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A Comparative Study of Four Autobiographical Novels

Florence Marion Olson

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS

FLORENCE MARION OLSON

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FOUR
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS

By
Florence Marion Olson

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

University of New Mexico

1938



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1938

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

George P. Hammond

DEAN

January 8, 1938

DATE

Thesis committee

George St. Blair

CHAIRMAN

Frank P. Reese

Rudley Wayne

57648

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144 The Hero of Of INTRODUCTION 145

The purpose of this study is to analyze and compare four biographical novels written in the century ending with the year 1914 and to note especially the growth in the conception of personality which resulted primarily from the introduction of the new sciences.

The four novels selected for this purpose are David Copperfield, The Way of All Flesh, Fortitude, and Of Human Bondage. Each of these books was written by a young man about a young man of his own generation. At the age of thirty-eight, Charles Dickens (1812-1870) wrote David Copperfield, his masterpiece; Samuel Butler (1835-1902) began his greatest novel, The Way of All Flesh, during his thirty-fifth year, although it was not published until the year following his death; Hugh Walpole (1884--) wrote Fortitude at the age of twenty-nine; and W. Somerset Maugham (1874--) wrote Of Human Bondage, his magnum opus, at the age of thirty-nine.

When David Copperfield was written, the Victorian world was yet resting in what might be called a moral equilibrium, and David could accept simply the traditions of the race of which he was a part; the scientist had not yet presented his disturbing testimony about life to trouble the minds of thoughtful men. But less than a century later, a sensitive and imaginative young man

like the hero of Of Human Bondage, the creation of a modern physician, had to live through almost a third of a century before he could explain satisfactorily to himself his mental and moral attitudes; these attitudes had not come to him as a convenient legacy of the past.

David Copperfield was written by a man who had himself suffered in his childhood from such social evils as the prison for debtors (the elder Dickens had been jailed for debt) and child labor. The vivid presentation of bad conditions like these was itself a plea for social reform. But The Way of All Flesh, begun only two decades later, actually attacked with devastating satire the greatest institutions of the age, the family and the church, because these institutions, in the opinion of the author, created an environment inimical to the development of a normal personality.

A generation after Butler began his work, Walpole, in Fortitude, revealed a personality which was dual in nature, combining forces of both good and evil; and Maugham, in Of Human Bondage, endeavored to present a young man with exact truth to life. Maugham fearlessly brought forth the mass of abstract ideas current at that time and made the sensitive, truthful, and intelligent hero struggle desperately in his effort to get at the real truth of things.

From each author's analysis of the thoughts and

feelings of his central character, especially, it is possible to learn a great deal of the author's own understanding of himself; and from the way in which the background of the story is handled it is possible to determine the intellectual grasp the author had of the forces which were shaping the times in which he lived. The growth of reforms, political and social, and the drift towards realism in literature are reflected in the successive works under consideration; from the new sciences came new material and interests, much to conflict with what had previously been taken for granted. The biographical works of Butler, Walpole, and Maugham were the result of courageous efforts by men well qualified to write of the society of their times.

The chief concern of this study is not the value of these books as psychological, sociological, or ethical documents, nor are they considered a short road to knowledge in these fields. But, because they are stimulating and sympathetic as well as serious, a thoughtful consideration of them is profitable for an understanding of some of the problems of adjustment which had to be faced by many young people during the Victorian and Edwardian periods.

CHAPTER I

THE FOUR AUTHORS

A biographical novel which is generally accepted as partly autobiographical arouses in readers a curiosity about the actual facts of the author's life. Especially when that novel was used as the medium for the author's criticism of life, it seems important to be able to separate fact from fiction, to know to what extent the author identified himself with his hero in temperament, habits, principles, and ideals. It may not, then, be inappropriate to include in a study of the biographical novels by Dickens, Butler, Walpole, and Maugham a brief sketch of the life of each author. In these sketches is included a description of style of writing, since the last three writers, especially, believed that style is simply a revelation of an author's personality; or, to use Samuel Butler's words, that "the quality of the mind of the producer"¹ determined the quality of his art.

Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens, the author of David Copperfield, was born in 1812. His father, a navy clerk, moved to London when the boy was small. Although

¹ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, Contemporary British Literature, outlines for study, indexes, bibliographies (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), p. 30.

the elder Dickens loved his family and idolized his boy, he was able to provide them with only a poor living. While Charles was yet but a boy, the father was jailed for debt, and the son had to give up school in order to go to work, for a meager living, in a rat-infested factory where he pasted labels on bottles of blacking. The youngster roomed with two other little waifs in an attic in the slums of London. The actual hardships and the harsh experiences of these very impressionable years of childhood left bitter memories, which, as Dickens grew older, greatly influenced his ideas of the injustice of the social conditions which made possible such suffering as he and the rest of the Dickens family had had to endure.

However, the few years of drudgery and enforced self-reliance were not all evil for Dickens, because the amazing power of observation which he displayed even as a child later yielded him many types of characters for his stories. Never did his adventurous spirit fail him; very early he became a child of the great city, Cockney in temperament and character.

When a legacy enabled the Dickens family to start anew, Charles received enough training to enter an attorney's office. By the time he was nineteen he had become a shorthand writer and obtained the position of parliamentary reporter. During the next five years he represented various papers in the city. This new work enabled

Dickens daily to learn more of London and the surrounding country.

Success as a reporter gave the ambitious young man courage to try some literary sketches, which in turn led to the writing of Pickwick Papers, an immediate favorite with English readers. This success marked the dividing line in the life of Dickens; after his twenty-fifth year his life was bright with approval and achievement. When he was thirty-one, he visited America, and upon his return published his impressions in American Notes and Martin Chuzzlewit. During the next ten years he appeared with tremendous success as a public reader of his eight great novels and collections. Of himself he had said that he was "a writer from the cradle, and an actor always."² The combination of these abilities both delighted and astonished his audiences.

This love of acting, of the stage, did undoubtedly influence the art of Dickens more than did any other factor.³ It may be, too, that because he instinctively saw the highlights and deep shadows of life, he could

² Cornelius Weygandt, A Century of the English Novel (New York: The Century Company, 1925), p. 15.

³ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, History of the Novel in England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1932), p. 231.

not help giving a melodramatic presentation.⁴ Equally important for success in both his writings and his readings were his high spirits, his mercurial temperament, "a something in him that was not far from instability."⁵

After more than a decade of original and independent work as a novelist, an editor, and a public reader, Dickens wrote his acknowledged autobiographical novel, David Copperfield, while he was yet a young man of thirty-eight. In his Life of Charles Dickens, John Forster accounts for the extreme popularity of Copperfield by the fact that "it could hardly have had a reader, man or lad, who did not discover that he was something of a Copperfield himself."⁶ He points out very sensibly, however, that the reader must take autobiography "as a design to show that any man's life may be as a mirror of existence to all men, and the individual career becomes altogether secondary to the variety of experiences received and rendered back in it."⁷ George Saintsbury believes that "Copperfield is not only partly what Dickens was, but,

⁴ Richard Burton, Masters of the English Novel (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1919), p. 249.

⁵ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 63.

⁶ John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1928), pp. 130 ff.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 129 ff.

to a larger extent, what Dickens could not be and would have liked to be. The early sufferings and the early successes were there; but the interval between them had no counterpart in fact."⁸

Dickens considered the biographical chronicle novel, Copperfield, his masterpiece. It is interesting to note that his own initials, C. D., were used for those of his hero's initials, D. C.

The life history of Copperfield stresses the period of early childhood; the books that Dickens had young David Copperfield read were undoubtedly the books that had most influenced the author himself. Smollett leads with Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and Humphrey Clinker. There follow Fielding, Goldsmith, and Defoe, with but one book each: Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakefield, and Robinson Crusoe. The three other books mentioned as among David's reading in boyhood are foreign: Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and The Arabian Nights.⁹

To the great Ben Jonson, Dickens has frankly acknowledged his indebtedness; the eccentric, grotesque, and

⁸ George Saintsbury, "Charles Dickens," The Cambridge History of English Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), XIII, p. 362.

⁹ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., pp. 66 ff.

richly caricatured qualities of character are somewhat similar to the "humours" of that famous playwright.¹⁰

A popular novelist of Dickens's younger manhood, Thomas Hook, influenced Dickens somewhat in the use of caricature and extravaganza; and to the essayist Leigh Hunt some would trace Dickens's use of easy, intimate talk. But George Saintsbury contends that Dickens, the true Dickens, would have found his medium of expression without their patterns.¹¹

Even when Dickens wrote hastily and carelessly, his idiomatic English was always resourcefully used, especially in description and narration; never does his expression tend to obscure the personality of the author. Cornelius Weygandt would have it that the self-expression of Charles Dickens possesses distinction as surely as does the self-expression of even such writers as Landor and DeQuincey.¹²

Although at times, in the more emotional passages, Dickens actually falls into blank verse (the storm scene in which Ham and Steerforth die is a notable illustration), he really believed that the story should be permitted to tell itself, and wrote so clearly that almost none of his writings need be reread to be understood. The simplicity

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹ George Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 341.

