



William Makepeace Thackeray
Vanity Fair

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VANITY FAIR

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY was born in 1811 in Calcutta. He was sent to Charterhouse school and went up to Cambridge in 1829. There he contributed to student magazines, and made his first visits to France, developing a deep affection for the country and its culture. He left Cambridge without a degree, and spent time working as a trainee lawyer, a bill discounter, and (in Paris) a student of painting. A series of bank failures in 1833 wiped out his inheritance. He attempted to support himself as an illustrator, but found reader success as a journalist and travel writer. His marriage to Isabella Shawe was initially happy and produced two surviving daughters, Anne Isabella (later Isabella Ritchie), and Harriet Marian ('Minnie'), later Mrs Leslie Stephen. Domestic tragedy struck in 1840, however, when Isabella suffered a serious mental breakdown; she spent the remainder of her life in private care. Thackeray published under numerous pen-names in the early 1840s: *Barry Lyndon* (1844) brought him some critical notice and he attracted considerable attention with *The Snobs of England* (1846–7) in the recently founded *Punch* magazine. *Vanity Fair* (1847–8) made him famous. Hugely acclaimed, it promoted him to the rank of Dickens's principal rival in fiction. Other major novels followed: the semi-autobiographical *Pendennis* (1848–50), the historical *Henry Esmond* (1852), *The Newcomes* (1853–5), and *The Virginians* (1857–9)—all of which consolidated his reputation, and enhanced his wealth, without equalling the huge popularity of *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray made two profitable lecturing tours of America, in 1852 and 1855, and stood unsuccessfully for parliament as an Independent Liberal. In 1860 he took on the editorship of the new *Cornhill Magazine*, a post he held until 1862. His last years were his most prosperous. His health had been erratic for years, however, and in December 1863 he died suddenly of a stroke. He was buried in Kensall Green cemetery. In 1865 a bust by his friend and neighbour Carlo, Baron Marochetti, was placed in Westminster Abbey.

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WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

Vanity Fair
A Novel without a Hero



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
HELEN SMALL

With 193 illustrations by the Author

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INTRODUCTION

[Readers who are unfamiliar with the plot may prefer to treat the Introduction as an Afterword.]

'HE is the best writer in England', was G. H. Lewes's verdict on Thackeray.¹ Lewes, one of the most influential critics in England, was talking informally among friends in 1846. If the judgement was a fraction premature at that point (Thackeray had yet to produce anything more ambitious than the witty skewering of English social mores, *Snobs of England*, currently appearing in *Punch*), it looked much less eccentric a year later, once *Vanity Fair's* publication was under way. Issued in monthly numbers from the office of *Punch* magazine, starting in January 1847, the novel was quickly recognized by astute readers as something exceptional in contemporary literature; by September the cultural 'noise' it was generating had become unignorable. 'He beats Dickens out of the world', Jane Carlyle wrote to her husband, Thomas (she had just read the first number in bed).² Charlotte Brontë was so impressed by the 'sagacity', 'truth', and 'sane energy' of the writing that her praise knew no limits: 'he stands alone . . . a Titan . . . a purely original mind'.³

Vanity Fair's first readers loved two related things about it: the sheer intricate cleverness of the narrative, and the easy relaxation of the style.⁴ Brilliantly funny, the novel managed to touch depths of pathos not seen from Thackeray before, and it commanded serious respect for its close engagement with the events and personalities that had shaped the European and British political scene in the early nineteenth century. Few writers could move with such easy assurance over a geographic territory that included England, Ireland, Belgium, France, Germany, and India, or across so wide a social milieu and class

¹ H. Sutherland Edwards, *Personal Recollections* (London: Cassell and Co., 1900), 150.

² Letter, 16 Sept. 1847, in *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, prepared for publication by Thomas Carlyle, ed. James Anthony Froude, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, Green 1883), ii. 3.

³ Letter to W. S. Williams, 29 March 1848, in Geoffrey Tillotson and Donald Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 51-2.

⁴ See the reviews collected in Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*.

range, without descending into the haphazardly picaresque. The servant's hall, schoolroom, army mess, banking-house, sponging-house, gambling-table, sporting circles—all these Dickens could do, but he could not bring an equal familiarity to the Cambridge student experience, to the aristocratic drawing-room, or to foreign halls of power. Not even Dickens possessed such agility of tone.

Take this early description of the scene in Brighton, where the recently wed Amelia Osborne and Rebecca Crawley await their husbands' deployment to Belgium for what may or may not be war against Napoleon. A mere seven days married, Amelia feels painfully redundant. She sits neglected in a chair, while Rawdon Crawley fleeces her brother at backgammon and, out of her hearing, her husband flirts with Becky on the balcony:

Scarce a week was past, and it was come to this! The future, had she regarded it, offered a dismal prospect; but Emmy was too shy, so to speak, to look to that, and embark alone on that wide sea, and unfit to navigate it without a guide and protector. I know Miss Smith has a mean opinion of her. But how many, my dear madam, are endowed with your prodigious strength of mind?

'Gad, what a fine night, and how bright the moon is!' George said, with a puff of his cigar, which went soaring up skywards.

