bertha, weary and disappointed, sets out for home again, the only thing that Miss Ley has to offer to her is a string of polite platitudes about the desirability of treading the safest path in life; and her conclusion of the whole matter is — "The fact is that very few women can be happy with only one husband. I believe that the only solution of the marriage question is legalised polyandry" — a diverting thought indeed; but it also reveals how the sentimentalist turning savagely against himself manages to murder all sympathy in his breast, and becomes a cold, indifferent cynic.

(B) EARLY PLAYS:

From among the eleven plays of the first phase of his career as a dramatist, Maugham has included only six in the collected edition of his works. They are: Lady Frederick, Jack Straw, Mrs. Dot, and Penelope (1912), and Smith and

34. cf. The List of Early Plays (page 74).
The Land of Promise (1913). The first three, of which Jack Straw and Mrs. Dot are both described as 'farces' by their author, are amusing pieces with a touch both of light satire and sentiment, but nothing more. The theme in each is trivial. Lady Frederick presents "an adventuress with a heart of gold; Mrs. Dot, a brainy woman who employs a variety of tricks to catch her man. Jack Straw is built round the hoary comic convention of mistaken identity. They are plays after the manner of Oscar Wilde, but of the Wilde of the early comedies, not of the Wilde of that perfect comedy of Manners — The Importance of Being Earnest. They have more of flippancy and light-heartedness than of satire or cynicism.

The picture of upper-class society in these plays has nothing of the bitterness and savagery of similar pictures in the later plays. Even the so-called confirmed cynics in these plays — Paradine Fouldes in Mrs. Frederick and Blenkinsop in Mrs. Dot—are harmless middle-aged bachelors indulging in nothing stronger than a few flippant and innocuous epigrams and paradoxes, like Oscar Wilde's Lord Goring in An Ideal Husband. The point is even better illustrated by Jack Straw. Here in exposing the snobs — Mr. and Mrs. Parker-Jennings — the author is as kind as to them as he is cruel to the snobs in his later plays. The Parker-Jennings are vulgar and mean-minded upstarts whom a wind-fall fills with a passion for
hobnobbing with aristocracy. A hotel-waiter is passed off on them as an archduke. But their discomfiture is not severe. In consistency with the geniality of the play, the supposed waiter really turns out to be the Archduke of Pomerania. Satire thus melts into good spirits. Each of these three plays ends with a marriage, providing a fine contrast with the endings of some of the bitter comedies of Maugham's second phase. About these three plays Maugham writes, "I had then very high spirits, a facility for amusing dialogue, an eye for a comic situation, and a flippant gaiety; there was more in me than that, but this I put away for the time, and wrote my comedies with those sides of myself only that were useful to my purpose. They were designed to please and they achieved their aim."35

Maugham's progress from Lady Frederick to Penelope has an almost exact parallel in Oscar Wilde's advance from light sentimental comedy in Lady Windermere's Fan to intellectual comedy of manners in The Importance of Being Earnest. Lady Frederick and its two immediate successors have their share of sentiment, and rather cheap sentiment it is. Queer things happen in the world of these comedies. Here a debt-ridden siren is magnanimous enough to let her prey escape (Lady

35. The Summing Up, p. 81.
Frederick); a confirmed cynic suddenly turns out to be an ardent lover (Paradine Fouldes); an archduke falls in love with the daughter of an upstart because she is kind to him when he, disguised as a waiter, is shamefully treated by her parents, and marries her (Jack Straw).

In Penelope Maugham has got over sham sentiment, though this does not lead him here to being bitter and cruel, as in some of the later comedies. This play has, as Allardyce Nicoll points out, "a frank air of intellectualism". The title Penelope is significant. Penelope is the devoted wife, the Penelope of Ulysses. The problem of the play, stated in rather simple terms is, 'how can a wife keep her husband's love?' The answer given by Professor Golightly in the play is — "a wise woman never lets her husband be quite, quite sure of her. The moment he is, Cupid puts on a top-hat and becomes a church-warden." His advice to Penelope is not to make her love too cheap. "Remember that man is by nature a hunter. But how can he pursue if you're always flinging yourself in his arms? ..... Make yourself a fortress that must be freshly stormed each day." But the problem is throughout dealt with on the purely intellectual plane, in the best tradition of the comedy of Manners. Penelope has...

37. Penelope, Collected Plays Vol. II, p. 82.
therefore neither sentiment nor satire. It is *The Importance of Being Earnest* of Maugham's career.