¹² Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., pp. 24 ff.

of his work is often compared to that of folk tales.¹³

George Saintsbury summarizes the good and the bad of Charles Dickens, beloved writer of the Mid-Victorians, in the following paragraph:

Of the faults--ethical and aesthetic--of the national character he has plenty: prejudice, party spirit, aptness to speak without sufficient information, lack of criticism, insubordination to even reasonable rules in art and literature, exaggeration, extravagance, doubtful taste. . . . On the other hand, he has many, if not quite all, of the virtues on which we most pride, or, at least, used to pride, ourselves--courage, independence, individuality, imaginative freshness and activity, which does not disdain to approach the diviner kinds of nonsense, humour, in some, if not all, of its quintessences, kindliness, the sense of comfort and cheerfulness and home. And all these good and bad things he put together for our literary use with an unstinting fertility of device, a daemonic energy, an actual power of artistic creation in certain kinds, to which there is, perhaps, no parallel in our literature and certainly none in any other.¹⁴

Samuel Butler. Just about the time when young Mr. Charles Dickens was beginning his truly astonishing career as a writer, Samuel Butler began life in the Langor rectory, Nottingham. It might well have been said of the young Samuel that he was predestined for a place of leadership in the institutions of England: his father was a rector; his grandfather, Samuel Butler, was headmaster of Shrewsbury School and bishop of Lichfield; and he, himself,

¹³ Ibid., pp. 64 ff.

¹⁴ George Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 376.

was educated at Shrewsbury and at St. John's College, Cambridge, and was prepared for ecclesiastical work.

Instead of taking orders in the Church of England, however, the young Samuel Butler went to New Zealand, where he made a real success in the sheep business. Through the breeding of animals, he became interested in problems of evolutionary science and wrote articles of a scientific nature. When he retired from business, he returned to England, where he took permanent chambers in London, and there for the rest of his life cultivated his hobbies: scientific and literary research, music, painting, and the study of art.¹⁵

Although Butler wrote much, his only literary success during his life was a shrewd satire on civilization as he saw it: Erewhon (anagram for Nowhere), which was immediately ranked high among writing on Utopias. During much of his lifetime, Butler kept a series of notebooks which were posthumously classified and edited by his friend, Mr. Festing Jones, in 1912. Especially interesting are the faithful records of his impressions of the lands he visited in his many travels. The one novel on which Butler worked from 1872 to 1885 was not published until 1903, the year following his death. This book, his masterpiece, which "perfectly expressed the challenging

¹⁵ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 375.

and iconoclastic temper of the nineties, summed up the reaction against the Victorian Age, and by its example set in motion a school of fiction with a new education motive and a new criticism of life,"¹⁶ was an autobiography not only of the experiences of the author but of his ideas as well.

Although the lifetime of Samuel Butler, beginning in 1835 and ending in 1903, covered the Victorian age, in spirit he belonged to the Edwardian period, which followed; and it was in the years following his death that his autobiographical book became a dominant influence of his time. Butler fought bitterly the Victorian conceptions of the family and of the church, and he did this fighting in a way peculiar to himself; he would not join forces with the defenders of the science of his day, because he had his own independent ideas on science, also. Never in sympathy with things as they were, an Ishmael of this sort, naturally, could not be popular in his day. Born to be one of those brilliant unfortunates, Butler, like others who think ahead of their contemporaries, had to forego the recognition which he yearned for; even the certainty of posthumous glory could not take away the bitterness caused by lack of appreciation which he knew he merited.

Those who write about Samuel Butler insist that his

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 375.

personality was pleasant, that he had a way with him that won people, and that he was always considerate of others, whether those others were his servants or his peers. But the Samuel Butler revealed in his writings is not such a pleasant person.¹⁷ Clara Gruening Stillman, in her book, Samuel Butler, a Mid-Victorian Modern, makes this shrewd comment on his subject, who, arch-critic of the Victorian family, never had wife or family of his own: "Fundamentally Butler loved himself more than he loved anyone else, and most of his close personal relations are fragmentary attempts to compensate himself in some way for the missing reality."¹⁸

Although Butler loved art and music, he was neither highly emotional nor poetic. His attitude toward art in his writing is made clear in his Notebooks:

I never knew a writer who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable. . . . I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style. . . . The deepest quality of a work of art will¹⁹ always be the quality of the mind of the producer.

Butler's style is characterized by the satirical and the incisive; these qualities sting the memory and feelings

¹⁷ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 338.

¹⁸ Clara G. Stillman, Samuel Butler, a Mid-Victorian Modern (New York: The Viking Press, 1932), p. 59.

¹⁹ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 29.

of the reader.²⁰ His autobiography has been said to be "inspired by a controlled passion of hatred which surges up with embittered, unassuaged memories of his youth."²¹

Mrs. Stillman believes that The Way of All Flesh, though including some fiction, was subjectively Butler's own story plainly told and that for many years it runs parallel to his own life.

Drawn immediately from the well of personal memory and experience it constituted an ultimate and satisfying act of self-expression almost as direct as life itself. More satisfying in a sense, for in writing it he was living his life again with all the trumps of after-knowledge in his hand.²²

For this kind of story Butler's humor, satirical and savage at times, like Swift's, actually aids the realistic illusion.

Hugh Walpole. Like his predecessor Butler, Hugh Seymour Walpole was reared in a home greatly influenced by the Church of England. He was born in 1884 in Auckland, New Zealand, where his father had a pastorate. In his fifth year, Hugh went to New York City, where his father taught in the General Theological Seminary. When the boy was twelve, he was sent to England to be educated at

²⁰ W. T. Young, "Lesser Novelists" Cambridge History of English Literature, XIII, p. 504.

²¹ Ibid., p. 504.

²² Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., p. 84.

Canterbury and Cambridge. During the impressionable years of his youth, he spent a long vacation in Cornwall. A few years later, he went to live in the cathedral town of Durham, where his father now had become a principal of Bede College.

The following description by Frank Swinnerton helps one understand the Walpole of the next few years:

. . . he was impulsive, generous, and immature. He had dallied with the idea of following his father's example and entering the Church, and the earnestness which is one of his traits, as well as his love of public speaking, testifies to a natural bent for exhortation. If he had not been a writer, he would have been a successful preacher; his lectures are always delivered with a spontaneity and energy of the most persuasive kind. But he did not feel, after some trial of his abilities, that he could properly remain in the Church; and after a brief experience of school-mastering he determined that he wanted--as Henry James, nearly fifty years earlier, had wanted--to be "just literary."²³

To break into literary circles, he went to London. His start there was made as a book reviewer, and not until 1913 did he gain much profit or following from his writings. In that year appeared Fortitude, his third book and the one that established him on both sides of the Atlantic.

During the World War, shortness of sight prevented military service, but Walpole went to Russia on diplomatic business and was for a time with the Red Cross there. This experience and his discovery of the Russian novelists

²³ Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Scene (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), p. 305.

had a powerful influence on his later work.²⁴ To him the purpose of life always had been the education of the soul. Now the war impressed him with the unimportance of physical death and deepened his conviction that spiritual life could not end with physical death.

After the war, Walpole made frequent visits to America, where he became and has remained very popular as a lecturer and critic, always kindly, gracious, and tactful. Neither by his lectures nor his writings has he made himself a storm center as have some of his contemporaries.

Although Mr. Walpole seems to his audiences to be unusually wholesome and self-reliant, Mr. Swinnerton analyses his character in the following way:

. . . His cheerfulness and good nature, which are perfectly natural to him, his impulsive friendliness, his wish to establish sincere relationships with those whom he likes, are enmeshed with many reserves and distrusts, with shrewdness and good sense and another trait which I vaguely decipher as a power to shut his mind to unacceptable aspects of life. He is capable of great loyalty, ardent championship, candour; and at the same time bottomless suspicion, evasiveness, and deep trouble of spirit. This cheerfulness is warrantably genuine; the morbidness is just as genuine; it is an essential characteristic of his work, in which there is a strain of terror as well as much jovial power to interest and amuse. He looks happy, his manner is always full of bonhomie; he can be teased--and is, although perhaps he now relishes it less than he did; he laughs readily and plunges into a room with massive energy; he talks well and with humor as well as good humor; he is extremely likable; if one did not know him, and did not know his work, one would suppose him the most ingenuous soul in

²⁴ Ibid., p. 306.

the world. The strange thing is that one would be right as well as profoundly wrong.²⁵

Just as Walpole, the man, is not a simple character, so his style of writing is not simple. Not like his predecessor Butler with his plain and vigorous style is this later writer, who has an aversion to over-explicitness; but in both cases the style of writing may well be regarded "as the inevitable outcome of an author's personality and material."²⁶

In his sense of the supernatural, Walpole was much influenced by two earlier writers, Henry James and Nathaniel Hawthorne. And like Hawthorne, the great stylist, Walpole exhibits that magical quality which maintains the right atmosphere for the events of his narrative. In Fortitude the succession of events is subordinated to the suffering of the character in mind and soul. The peculiar quality of the Cornish landscape which serves as part of the background, and the strange influences emanating from it, are so convincingly portrayed that they are easily accepted by the reader. The style aids in the development of the theme; courage even in the face of terrible, unseen forces. And the struggle through the story is such a grim one that the fascinated reader never thinks of missing the entertainment which the jollity of a Dickens or the satire of

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 305 ff.

