The merry-go-round ..

Maugham W Somerset
The Merry-go-round
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MRS. CRADDOCK


Some Press Opinions

Daily Telegraph.—'Mr. Maugham has contributed an extremely interesting study to the psychological literature of passion. Many will find it unpleasant; against an intimate analytical exposition of character this charge can generally be brought. It is certainly true of all the classical "confessions." Mr. Maugham has torn the veil from a woman's heart, has shown her in the budgassing of her love, in the full glory of its blossom, in its fading, decay, and death. He has painted it with what, according to temperament, some will call extraordinary faithfulness. . . . Those who are interested in human nature under all its aspects will, however, find the book absorbing. . . . The excellence of the work, however, does not rest merely on the central figure; all the minor characters are good. Miss Ley, Bertha's aunt, with whom she is living at the time of her engagement, and with whom she more than once takes refuge from her domestic troubles, is an extremely clever portrait, which would redeem any book. Unemotional, clever, hard, cynical, yet not without soft corners in her heart, content to look on at life, and delighted to sum up her reflections in pithy comments, she is a most entertaining and illuminating companion.'

Truth.—'Mr. Maugham's treatment in "Mrs. Craddock" of that eternal theme of domestic tragedy is nothing less than masterly.'

Leeds Mercury.—'It is a virile and vivid study of a badly assorted marriage, containing at least one living character, and an unusual amount of comprehension of human nature from several standpoints. . . . It is probable that ere long he will be admitted to the ranks of those (very few) writers of English fiction whose works have to be reckoned with as literature.'

Sketch.—"In "Mrs. Craddock," Mr. W. S. Maugham has given us his strongest book. In fact, the novel is in many ways one of the strongest of the year.'

Academy.—'He handles the general history of the marriage with excellent simplicity and skill. The revelation of Bertha's feelings is rendered almost to perfection. . . . The book has earned our genuine respect.'

Daily Chronicle.—""Mrs. Craddock" is the best study of the misunderstood woman that we ever remember to have read. It is at once pitiless and kindly. Mr. Maugham is pitiless because he knows; he is kindly because he understands . . . so excellent a novel is "Mrs. Craddock."'

Yorkshire Post.—'It is a finely conceived and absolutely convincing study of the lives of two quite ordinary persons, who, differing altogether in temperament and in their outlook on life generally, have the misfortune to become man and wife. . . . The study of Mrs. Craddock's married life is in itself worth a thousand of the average novels published nowadays.'

Standard.—'In Mr. Maugham's new story, "Mrs. Craddock," all the author's qualities are well to the fore. The character-drawing is firm and unflinching, the physical side of life always in mind; he is cynical and occasionally flippancy—in short, the book is extremely clever.'

Graphic.—'The novel is, with its wide range of open and covert satire, healthily entertaining.'

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'The Merry-go-round

By
William Somerset Maugham
Author of
'Liza of Lambeth,' 'The Hero,' 'Mrs. Craddock'

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William Heinemann
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HERBERT AND MARGUERITE BUNNING

I bring not only all I wrought
Into the faltering words of speech,
I dedicate the song I sought,
Yet could not reach.
PART I

I

All her life Miss Elizabeth Dwarris had been a sore trial to her relations. A woman of means, she ruled tyrannically over a large number of impecunious cousins, using her bank balance like the scorpions of Rehoboam to chastise them; and, like many another pious creature, for their souls' good making all and sundry excessively miserable. Nurtured in the Evangelical ways current in her youth, she insisted that her connections should seek salvation according to her own lights, and with harsh tongue and bitter gibe made it her constant business to persuade them of their extreme unworthiness. She arranged lives as she thought fit, and ventured not only to order the costume and habits, but even the inner thought, of those about her; the Last Judgment could have no terrors for any that had faced her searching examination. She invited to stay with her in succession various poor ladies who presumed on a distant tie to call her Aunt Eliza, and they accepted her summons, more imperious than a royal command, with gratitude by no means unmixed with fear, bearing the servitude meekly as a cross which in the future would meet due testamentary reward.

Miss Dwarris loved to feel her power. During these long visits—for in a way the old lady was very hospitable—she made it her especial object to break the spirit of her guests,
and it entertained her hugely to see the mildness with which were borne her extravagant demands, the humility with which every inclination was crushed. She took a malicious pleasure in publicly affronting persons, ostensibly to bend a sinful pride, or in obliging them to do things which they peculiarly disliked. With a singular quickness for discovering the points on which they were most sensitive, she attacked every weakness with blunt invective till the sufferer withered before her raw and bleeding; no defect, physical or mental, was protected from her raillery, and she could pardon as little an excess of avidity as a want of memory. Yet with all her heart she despised her victims, she flung in their face insolently their mercenary spirit, vowing that she would never leave a penny to such a pack of weak fools; it delighted her to ask for advice in the distribution of her property among charitable societies, and she heard with unconcealed hilarity their unwilling and confused suggestions.

With one of her relations only Miss Dwarris found it needful to observe a certain restraint—for Miss Ley, perhaps the most distant of her cousins, was as plain-spoken as herself, and had besides a far keener wit, whereby she could turn rash statements to the utter ridicule of the speaker. Nor did Miss Dwarris precisely dislike this independent spirit; she looked upon her, in fact, with a certain degree of affection and not a little fear. Miss Ley, seldom lacking a repartee, appeared really to enjoy the verbal contests, from which, by her greater urbanity, readiness, and knowledge, she usually emerged victorious; it confounded, but at the same time almost amused, the elder lady that a woman so much poorer than herself, with no smaller claim than others to the coveted inheritance, should venture not only to be facetious at her expense, but even to carry war into her very camp. Miss Ley,
really not grieved to find someone to whom without prickings of conscience she could speak her whole mind, took a grim pleasure in pointing out to her cousin the poor logic of her observations or the foolish unreason of her acts. No cherished opinion of Miss Dwarris was safe from satire; even her Evangelicism was laughed at, and the rich old woman, unused to argument, was easily driven to self-contradiction; and then—for the victor took no pains to conceal her triumph—she grew pale and speechless with rage. The quarrels were frequent, but Miss Dwarris, though it was a sharp thorn in her flesh that the first advances must be made by her, in the end always forgave. Yet at last it was inevitable that a final breach should occur. The cause thereof, characteristically enough, was very trivial.

Miss Ley, accustomed when she went abroad for the winter to let her little flat in Chelsea, had been obliged by unforeseen circumstances to return to England while her tenants were still in possession, and had asked Miss Dwarris whether she might stay with her in Old Queen Street. The old tyrant, much as she hated her relatives, hated still more to live alone; she needed someone on whom to vent her temper, and through the illness of a niece, due to spend March and April with her, had been forced to pass a month of solitude. She wrote back, in the peremptory fashion which even with Miss Ley she could not refrain from using, that she expected her on such and such a day by such and such a train. It is not clear whether there was in the letter anything to excite in Miss Ley a contradictory spirit, or whether her engagements really prevented it, but at all events she answered that her plans made it more convenient to arrive on the day following and by a different train. Miss Dwarris telegraphed that unless her guest came on the day and at