The theme in *Smith* and *The Land of Promise* is almost the same — the contrast between the artificial, hot-house life and false values of upper middle-class society, and the healthy, natural life and the true values of the farmers in the colonies who struggle with nature to turn a wilderness into cultivated land. But the theme is treated differently in either play. There is no satire in *The Land of Promise*, which tells in a straightforward manner the story of Norah Marsh, who is compelled by circumstances to give up the idle and dull but secure and comfortable life of a lady's companion in England for the hard and rough but useful life of farmer's wife in Canada. It is not easy for her to accustom herself to her new way of life. Yet when that is done she begins to love her new life so well that she forgoes an opportunity to return to her old ways. "I know the life now", she says referring to her new role; "It's not adventurous and exciting. For men and women it is the same hard work from morning till night, and I know it's woman who bears the greater burden. ..... And yet it's all got a meaning. We, too, have our part in opening up the country. We are its mothers and the future is in us. We are building up the greatness of the nation. It needs our
courage and strength and hope, and because it needs them, they come to us." 38

The method in Smith is to expose the false values of upper middle-class life by viewing them through the eyes of the young Rhodesian farmer Thomas Freeman, who has returned to England to find a wife. He finds himself in a thoroughly rotten society where a lady does not want to have a child, because "it would bore me to death"; where a mother will rather attend a bridge-party than stay with her child which is seriously ill; where the day is considered to be well-spent in paying idle calls and visiting the dressmaker's; where the only topics of conversation are tearing the reputation of absent friends to pieces; where work is considered to be "merely the refuge from boredom of the unintellectual;" where young men delight in becoming social parasites and hangers-on on married couples, who are satisfied with the arrangement, because to have a young man to flirt with makes for some occupation to the wife, and peace for the husband! Thomas Freeman tells these people in the end, "It took me some time to discover that you weren't real people at all. You're not men and women but strange sexless creatures, without blood in your veins. ...... You're

too trifling to be wicked. ..... In yourself you're perfectly unimportant, but England is full of people as flippant and frivolous and inane as yourself."

The note of satire is stronger here than in any of the preceding comedies, but the positive values are indicated through Thomas Freeman. This is not done — at least not done with equal power (as will be shown later on), in some of the later comedies, which therefore lie open to the charge of cynicism.

Of the five plays not included in the collected edition three may be briefly noticed. Loaves and Fishes written as early as 1902, though published much later (1924) is a minor play, a light farcical satire on the clergy, Maugham's favourite butt of ridicule. Of the other two — The Tenth Man and Landed Gentry, Maugham says that they "fell between two stools. One portrayed the narrow, hide-bound life of country gentlefolk; the other, the political and financial world, with both of which I had some acquaintance. I knew that I must interest, move and amuse, and I heightened the note. They were neither frankly realistic nor frankly theatrical. My indecision was fatal. The audiences found them rather disagreeable and not quite real". 40

40. The Summing Up, p. 82.
The first phase of Maugham's work — his early novels and plays — may now be summed up in the light of the conflict posed in this thesis. The native sensibility of Maugham appears to be very strong in this phase. It fills both Liza of Lambeth and Mrs. Craddock with deep compassion and tenderness. But reticence, reserve and restraint seem to be native to Maugham. Hence it is that he escapes the pit-fall of sentimentalism in both the novels. There is, as has been shown, some cheap sentiment in some of the early comedies (in Lady Frederick and the two plays which follow immediately) but it is, as Maugham himself tells us, the result of a deliberate attempt on his part to give to the public what it wanted.\footnote{The Summing Up, p. 81.}

The other strain which, later on, was to develop, at least in some places, into cynicism also makes its appearance in this phase. It is present, first of all, in the picture of Miss Ley in Mrs. Craddock in whom Maugham seems to have put much of this other self of his. Miss Ley, the sentimentalist-turned-cynic, looking at Bertha's tribulations with her frigid indifference and her sneers, appears to be even like a
projection of the cynical self of Maugham looking at the sympathetic picture painted by the author's native sensibility. But sensibility wins in the conflict here, for though the character of Miss Ley interests us, it is Bertha who runs away with the readers' hearts. The cynical strain appears in some of the unsuccessful novels of this phase — as in the cynical observations on the mob in *The Making of a Saint*; in the crude iconoclasm of James Parsons in *The Hero*; and in the attack on the clergy in *The Bishop's Apron*. But as these novels fail to come to life, their cynicism too fails to be effective and only appears to be the outcome of a clever young man's desire to shock the public.

In the plays of this phase, sheer gaiety and harmless flippancy predominate in the lighter pieces such as *Lady Frederick*. In *Penelope*, Maugham achieves pure comedy which rises above both sentiment and satire. *The Land of Promise*, wholly serious in tone, has no room for either humour or satire. It is only in *Smith* that satire dominates. It is no doubt powerful satire, but it is not cynicism, because the positive values are always kept in sight throughout.

The works of this early phase do not show any great positive achievement, but they do promise considerable achievement in future. Maugham, the artist, is still learning
his technique in this phase. Hence it is that the straightforward undistinguished method of narration in both *Liza of Lambeth* and *Mrs. Craddock* appears to be crude as compared with the dexterously woven and intricate patterns in, for example, *Cakes and Ale*. Yet these early works show the two faculties in Maugham — first, a deep sensibility which was to create, very soon, a book — which ranks among the best of Maugham's novels — viz. *Of Human Bondage*; and secondly, the gift of satirical observation, which was to lead to the sardonic comedies of the later years, and to the cold indifference and cynicism of some of the later works.