²⁶ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 29.

a Butler would furnish. The attention is focused on the hero struggling with supernatural forces, malignant forces which would drag him into spiritual regions which are the more awful because their terrors are left to the imagination stimulated by terror and pity. Caught between two worlds, the hero can save himself only by courage. Characteristic of Fortitude are those qualities of Walpole noted by Mr. Swinnerton: morbidity and a strain of terror; lacking in Fortitude is the cheerfulness which Mr. Walpole displays elsewhere.

William Somerset Maugham. A few years ago a thoughtful critic described William Somerset Maugham in the following way:

. . . He is not a very tall man, is very dark, and has small, extremely dark brown eyes which one immediately notices. He is very slim, and one's first impression is of a small head, a gentle manner of great modesty, and a slight hesitation in speech. One then discovers that all his remarks are unusually brief. And that when he tells a story it is in so few words, and with such point, that there is time in his company for a considerable amount and range of conversation, Nor is the conversation merely brief; for Maugham is so quick-witted that he stimulates others to similar unselfconscious brevity, and, whether the effect is one of imagination or not I cannot say, one leaves him with the sense that everybody--including oneself--has been very amusing. . . .²⁷

About this same time Mr. Maugham wrote of himself:

Now I have most of my life been miserably conscious that I am not the average Englishman. . . . Let no one

²⁷ Frank Swinnerton, op. cit., pp. 200 ff.

think that I say this with self-satisfaction, for I think that there is nothing better than to be like everybody else. It is the only way to be happy, and it is with a very wry face that one tells oneself that happiness is not everything.²⁸

When Mr. Maugham wrote Of Human Bondage almost a quarter of a century ago, he may have felt that happiness was everything, but he did not present his hero as a person who wanted to be like everyone else. He labored to present a real young man like the author himself wrestling with real problems in an everyday environment.

Born in Paris in 1874, the son of a counselor at the English Embassy, William Somerset Maugham did not live in England until, when he was ten years old, he became a student in King's School at Canterbury, where he remained for three years. Later he studied in Germany at the University of Heidelberg. For a short time he studied painting in Paris. But since his family wished him to become a doctor, he returned to England to spend several years at St. Thomas's hospital in London and graduated with the degrees of M.R.C.S. and L.R.C.P. Instead of practicing, however, the young graduate began at once his career as world rover and author. In the entertaining autobiographical account in Don Fernando we learn of this period from Maugham himself:

²⁸ William Somerset Maugham, Fifty Modern English Writers (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1934), p. 6.

Many years ago I wrote a book about Andalusia, but I am bitterly conscious of its defects. . . . In those days at the end of the nineteenth century, the young men were more immature than at present; they had not the knowing, clever way of concealing their ignorance that now fills with admiration those who read their works. I was but twenty-three when I went to Seville. I had spent five years in a London hospital and for the first time in my life was my own master. I have been back to Spain a dozen times since then; it has never ceased to possess for me the glamour of those first few months of heavenly freedom. I had no ties and no responsibilities. I had no care in the world but to write well; I did not know then what severe labour and what harassing bondage this entailed. I wandered about the country, enthusiastic with all the new sights I saw, but my enthusiasm (though I did not know it) was perfectly conventional. It is curious how seldom youth looks at the world with the fresh and direct gaze you would have expected to come natural to it; whether from diffidence or timidity it looks upon what it has never seen before with alien eyes. Perhaps a certain sophistication is needed before one can see things for oneself. Such certainly was the case with me. My feelings were genuine enough, but they were the feelings of the travelers who had gone before me. I saw what Borrow and Richard Ford, Théophile Gautier and Mérimée had seen.²⁹

Maugham's real literary career began when, at twenty-three, having qualified as a physician and surgeon, he wrote a novel, Liza of Lambeth, which is based on his hospital experience, and which shocked his Victorian readers by its vivid description of slum conditions in Lambeth, near the hospital. The reviewers were very kind to him, and he immediately abandoned his medical career for that of a writer. This decision may have seemed a very foolish

²⁹ William Somerset Maugham, Don Fernando (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1935), pp. 57 ff.

one for a time, because the period that followed was one of very meagre success; until he was thirty-four he never earned as much as a hundred pounds a year, and often he did not have enough to eat. Although a stroke of luck set him on the road to fame as a dramatist, he does not consider that writing for the stage is his metier.³⁰

His dramatic experience, however, was not without value to him in his writing of novels; he believes that good stories, like good dramas, are built up carefully, step by step. In a recent interview, Mr. Maugham said, "I like a story that fits. I did not take to writing stories seriously till I had had much experience as a dramatist, and this experience taught me to leave out everything that did not serve the dramatic value of my story. It taught me to make incident follow incident in such a manner as to lead up to the climax I had in mind."³¹

Several plays and novels followed, but not until Lady Frederick (1907) appeared did the English audiences become really conscious of the ability of the young author. In 1915 appeared the magnum opus of Maugham's writings, Of Human Bondage, which, excepting certain slight dis-

³⁰ Modern Literature, Vol. 4, No. 9, January, 1936 (Quoting from an interview in Jack O'London's Weekly).

³¹ Ibid., Vol. 4, No. 11, February, 1936.

crepancies, is an autobiography of his first thirty years. In this book the author reveals himself as a very tolerant and human person, although he had the reputation of a sardonic and caustic wit.

During the World War, Maugham served in the Secret Service. Ashendon or the British Agent (1928) is based on this experience. Cakes and Ale (1930), supposed to be a malicious portrayal of Thomas Hardy and Hugh Walpole, made its author quite a storm center of criticism in England. Besides his novels, short stories, and travel sketches, Maugham has written about twenty-five plays, witty and masterly in their craftsmanship.

Content with the old methods and straightforward narrative, Somerset Maugham is, according to Frank Swinnerton, "Of all modern authors. . . the man who most nearly says. . . precisely what he means to say."³² In a recent interview Mr. Maugham said that if he were starting over again, he would concentrate on establishing himself as a stylist rather than an original thinker.³³ He has no fancy aesthetics, and he regards readableness as the highest merit of a novel.

In one of his latest books, Don Fernando, Mr.

³² Frank Swinnerton, op. cit., p. 206.

³³ Modern Literature, Vol. 4, No. 9, January, 1936, p. 4.

Maugham remarks, "I should say that the three essentials of good writing are lucidity, euphony, and simplicity."³⁴ In the same book, however, he confesses, "To write simply is as difficult as to be good."³⁵

While the style of Of Human Bondage is always lively, at times the reader is conscious of a certain coldness, an aloofness on the part of the author. From a prefatory note in his recent book, Fifty Modern English Authors, his readers may learn the reason for this feeling:

The accident of my birth in France, which enabled me to learn French and English simultaneously and thus instilled in me two modes of life, two liberties, two points of view, prevented me from ever identifying myself completely with the instincts and prejudices of one people or the other, and it is in instinct and prejudice that sympathy is most deeply rooted; the accident of a physical infirmity, with its attendant nervousness separated me to a greater extent than would be thought likely from the common life of others. In my communications with my fellows I have generally felt "out of it"; in that uprush of emotion that sometimes seizes a crowd so that their hearts throb as one I have been lamentably aware that my own heart keeps its accustomed and normal rhythm. When "Everybody suddenly bursts out singing". . . I have always felt exceedingly embarrassed. And when on New Year's Eve people join hands and swinging them up and down like a nurse rocking the baby, sing lustily Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot, my shivering nerves whisper, yes, please.³⁶

³⁴ William Somerset Maugham, Don Fernando, p. 94.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁶ William Somerset Maugham, Fifty Modern English Authors, pp. 6 ff.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

The Way of All Flesh, Fortitude, and Of Human Bondage depict mental and moral attitudes which are very different from those in David Copperfield; and a comparison of the unsettled young men of the first three books with David shows that a muddled state of mind during the years of adjustment was more disturbingly characteristic of them than of the Mid-Victorian hero of Dickens's book.

To explain the young men satisfactorily it is necessary to try to understand the spirit of the times in which they lived. Dickens's hero, fairly representative of the Mid-Victorian era, grew to manhood when theoretical science was steadily undermining the conventional ways of thinking, but the undermining process had not yet greatly disturbed the dominant writers of the time. The complacency dependent upon a genuine belief in the rightness of things as they are made it possible for a young man then to devote his energies to his own problems without having first to solve the problems of the universe. Compared with his successors in a world rapidly changing as science advanced, he led a fairly untroubled life.

The changes in spirit and outlook of the years

between 1850 and 1915 have been suggested by Manly and Rickert in three sentences: the positive It is so for the middle nineteenth century; the equally positive It is not so for the rebel attitude of the later nineteenth century; and the searching Is it so? for the first part of the twentieth century.¹ Although there is some propaganda for social reform in the biographical novel of Dickens, the dominance of the complacent It is so is easily recognizable; the bitter and equally positive It is NOT so is flung out defiantly in The Way of All Flesh; and the troubled, yearning cry of the searcher in the Is it so? of both Fortitude and Of Human Bondage is especially poignant in the latter book.

Although Dickens was "a pioneer in the democratic sympathy which was to become so marked a feature in the novel in the late nineteenth century",² he did not question traditional conceptions of the society of which he was a part. From the time he was twenty-one up to the time of his death in 1870 reforms were being made in every field of English life. The hardships of his own youth had early made him a humanitarian: child labor and imprisonment for debt, for example, were social evils which had affected

¹ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 5.

² Richard Burton, Charles Dickens (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1919), p. 194.

him personally. Always compassionate and, therefore, most vitally interested in those changes, political and social, which alleviated the sufferings of the poor, Dickens sincerely believed that the novel could be used effectively in social regeneration.³ But he was not one who would destroy all in bringing about better times for the oppressed. Although he satirized a social regime founded on commerce and industry, he sincerely respected material possessions; and the idea that these possessions give the possessor a distinction that outweighs all else is reflected, naturally, in David Copperfield.⁴ However, the social barriers of the period were so very definite that the democracy of Dickens is all the more marked.⁵ Occasionally he succumbed to a snobbishness which Butler later satirized very effectively: this might be called a cult of the lower classes, the belief that poor and uneducated people were better than rich and educated people.

The way in which Dickens pictures his childhood and some of the social evils of the time makes it possible to

³ Pelham Edgar, The Art of the Novel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 123.

⁴ Agnes Hansen, Twentieth Century Forces in European Fiction (Chicago: American Library Association, 1934), pp. 21 ff.

⁵ Richard Burton, op. cit., pp. 269 ff.

include David Copperfield as a part of realistic literature.⁶ The rational realism of this time was, however, modified by a sense of decorum, and the Victorian conscience of Dickens did not give him much license. Even when he portrayed common life in the middle-class and low life of London, life with which he was very familiar, he did it in a romantic manner.⁷ At this time the realistic ideal of individual self-expression, hampered as it was by a deliberately imposed moral restraint,⁸ was very different from that of modern realistic fiction.

But vivid exposure of some old social canker such as conditions that fostered criminal life among the young and the evils of the debtor's prison were side issues for Dickens, whose genius enabled him to portray unforgettably traits of human character. Not the product of a scientific moralist, these characters delighted rather than disturbed his enthusiastic readers. "In his works, good and evil are sharply divided--the good represented by beings of unearthly innocence, the evil by monsters like the devils in a medieval picture of hell. Their cruelty brings unmerited suffering to the children of light, but their

⁶ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 77.

⁷ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 235.

⁸ Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., p. 205.

impotence is always clear."⁹ Not yet had the lights and shadows of personality been recognized; literature could remain in the old traditional grooves until it was disturbed by the knowledge which accompanied the development of biology, psychology, and sociology in the latter part of the century. Compared with the painful adjustment to the complexities of the new knowledge, the old cheerful acceptance of good and evil had about it a fairy-tale atmosphere. The very style throughout David Copperfield is free and cheerful.

A vast enlargement of literary materials brought in at the end of the nineteenth century by the enormous development of science is seen

. . . in the actual borrowing of scientific subject matter; in the application of scientific methods of analysis in character presentation; in the opening of the doors of literature to all sorts of ideas never before regarded as suitable for literary treatment; in the general attitude of regarding literary themes as facts to be traced to their sources and consequences, or as problems to be solved independently of traditional methods and opinions.¹⁰

Two factors, heredity and environment, emphasized in the theory of evolution, were taken account of by realism, recognizing that a character is determined in part by factors existing before his birth; but English

⁹ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., pp. 235 ff.

¹⁰ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 9.

realism usually reflects the freedom of the will.¹¹ In The Way of All Flesh Butler shows his hero Ernest " . . . a weak character in an unfavorable environment, but events which seem to spell his ruin shock him into an exercise of his latent will. He finds in a world of reality an environment in which he can develop and gain fitness through activity."¹²

Begun two decades after the appearance of David Copperfield, The Way of All Flesh marked the beginning of a change in novel writing and records the struggle of a young man to break from family, educational, and social traditions, and to find self-expression. Butler was the first English novelist to present a new idea of individuality which recognized the fact that personality is not necessarily consistent with itself. So very frank and daring was this book which embodied Butler's criticism of life that he stipulated that its publication was to be postponed until after his death. This constraint was the result of his consideration of living relatives and, perhaps, of his own comfort, also. In 1885, the year the book was finished, his countrymen were not yet sufficiently prepared to receive it as were those of the next genera-

¹¹ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 377.

¹² Ibid., pp. 377 ff.

tion. The almost half-century after 1870 was characterized by a decidedly marked dissatisfaction and irritation. The traditional virtues and prevailing values which Butler satirized with no respect were gradually losing weight before his book began its influential life.

Besides Butler's vigorous challenge of accepted ideas, it should be pointed out that there is in his book a positive element, ". . . the theme of making good through freedom from social prejudice and superstition, and the education of experience."¹³

Butler's philosophy was pragmatic, since it ". . . developed from the scientific view of the world" and was "akin to realism in its strict adherence to the facts of experience."¹⁴ As to the belief in consciousness and the rule of reason preached by John Stuart Mill, "Butler anticipated the Freudian emphasis on the unconscious. 'Man, forsooth, prides himself on his consciousness! . . . I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays, that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mould our lives and the lives of those who spring from us.'¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p. 381.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 378.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 381.

The title, The Way of All Flesh, shows that the novel was intended to be "a kind of modern Pilgrim's Progress,"¹⁶ and this title is very appropriate because every human being

. . . is faced with the problem of self-development in some form or other, and the crux of this problem is the delicate progressive adjustment of the identity and separation values between offspring and parent. The Way of All Flesh deals with a peculiarly acute conflict between the two. It was the first expression in fiction of that nineteenth-century "revolt of the life force against ready-made morality" that Bernard Shaw speaks of in the preface to The Irrational Knot, and in fact against ready made ideas of any kind.¹⁷

Another aspect of the book is valuable for its social significance. The realism of the day, which followed the scientific theories of heredity and environment, emphasized the importance to character of factors existing before birth. Butler took four generations of his hero's family in order to estimate the importance of inheritance, and he concludes, "If a man is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, he must do so, not only as a little child, but as a little embryo, or rather as a little zoosperm--and not only this, but as one that has come of zoosperms which have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven before him for many generations."¹⁸ However, Butler did

¹⁶ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 29.

¹⁷ Clara Stillman, op. cit., pp. 195 ff.

¹⁸ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 377.

not agree with Darwin that the individual was merely the result of factors over which he had no control or that predestination was a scientific fact. Butler heartily approved a suggestion by Lamarck, many years before, that variation arose from a sense of need or the impulse towards improvement.¹⁹ His Ernest, a weak character, lived in a most unfavorable environment until he was led, through what at the time seemed an untoward accident, into an exercise of his will. By the exercise of this will-power which had up to this time been latent and by the aid of unconscious memory through which reserves of strength from his great-grandfather were transmitted to him, he was able to overcome the effects of two generations of false standards and false education and to achieve through struggle and self-assertion a harmony as real as that of his ancestor who represents the good life. Ernest's father represented stagnation. Ernest represented the revolt of the life force and was the spirit of revolution acting under the most conservative of sanctions.

It is only by seeing it in this dual aspect that one gets the full flavor and significance of Ernest's career, whether one views it primarily as an individual struggle, as exemplifying a whole period, or as symbolizing the process of creative evolution. It is all these, but this complex conception is embodied in the novel in so realistic a manner that it is only as obvious as it would be if we were witnessing the actual

¹⁹ Frank Swinnerton, op. cit., p. 49.

life of Samuel Butler instead of the fictional life of Ernest Pontifex.²⁰

Innumerable doors to self-knowledge were opened to the western world in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Most of the new insights and attitudes had been foreseen by Butler. Humanity could at last bear to face its own nature and discover its relation to earth and the history of earth, since it had lost its God and some of its fear.²¹

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, when the old century was merging into the new, English novelists were deeply influenced in their thinking, their style, and their literary methods, by a few great innovators of the Continent: Ibsen, the Norwegian social critic, and Wagner, the German intellectual, rebels against traditional art forms; Nietzsche, the German iconoclast of current ideals, would-be remaker of the world;²² Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Gorky, Chekhov, and Andreev, members of a social class which had arisen in Russia, known there as the Intelligentsia. Characteristic of the Slavic novel were vivid portrayals of torment, spiritual, intellectual,

²⁰ Clara Stillman, op. cit., p. 200.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 203 ff.

²² John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., pp. 8 ff.

and physical; analysis of qualities such as compassion, tolerance, and understanding of human frailty.²³

Among the many novelists who arose in the years between 1890-1914 who had exceptional qualities of insight and courage were Hugh Walpole and W. Somerset Maugham. Both were deeply concerned with the subtleties of mind and of character. In Fortitude, Walpole stressed the need of courage to overcome the forces of evil both in the outer world and in the depths of the personality as well. In Of Human Bondage, Maugham tried to separate all human truth from accumulated error in thought and to get to the essential facts of life.

The intellectual ferment of the period preceding that in which Maugham and Walpole wrote their biographical novels had made change inevitable in deep thoughts about life and death. Of Human Bondage, especially, presented much evidence that the belief in a personal God had been weakened, perhaps destroyed, by the new scientific interpretation of the material world. Philip, the central figure of Maugham's book, dared to think with ruthless logic about God and life and the meaning of life. He enjoyed his happiest moments when he first came to the conclusion that there was no God and when, the battle to

²³ Agnes Hansen, op. cit., p. 30.

maintain life getting to be almost too much for him, he proved to himself that life itself had no meaning. The following quotation from Of Human Bondage contains part of his conclusions:

. . . On the earth, satellite of a star speeding through space, living things had arisen under the influence of conditions which were a part of the planet's history; and as there had been a beginning of life upon it so, under the influence of other conditions, there would be an end; man, no more significant than other forms of life, had come not as the climax of creation but as a physical reaction to the environment. . . . There was no meaning in life, and man by living served no end. It was immaterial whether he was born or not born, whether he lived or died. Life was insignificant and death without consequence. . . . If life was meaningless, the world was robbed of its cruelty. . . . Failure was unimportant and success amounted to nothing. He was the most inconsiderable creature in that swarming mass of mankind which for a brief space occupied the surface of the earth; and he was almighty because he had wrenched from chaos the secret of its nothingness. . . .²⁴

From a historical standpoint this book is important; and to one of Maugham's generation, especially, as Cornelius Weygandt points out, it cannot but be very interesting "as it recounts so much of the life that was common to all men of the English-speaking countries who grew to manhood in the eighteen nineties. The talk current then about education and literature and music and painting is faithfully reproduced."²⁵

²⁴ W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, pp. 657 ff.

²⁵ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 366.

Mr. Maugham, not a believer in the perfectibility of humanity, neither apologized for his characters nor moralized for the benefit of his readers; his realism has been described by one critic as the work of an artist in black and white.²⁶ In Of Human Bondage the essential spirit of this realism was caught in Philip's reflections as he watched the poor people being examined in the hospital receiving room:

On the whole the impression was neither of tragedy nor of comedy. There was no describing it. It was manifold and various; there were tears and laughter, happiness and woe; it was tedious and interesting and indifferent; it was as you saw it; it was tumultuous and passionate; it was grave; it was sad and comic; it was trivial; it was simple and complex; joy was there and despair. . . . There was neither good nor bad there. There were just facts. It was life.²⁷

But before Philip could accept life with the poise that he finally achieved, he experienced vicissitudes that challenged his most profound thought. His desire to know what life was for was not born of pride; it was a real personal need for him because he was intelligent and sincere and because the old interpretations were no longer sufficient for men like him. And when Philip did find the answers which rang true for him, his confident It is so was not like the half-timid, half-complacent statement

²⁶ Frank Swinnerton, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁷ W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, p. 502.

of fact common in England when Dickens wrote David Copperfield; and his It is not so was not like the defiant shout of Samuel Butler in The Way of All Flesh. Maugham's hero spoke with courageous simplicity; he was a real pioneer of the spiritual and intellectual frontier of the modern world. In the wilderness of knowledge he had made a clearing for himself at least; he could settle down to the business of living with a contentment that was not superficial.

CHAPTER III

THE NARRATIVES

Englishmen living in the remarkably prosperous century that began with the reign of Queen Victoria ought to have had much in common; it is not surprising, therefore, that in the biographical narratives of Charles Dickens, Samuel Butler, Hugh Walpole, and W. Somerset Maugham there should be similarity in the descriptions of the institutions of their native land and of the characters typical of their countrymen.

In David Copperfield, The Way of All Flesh, Fortitude, and Of Human Bondage, each author sketches in enough of the peculiarities of the time and the place to make his account satisfyingly convincing. Of course, even plain facts seen through the eyes of the best story-teller ". . . are not plain facts but facts distorted by his own idiosyncrasies."¹

London provided the setting for the main action in each of the books; each of which presented a cross section of life on a large scale. For Dickens, the first writer of the four, London was a real mother city; it might

¹ W. Somerset Maugham, Cosmopolitans (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1936), Preface, viii.

with a good deal of truth be called his alma mater. As a reporter he had learned to know the great city ". . . from the blackened and broken buildings along the Thames, which housed poverty and crime, to the cheerful cottages of the suburbs. London furnished him with his earliest material for fiction."² The supreme importance of this city for this "lover of mankind"³ with his reporter's observational eye is illustrated in an incident told by G. K. Chesterton. When Dickens went to Switzerland in May of 1846 and could not make progress in his writing, he attributed his difficulty to his being away from the city he loved so much that his very characters seemed to stagnate without London crowds about them.⁴

Dickens worked hard to picture life as it was really lived ". . . in the London that he knew and loved; the London that was as definitely his inspiration as Paris was the inspiration of that other great novelist, Balzac."⁵ So very idiosyncratic and so faithful in his descriptions of London was the great master that perhaps

² Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 229.

³ Richard Burton, op. cit., p. 258.

⁴ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Charles Dickens (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1906), pp. 181 ff.

⁵ Richard Burton, op. cit., p. 248.

all story-tellers since Dickens's day who have succumbed to the spell of London have likewise succumbed to the spell of his personality, although it may be London and not Dickens that has made men like Walpole resemble him. Of Hugh Walpole's sketches of London, one critic remarks that they ". . . in their whimsically personal note, make one think of Dickens in the same field."⁶

Butler, Walpole, and Maugham had an unusually wide knowledge of the social scene. The following tribute that Hergesheimer pays to Walpole might equally well apply to that writer's predecessor, Butler, and to his contemporary, Maugham:

. . . the people . . . true in costume and speech to their various moments, are equally true to that which in man is changeless. They, the novels, are at once provincial, as the best novels invariably are, and universal as any deep penetration of humanity, any considerable artistry, must be. Never merely cosmopolitan, never merely smart--even in his knowledge of smart people--they are sincere without being stupid, serious without a touch of hypocrisy; on the other hand, light without vapidness, entertaining with never a compromise nor the least descent from the most dignified of engagements.⁷

The part that the great institutions of the home, the school, and the church played in the lives of the four heroes gives the reader of these biographies a

⁶ Joseph Hergesheimer, Hugh Walpole, an Appreciation, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1919), p. 51.

⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

disturbing knowledge of the troubles that could face a boy living in the complacent England of the last century. Each of these boys, sensitive, imaginative, and gentle, was early made aware of many kinds of misery.

Dickens had David's vain, fond, impractical widowed mother give her young son a cruel step-father before she died; Walpole had Peter barely become acquainted with his frightened invalid mother before she was released through death from her maniacal, sadistic husband; Maugham had Philip taken to the home of his uncle and aunt, after the death of his pretty young widowed mother left the youngster an orphan. Thus David was left to the mercies of a stern, cruel, morbid step-father; Peter to a real father even more fearful; Philip to an uncle-guardian, who, while not cruel, was stupid, lazy, small, mean, and unsympathetic. Each of these men, however, was considered an upright Christian gentleman in his comfortable, respectable English community.

Dickens, Walpole, and Maugham did not have to face the possibility that both of a child's own parents may be cruel, selfish, tyrannical, and unsympathetic. Butler, by contrast, showed both of Ernest's own parents in a manner "three dimensional and real."⁸ The father, the

⁸ Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., p. 88.

Reverend Pontifex, was the epitome of dullness, stupidity, tyranny, unconscious sadism, and stagnation; and the mother, Christina, was a perfect helpmate who never hesitated to sacrifice her children to her husband.

Mrs. Stillman gives two comments which, she believes, epitomize the impression that the powerful book, The Way of All Flesh, has left on a wide circle of readers. She quotes Bernard Shaw, who says, "Butler is the only man known to history who has immortalized and actually endeared himself by parricide and matricide long drawn out;" and W. D. Cobley, who writes,

He has taken his father and mother . . . and damned them to all eternity with a devilish cunning and skill, a brilliance of wit, a loving care that nothing shall be missed, which makes the story of his own early life the most extraordinary book of its kind in the language. So great is the genius with which this shocking thing is done that it is useless to deny that Butler has carried off triumphantly the difficult feat of being at once victim, judge, jury, and prosecuting counsel, and obtained a verdict with which we willy-nilly agree.⁹

Since all the heroes were of the upper middle class, they were all, as a matter of course, sent to a school for boys. Their school experiences sharply contrasted their type with that of other boys in different circumstances; each came to idolize an attractive, sophisticated schoolmate, who appeared many years later to bring

⁹ Ibid., p. 196.

him unhappiness: David's Steerforth wrecked the life of David's little friend Emily; Ernest's Towneley unconsciously influenced Ernest to commit the crime for which he was sent to prison; Peter's Cardillac stole the affections of Peter's wife; Philip's Griffiths carelessly won the affection of the girl for whom Philip would have counted no sacrifice too great.

Dickens, like the others, certainly did not picture David's school days as a happy period; but Butler went into such detail about Ernest's experiences at an English public school that there was positively an unmasking of an institution "which had been given a pretentious religious facade by Thomas Arnold of Rugby."¹⁰ Later, Walpole and Maugham in their descriptions of the public schools in Fortitude and Of Human Bondage added their denunciations of the institution to that of their predecessor, Butler. Dr. Skinner, the headmaster of the "great" public school which Ernest attended, was the unflattering portrait of Butler's grandfather, former headmaster of Shrewsbury School.

After David, while still a little boy, had experienced real hardships in school and in trying to earn his own living, during which time he had made the friendship

¹⁰ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 380.

of Wilkins Micawber (humorously portrayed character patterned after Dickens's own father), he was taken into the home and the heart of his odd Aunt Betsy, a real fairy-godmother, and given the opportunity to develop his genius. Never again did he lack friends and protectors.

Walpole's Peter, like David, had great good fortune in making many comforting friendships. After he had run away from the intolerable home of his father, he was cherished by several older people. In his Bloomsbury boarding-house, a pleasant place, he came into contact with the young woman who became practically his guardian angel during the following turbulent years of his struggles for literary success; and at that point in his career when despair threatened him, it was she who renewed his courage to fight for self-mastery. About both David and Peter there was always a more or less romantic atmosphere and action. They belonged to the "nature's noblemen" group, for whom nothing is too good.

About the heroes of Butler and Maugham, on the other hand, there was little of the glamour of romance. Butler's Ernest Pontifex was a weak, impressionable young person who would never have been able to free himself from the sort of life his domineering parents and schoolmasters had planned for him, except that by his "sin" he made their choice of a career for him an impossibility. When he had

become an outcast from the social group to which his family belonged, his previously latent will power was aroused and he began to lead a normal life for the first time; his "unconscious self," freed at last from the hateful hypocrisy bred by home and church and school, became victorious.

Quite characteristic of Mr. Butler's preference for the practical in life was his careful account of the importance of money in the rehabilitation of his previously much-abused hero. Butler, himself, never entertained any sentimental ideas about poverty; the following summary shows the independence of his attitude:

. . . He points out that while a man can stand being told that he must submit to a severe surgical operation, or even go coolly enough to be hanged, the strongest will quail before financial ruin. Granting that there are three serious losses, money, health, and reputation, "loss of money is far the worst, then comes ill-health, and then loss of reputation." True to this pragmatic concept he makes Ernest's rehabilitation depend not entirely on his own exertions, but in part on a legacy which his aunt, without his knowledge, has left for him to receive at the age of twenty-eight. Butler describes in detail Overton's investment of this sum and its increase, giving a thoroughly realistic treatment to the romantic theme of the fairy god-mother. The sanction of conduct in the good opinion of society he tosses overboard with other moral baggage. Loss of reputation, indeed, he makes a constructive element in setting Ernest free from a profession which he had come to detest, and throwing him on his own resources. "If a man's moral and intellectual constitution is naturally sound, there is nothing which will give him so much strength of character as having been well cut."¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., p. 379.

Maugham's Philip, like Butler's Ernest, rebelled at being prepared for the ministry, a respectable and safe profession for a young man of the middle-class who had no large fortune. After a brief experience in a London office, he managed (with some help from his gentle old Aunt) to try his hand at art on the Continent for two years; then, honestly convinced that, though he had worked hard at this apprenticeship, he would never be a great artist, he had the courage to try once more to find out what he could do really well in the world. His fourth attempt was to prepare to become a doctor.

In the medical profession, Philip, lover of humanity that he was, had found the place where he belonged. He learned more and more about men and women, and he gradually advanced in self-knowledge as well. He began to lose the sense of inferiority which had developed from his sensitiveness about his club-foot; about him he saw everywhere people defective in some way and he came to realize that each person was a strange combination of good and bad and that no one was free of some sort of "human bondage."

Worse in torment than his physical deformity was his first real love, for that experience bound him to a parasitic young woman who was his inferior in every way. However, his natural soundness of mind and spirit was not

impaired during the trying years, and genuine affection for a wholesome young woman brought promise that even the bonds that cut the heart cruelly are not impossible to sever.

From a pedantic point of view, Of Human Bondage might seem not to have a plot, although the vital reality of the narrative is sustained from the beginning to the end. Conventions of form had to give way to permit the inclusion of all sorts of personal reflections. Sometimes these reflections seem necessary to the movement of the story; sometimes they do not. But they do reveal Philip's mood; and since the story is chiefly concerned with the spiritual development of the hero through adolescence and young manhood, what he thinks about and what he decides as a result of his thinking must be made clear. Developments that are usually hidden mysteries are revealed in fascinating succession. New intricacies of complication replace familiar ones; something different from the traditional climax is not unacceptable.

Philip's real triumph, his "happy ending," came when he reached a few satisfactory conclusions about life; a real contentment soon replaced the old restlessness. The following passage reveals his mood toward the last of the narrative:

Out of the manifold events of his life, his deeds, his feelings, his thoughts, [a man] might make a design,

regular, elaborate, complicated, or beautiful; and though it might be no more than an illusion that he had the power of selection, . . . that did not matter; it seemed, and so to him it was. In the vast warp of life, (a river arising from no springs and flowing endlessly to no sea), with the background to his fancies that there was no meaning and that nothing was important, a man might get a personal satisfaction in selecting the various strands that worked out the pattern, the most obvious, perfect, and beautiful, in which a man was born, grew to manhood, married, produced children, toiled for his bread, and died; but there were others, intricate and wonderful, in which happiness did not enter and in which success was not attempted; and in them might be discovered a more troubling grace. . . . Happiness mattered as little as pain. . . . Whatever happened to him now would be one more motive to add to the complexity of the pattern, and when the end approached he would rejoice in its completion. It would be a work of art, and it would be none the less beautiful because he alone knew of its existence, and with his death it would at once cease to be.¹²

Philip knew that he, at least, had risen above circumstance; he had learned to know himself, and his self-knowledge was the beginning of wisdom. The material reward which satisfied Copperfield seems trivial in comparison with the remarkable maturity reached by Philip.

What influences working between the writing of David Copperfield and Of Human Bondage made for so great a change in the conception of a personality and its needs that David, living in the early part of a century, and Philip, living in the latter part of the same century, seem to struggle in different worlds? The answer will be

¹² W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, pp. 659 ff.

found in a consideration of the masterpiece of Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh.

A comparison of the plots of David Copperfield and The Way of All Flesh will make clear the main differences between the Mid-Victorian biographical story and that of the Late-Victorian, or rather Edwardian period; for although Butler's work was completed by 1885, it was not published until after his death in 1902. Butler's narrative had such an important influence on Fortitude and Of Human Bondage that much of what is said of Butler's work will also be true of them.

It has been noted that in each of the four biographical narratives the identification of the author with the main character is not only external, but that it coincides with his temperament, his habits, his principles, and his ideals. In the matter of plot construction, however, David Copperfield is very different from the other three. The later writers were chiefly concerned with the effective presentation of their own private views of the universe in writings which would provide intelligent entertainment. Even more important than the experiences of the author in his climb in the material world were his ideas, his criticism of life. Necessarily the plot became of relatively small importance. The definiteness of old fictional patterns had to give way to permit the author to make his

comments; for the seemingly extraneous material, searching, satirical, or witty, contained the author's own criticism of life itself. The climax was reached when the hero had finally adjusted himself in the environment of a responsible adult.

In David Copperfield, a fair representative of the Victorian novel, the plot is rather carefully constructed. The material, although based sometimes upon the actual life of the author and sometimes upon his ideal for his life, is shaped according to a definite fictional pattern. The development is chronological, and the type is picaresque. The incidents arise easily and to the very end connect themselves unobtrusively with the character of which they are a part, even though there are many digressions and side plots and Dickens does have a habit of erecting "each minor event into a major dramatic occasion."¹³ The love-story of David Copperfield is a tribute to the taste of Dickens's happy public, something of an As You Like It piece of work: there is a happy ending even though the unsatisfactory child-wife has to die to make way for the angel-wife. The story has a beginning, growth and end, "an idea of completion, of rounding-out, where life itself

¹³ J. W. Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel (New York: The Century Company, 1932), p. 170.

fails to do so."¹⁴

Written to record the successful battle of a talented youngster (the author) against poverty and misery, David Copperfield presents "the odd contrasts and piquant variety of human experience."¹⁵ The hero is not so much a single individual as he is a type, and the theme of the book is discipline of a character. John Forster, biographer of Dickens, summarizes David Copperfield from that point of view:

Consider Copperfield thus in his proper place in the story, and sequence as well as connection will be given to the varieties of its childish adventure. The first warm nest of love in which his vain fond mother, and her quaint kind servant, cherish him; the quick-following contrast of hard dependence and servile treatment; the escape from that premature and dwarfed maturity by leisurely growth of emotions and faculties into manhood; these are component parts of a character consistently drawn. The sum of its achievement is to be a successful cultivation of letters; and often as such imaginary discipline has been the theme of fiction, there are not many happier conceptions of it. The ideal and real parts of the boy's nature receive development in the proportions which contribute best to the end desired; the readiness for impulsive attachments that had put him into the leading of others, has underneath it a base of truthfulness on which at last he rests in safety; the practical man is the outcome of the fanciful youth; and a more than equivalent for the graces of his visionary days, is found in the active sympathies that life has opened to him. Many experiences have come within its range, and his heart has had room for all.¹⁶

¹⁴ Richard Burton, op. cit., p. 247.

¹⁵ J. W. Beach, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁶ John Forster, op. cit., p. 130.

Motives and the conscious or unconscious processes of thought of his characters do not concern the author of David Copperfield.¹⁷ In portraying his characters, Dickens paints more coarsely and sweepingly than do his successors,¹⁸ and those who care more for the quiet impersonality of present-day methods of character presentation are conscious of his over-emphasis.¹⁹

Two generations ago London presented a much more picturesque scene than it does today, and Dickens, in his very remarkable picture gallery of unforgettable characters, was not content to paint his people just as they were; but, in order to increase the enjoyment of his readers, he enlarged these pictures beyond life size and stressed some dominant trait in character, one method, at least, of simplifying complex human nature.²⁰ He often began with a salient impression and then worked outward to a fuller conception of the person as a whole;²¹ but,

¹⁷ Pelham Edgar, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁸ Richard Burton, Charles Dickens, p. 259.

¹⁹ Loc. cit.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 255.

²¹ G. H. Mair, English Literature, Modern (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), p. 229.

like his master, Smollett, Dickens was fond of emphasizing a type to such a degree that the result often seems caricature. The virtues and the vices are personified in David Copperfield as follows: Betsy Trotwood, kindness; Peggotty, devotion; Dr. Strong, gentleness; Mr. Murdstone, cruelty; and Uriah Heep, sneaking humility.

Dickens has often been called a writer of fairy stories for grown-up people;²² David Copperfield may, perhaps, be one good reason for such a charge, for there are many fairy-story types: the lovable prince, David; the cruel step-father, Murdstone; the fairy-godmother, Aunt Betsy; the monstrous villain, Heep; the devoted servants and friends, the Peggotty group, for example; the fairy-princesses, two of them--Dora, the illusion, and Agnes, the deserving.

In David Copperfield, the interest is not concentrated upon the central character, but is distributed among a large number of characters. Although Dickens, master novelist that he was, realized the importance of each character and allotted him his space and emphasis, he used many more characters than his subject required.²³ His greatest power lay in portraying those from the middle and lower classes. His early hardships had prejudiced him

²² J. W. Beach, op. cit., p. 126.

²³ Ibid., p. 128.

against the upper middle class, it is said, and he could not resist some disparagement of their representatives; an example of his prejudice is seen in his presentation of Steerforth.²⁴

In the book which he acknowledged as largely autobiographical, Dickens does not make his hero the most memorable character of all; that distinction goes to one who will, perhaps, be an immortal character, the original of which was Dickens's father, the lovable, impractical optimist, Mr. Wilkins Micawber.²⁵ Beach calls this character ". . . a representative comic figure standing . . . for significant social tendencies, for an age and a culture. And he enables his author to make his reflections on commerce, on our social order, without the necessity of indulging in dissertations."²⁶

Although Dickens did show the need of some reforms in the social life of England, he did not try to make a serious study of human nature. To him individuals were good or bad and a story arose from the thrilling situations which followed their struggles for place. Samuel Butler began his masterpiece less than a generation after Dickens

²⁴ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁵ Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, op. cit., p. 226.

²⁶ J. W. Beach, op. cit., p. 72.

completed his, but in that short interval any person who was science-conscious would have had to depart from many of the traditions of his race regarding his fellow-men as well as himself. Butler, alive to the findings of the new knowledge, apprehended in advance of his generation the question of personality; The Way of All Flesh "is the first modern novel in which family relationships are treated with psychoanalytical insight, and growth to maturity is seen as the process of freeing oneself from one's parents. It is the first novel in which the unconscious self is clearly recognized."²⁷

The Way of All Flesh, an autobiography of Butler's experiences and ideas, was, as the title reveals, also intended to have a symbolic character.²⁸ From the beginning it is a "satire on tyranny, dullness, and narrow obscurantism which so often go with domestic respectability."²⁹

Clara Gruening Stillman in her book, Samuel Butler, a Mid-Victorian Modern, has summarized the plot of The Way of All Flesh in the following succinct manner:

It is the story of how Ernest Pontifex saved his

²⁷ Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., pp. 194 ff.

²⁸ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁹ Helen Thomas Follett and Wilson Follett, Some Modern Novelists (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918), p. 354.

soul alive from the false ideals and crushing domination of his parents, and discovered what he was and what he wanted to do and did it; no simple achievement, for he was so timid and ignorant that he had practically to be born again before he could make the first conscious gesture toward self-realization. His early life at home and at school is modelled on Butler's own, but Ernest was actually ordained and thus, having been committed far more deeply than Butler to the life his parents had planned for him, was faced with a much more difficult problem in extricating himself. So thoroughly involved was he in this life and so unfit both for it and any other kind at the time of the deep humiliation of his imprisonment--another experience which Butler did not share with him--that this, which seemed at first only a supreme misfortune and disgrace, turned out to be his salvation, for it enabled him to make a fresh start stripped clean of parents, social position, and all the lesser handicaps his past had piled up against him.³⁰

Out of the exigencies of Butler's material and purpose arose a new technique, an ingenious device to give verisimilitude--a double focus; the story is told by the hero's godfather, Mr. Overton, who represents the mature Butler. Nevertheless, the hero, Ernest, who represents the young Butler, is always the center in the process of living his life. The reader is soon conscious that this device makes it easy to give the real Ernest in both his past and present, that it is well adapted to the purpose of the author:

. . . for Overton had been a playmate of Ernest's father, though he did not like him, for Theobald was dull and mean even as a child, and of his Aunt Alethea whom he liked very much, and he remembered Ernest's

³⁰ Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., p. 191.

grand-parents and great-grand-parents, and the social environment of Ernest's youth had been his own. He thus knew a great many things about Ernest that Ernest could not know and greatly enriches the picture by his contacts with Ernest's prenatal and early existence, just as he affords a certain background and balance for Ernest's later life by being its sole link with the past. . . .³¹

Overton, who is a man-of-letters, assumes the right of an author to comment freely; through him the author's view of life is presented with a simple directness which is very effective. Always, however, Overton is unobtrusive so that "the story is told in Ernest's own words or in a paraphrase of such words as Ernest might have used in telling Overton about it long afterward. Ernest is always the centre, and, so convincingly is his life laid bare, and so skilfully is everything made to contribute to that reality--even the author's qualifications of Ernest's point-of-view--that one has the absorbed sense of watching a drama in flesh and blood."³² Throughout this remarkable book there is present a strong sense of continuity--the passing of life from generation to generation.

The Way of All Flesh, published in 1903, soon became one of the most influential books of the Edwardian period. To understand the works of the younger writers of that time, Butler's works must be studied, for he began

³¹ Loc. cit.

³² Ibid., p. 192.

something new in writing:

The effect of Butler's pungent book is traceable in much of the work that followed it. H. G. Wells . . . developed Butler's conception of the novel into the assertion that its function was "to be social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination, the parade of morals, and the exchange of manners, the factory of customs, the criticism of laws and institutions and of social dogmas and ideas . . . the home confessional, the initiator of knowledge, the seed of fruitful self-questioning."³³

Of the novels beginning with The Way of All Flesh, one critic notes, "In these novels of the younger generation we see humane and searching criticism of society linking for the first time a treatment as full as that of a Thackeray novel and an effect as single as that of an Ibsen play. . . ."³⁴

Fortitude, by Hugh Walpole, and Of Human Bondage, by W. Somerset Maugham, were both written just before the World War; both show the direct influence of Samuel Butler, although each book has marked distinctive traits.

The story in Fortitude is of Peter Westcott, from childhood to maturity. He goes from his home, grim Scaw House in Cornwall, to a second-rate Devonshire School. A romantic escape takes him to a boarding-house in Bloomsbury while he works for a queer second-hand bookseller.

³³ John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickert, op. cit., p. 30.

³⁴ Helen Thomas Follett and Wilson Follett, op. cit., p. 354.

A calamity takes him to poverty in the East End for a short time. But soon he achieves a real success in literature. A few years of happiness follow; then love and marriage are blasted by a catastrophe which would seem to mean that tragedy ended all. Instead, however, we learn that all the previous experiences are but the long beginning; for Peter's success or failure must await the outcome of a great struggle within himself. The course of the story is from the surface of life inward. "Fortitude is a story written to a theme rather than a story written to make something beautiful out of a dream of life or out of an experience of life."³⁵

In Fortitude there is much philosophy and, perhaps, even preaching, for Mr. Walpole has

. . . a picturesque and most elusive moral theory having to do with a Tiger which each one of us carries hidden somewhere in his heart, and which, if our soul is to live, we must sometime face and conquer. . . . This Tiger belongs to a region of Mr. Walpole's imagination which makes him rather skilful in creating an atmosphere of mystery and terror. He has done this quite successfully in Fortitude.³⁶

Joseph Hergesheimer believes that in Hugh Walpole the consciousness of both the inner and outer worlds is splendidly joined,³⁷ that his writing takes the reader

³⁵ Cornelius Weygandt, op. cit., p. 447.

³⁶ J. W. Beach, op. cit., p. 316.

³⁷ Joseph Hergesheimer, op. cit., p. 3.

"from the bright surface of life onward to its impenetrable heart, from the striking the easy, the lovely, to the hopelessly hidden mystery of being."³⁸ And again Mr. Hergesheimer tells us that

. . . it is impossible . . . to separate what occurs in the sphere of reality from the vivid pressure, the dim forces, that, lying back of conscious existence, are always gathering like portentous storms behind Mr. Walpole's stories. To have stated so calmly his passionate belief in just these influences was, at the time most of his books were written, an act of that courage he has so persistently extolled.³⁹

In his little book, Hugh Walpole, an Appreciation, Mr. Hergesheimer emphasizes the deep insight of Walpole in the following paragraph:

He recognizes clearly that beauty and ugliness are twisted into the fibre of man, they are man; without one the other must cease--in spite of legend to the contrary--to exist. Beauty lies in struggle, in the overcoming of evil; without struggle there can be no good. Victory, certainly, is not unheard of; but it is rare, the result of amazing courage, strength, or amazing luck. To say that anyone, almost, can triumph over life, that temptation is easily cast aside, the devil denied on every hand, is one of the most insidious lies imaginable. It is an error into which Hugh Walpole has never fallen; the progress of his books has been an increasing recognition of the tragic difficulty of any accomplishment whatever; and, as time goes by, such success becomes smaller, more momentary, and more heroic.⁴⁰

Throughout Walpole's narrative the suspense, heightened by mystery and conflict interwoven, is about

³⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 27 ff.

things spiritual; the reader carries away a memory not so much of a succession of events as the vision of a person suffering. Peter, in his awful struggle with innate evil, is as lonely a figure as the Savior in Gethsemane. But, there can be no doubt of it, his integrity will enable him to keep up his fight, confident of ultimate victory.

The struggling, aspiring Peter, who, at the close of the narrative, is just beginning the greatest effort of his life, is very different from Dickens's David, who, at the age of thirty, is definitely settled down after a number of trying years spent in acquiring the position and winning the love to which his virtue entitles him.

A comparative study of David Copperfield, The Way of All Flesh, Fortitude, and Of Human Bondage reveals David to be a static character and Ernest, Peter, and Philip to be steadily developing characters from boyhood to maturity. David's conduct was always exemplary because his creator believed that a good person was always good. Butler's original and realistic characterization set a new standard for the psychological analysis of human experience. His successors, Walpole and Maugham, set even more ambitious standards. Peter and Philip both had characteristics of nature and temperament which obstructed the progress of their natural idealism, but their courageous intellectual honesty was rewarded with

a wisdom which they felt was the best part of life.

Maugham, the last writer of the group, was a twentieth-century physician who believed that "to the muddled race of man almost anything in the way of conduct is possible;"⁴¹ and the story of Philip's struggle gives the feeling of actual life. What Philip says and does is deeply true to all human motive, so that the reader sympathizes and understands. More than any of the other three writers, Maugham makes the reader feel that all men are created of the same elements; and more than they does he reveal an all-embracing compassion that is very nearly Christ-like.

An example of this compassion is found in a paragraph near the end of the story, Of Human Bondage. Philip had early become a self-conscious person whose physical deformity (a club foot) had actually warped his character. But, by the time he was thirty, he knew that this ugly deformity had proved itself a blessing because it had forced him to develop powers in himself that might otherwise have lain dormant:

. . . he had acquired that power of introspection which had given him so much delight. Without it he should never have had his keen appreciation of beauty, his passion for art and literature, and his interest in the varied spectacle of life. The

⁴¹ Carl Van Doren, op. cit., p. 116.

ridicule and the contempt which had so often been heaped upon him had turned his mind inward and called forth those flowers which he felt would never lose their fragrance. Then he saw that the normal was the rarest thing in the world. Everyone had some defect of body or of mind; he thought of all the people he had known (the whole world was like a sick-house, and there was no rhyme or reason in it,) he saw a long procession, deformed in body and warped in mind, some with illness of the flesh, weak hearts or weak lungs, and some with illness of the spirit, languor of will, or a craving for liquor. At this moment he could feel a holy compassion for them all. They were the helpless instruments of blind chance. He could pardon Griffiths for his treachery and Mildred for the pain she had caused him. They could not help themselves. The only reasonable thing was to accept the good of men and be patient with their faults. The words of the dying God crossed his memory: Forgive them, for they know not what they do.⁴²

⁴² W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, p. 762.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Dickens, writing David Copperfield in the middle of the nineteenth century, had decried certain social evils; Butler, beginning to write The Way of All Flesh in the year that Dickens died and working on it until sometime in the eighties, savagely attacked the greatest Victorian institutions--the family and the church. Dickens longed for social reform when he wrote against social injustices; Butler burned to show in his book that the very sources of life, physical and spiritual, were so corrupt that there would have to be cleansing and vitalizing there if the young were to develop normally into wholesome men and women. Walpole and Maugham, much influenced by the powerful satire of their predecessor, Butler, proceeded farther in his direction: Walpole, writing of both the outer and the inner worlds, and Maugham, earnestly trying to avoid any concealment in his realistic portrayal of the perplexed mind and soul of a modern youth, attempted to go far below the surface of life.

With a well-developed fictional plot in David Copperfield, Dickens felt the necessity of giving his readers the pleasure of a happy ending. With no plot at all in The Way of All Flesh, Butler was concerned with

no formal end to his story, and so his hero, no longer a victim of social groups which had very nearly got him in their grasp, felt perfectly free to enjoy his happily inherited legacy in travel and art, not even encumbered with his own children.

Walpole, like Butler, had his hero's "happiness" consist mainly in having come through the troubled years of his young manhood with his soul still alive and eager to win complete self-mastery. At the end of the narrative, Peter, bereft of all persons and things that ordinarily make for personal pleasure, prayed only for boundless courage to fight the forces of evil which threatened his soul.

Maugham's Philip, unlike Walpole's young mystic, never seemed to feel that he was engaged in any grim battle with insidious, supernatural foes. Philip had to grapple with all the force of his intellect, for the great mass of knowledge brought in by the new sciences had swept away the old moorings of his faith in many things. He seemed to be living in a new world, a world in which the most vital problems of life had to be solved by his own generation. For himself, at least, he came to satisfactory conclusions by the time he had reached his thirtieth year. He had, in fact, reached such a maturity of understanding that he could actually contemplate a most

commonplace future existence with genuine contentment.

Vigorous thinkers in an age characterized by intellectual unrest, Butler, Maugham, and Walpole were eager to apply effectually the knowledge being gained about man and his environment; they could not tolerate stagnation, intellectual or spiritual, in those who should be alert and profit by the progress of the modern world. Their very style of writing, like their thinking, was clear and direct; they had a message, and they combined forcefulness with simplicity. Mrs. Stillman wrote of the author of The Way of All Flesh, "His own subjects grew always out of the organic structure of his life, forced upon him by the needs of his own development. Every problem he dealt with, however wide its scope, however impersonal its treatment, was in a profound sense a personal problem."¹ Walpole and Maugham were not unlike Butler in that respect.

The question of personality in a manner characteristic of the new scientific age was first approached by Butler in The Way of All Flesh. He was not concerned with reforms simply to ameliorate conditions as was his predecessor, Dickens, whose characters were typical of the masses who excited Dickens's sympathy. Butler and his

¹ Clara G. Stillman, op. cit., p. 38.

successors, Walpole and Maugham, were chiefly concerned with the freeing of the self from the dominion of wrongs of inheritance and of environment, forces which, in Dickens's time, had not yet been recognized.

David Copperfield presented no vital questions of morality, since Dickens conveniently embodied vices and virtues in typical persons. The development of science in the latter half of the nineteenth century made the later novelists conscious of man as a compound of good and evil and, naturally, not always consistent in his actions or clear in his thinking. Although David Copperfield presented the experiences of a life from boyhood to maturity, Dickens did not show character as affected by environment; much happened to Copperfield, but there was no great conflict in mind or spirit to change his personality. Butler, Walpole, and Maugham related experiences only to show how the character of the hero was developed by his dealings with them; they studied the individual in order to understand his ways of thinking and his motives for action; action itself and its consequences were of minor importance to them.

Butler had adverse circumstances shock Ernest Pontifex, a weak character in an unfavorable environment, into an exercise of will which transformed him into a strong, normal character capable of independent judgment; and

Walpole had Peter battle to make the good in his personality victorious over the inherited evil tendencies which had for him a most hateful attraction. Peter first sought to escape the tragic, downward pull of evil into the sombre depths of life by fleeing from the influence of his ancestral home; but he finally realized that the crucial battle with evil had to be waged within himself and that to it he must bring unfaltering courage, man's greatest asset in this world.

Maugham revealed in Philip a remarkable combination of intellectual courage with a deep sense of human fellowship. Philip's mind and soul were equally well-nourished; and his sufferings, resulting from unceasing efforts at adjustment in a world made strange by much new knowledge, were attended by a steady growth in himself of patience and sympathetic understanding. The objective accounts of Philip's dealings with many different types of persons emphasized the sterling qualities of a person who was really honest in his search for truth. Philip loved humanity, but was not sentimental; he had great intellectual ability, but was not a pedant; he had great spiritual insight, but was not a mystic. Philip's experiences and daily needs were those of vital persons; they were never those of an empty simulacrum.

Charles Dickens, a fair representative of the Early

and Mid-Victorian era, emphasized mainly traits and tendencies of humanity; Samuel Butler, Hugh Walpole, and W. Somerset Maugham, representative writers of the two generations following that of Dickens, were deeply concerned with problems of personality, analysis of life in general and of their own hearts in particular. They took cognizance of the constantly increasing importance of the intellect in man. Modern knowledge had begun to reveal the amazing complexity of what had before been considered ordinary humanity, and it was impossible for them to use the old, comfortable method of labeling a man simply good or bad. In The Way of All Flesh, Fortitude, and Of Human Bondage the element of self-revelation naturally varied, but on the whole the thoughtful and observant authors of these modern biographical works gave freely of themselves to increase self-knowledge.

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