'How delicious they smell in the open air! I adore them. Who'd think the moon was two hundred and thirty-six thousand eight hundred and forty-seven miles off?' Becky added, gazing at that orb with a smile. 'Isn't it clever of me to remember that? Pooh!' (p. 298)

Compassion for Amelia's vulnerability modulates into doubt about her claim on our regard, then into a rapid sarcasm at the too severe reader, before whipping through a speedy parody of George, into Becky's mocking display of the benefits of her education. Amelia and George both come off badly. The corrosive 'so to speak' diminishes 'Emmy' even as it sets about explaining her unhappiness, taking a conventional attribution of female modesty ('too shy') and redescribing it as moral incompetence—before pouring scorn on our surrogate ('Miss Smith', in this instance) for reaching that conclusion. (The imagined reader is a moving target in *Vanity Fair*: club-man, spinster, old, young, with children, without children, 'good-natured', 'carping', most of all 'beloved'—in short, teased and flattered into attention.)⁵ George's posturing 'Gad' launches a sentence of complacent stupidity: he

⁵ See Kate Flint, 'Women, Men and the Reading of *Vanity Fair*', in James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246–62.

thinks he is 'soaringly' romantic, but everything he says is bland cliché. Becky, as so often, has the best of it. Thoroughly on side with the narrator's stylistic game, she matches George's 'Gad' with an archly excessive 'I adore them', then offers her impressive empirical 'fact', only mercilessly to puncture its exaggerated importance in the curricula of young ladies' schools such as Miss Pinkerton's: 'Pooh!'

A putative origin for *Vanity Fair* lies in Thackeray's encounter in Paris, aged 19 or just 20, with a prototype of Becky: a 'lovely creature . . . about five-and-thirty years of age', who tapped him on the shoulder and saluted him by name at a masked ball, where he had not, till that moment, been enjoying himself. Dressed as she was in masculine costume, after the fashion of Louis XV's court, an enormous and filthy 'wig with three tails down her back', it took him a minute to recognize the governess he had once met 'in a very sober, worthy family in England'. He wrote up the encounter years later for *Britannia* magazine, giving what his biographers have taken to be a heavily censored version of the brief intimacy that ensued:⁶ 'I found her a few days afterwards eating garlic soup in a foul porter's lodge, from which she conducted me up a damp, mouldy staircase to her own apartment, on the seventh floor'⁷—his purpose, he clarifies, being to order some half-dozen shirts.⁷ This is thoroughly Sternean territory: Thackeray flirts simultaneously with the liberated French woman and the conventional English reader in a pastiche sentimentalism that asks, implausibly, to be above suspicion.

Although there are limits to the conventional claim that Becky and Thackeray are in a kind of narrative collusion with each other, the idea has evident traction in the early chapters: Becky shares her creator's penchant for mimicry and masquerade (her talent for acting matching his for stylistic imitation), she famously draws one of his caricature sketches (p. 123), and there is a withering accuracy in her assessment of other people's motives and capacities that enables her to function, at least until Waterloo, as an agent of the novel's disabused view of humanity. Thackeray dallies, in short, with her outlook on life, and for the duration of the attachment his critique of social inequalities is tied

⁶ See Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811–1846* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 124–6; and Peter Shillingsburg, *William Makepeace Thackeray: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 36.

⁷ 'Shrove Tuesday in Paris', *The Britannia*, 5 June 1841; repr. in *The Oxford Thackeray*, ed. George Saintsbury, 17 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), iii: *Catherine, A Shabby Genteel Story, The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Miscellanies, 1840–1*, 499–507, at 500–1.

to her desire for upward mobility (the *Edinburgh Review* was not alone in detecting 'a hard hit or two at the inequalities of our social order').⁸ Becky's knowing participation in the pleasures and the political point of that satire is among the chief reasons why this novel still seems so remarkably worldly, so fearlessly risqué, so uninterested in false notions of innocence, and why it has proved in its own time and since so appealing to men and women alike.⁹ What other major English novelist in the mid-century would have had his heroine regard her husband dispassionately and think that 'If he had but a little more brains . . . I might make something of him' (p. 208)? What other writer would allow her transparently to consider an alternative mode of self-advancement that entails giving Lord Steyne something of what he wants? (Just how much she gives him is a question to come back to.)

The heart rarely rules the head for Thackeray. Even at moments where seriousness would ordinarily matter most, the flavour is refreshingly acidic: 'The thought of [his fiancée's family's] ruin affected [George] not a little' (p. 220); 'every Englishman in the Duke of Wellington's army paid his way. The remembrance of such a fact surely becomes a nation of shopkeepers' (p. 336). As with Becky's 'Pooh!', a stylistic hallmark of this scepticism is the ready descent, by the narrative voice, from formality to demotic scorn: 'This history has been written to very little purpose if the reader has not perceived that the major was a spoony' (p. 844). Underpinning Thackeray's realism is a deep antipathy to idealism and to all forms of inflated valuation. Parody, pastiche, burlesque, mimicry were for him, as for Fielding—his favourite novelist—weapons against literary and social posturing. As with Fielding, the impulse to provoke laughter was at once radical and conservative. Intolerant of those 'civil Curses', 'Fraud, Pretence and Affectation',¹⁰ recognizing that all goods (literature included) are liable to marketization, and that the most cherished private possessions may easily go under the auctioneer's hammer, the writing is nevertheless stabilizing in its reference to ideals of value that are secure from the debasements of Vanity Fair. Thackeray differs from

⁸ [Abraham Hayward], *Edinburgh Review*, 88 (Jan. 1848), 46–67; repr. in Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 33–44, at 39.

⁹ 'The marvel is how he knew the ladies of the great world so well', Lord Acton commented of Thackeray's fiction at the time of his death. *The Correspondence of Lord Acton and Richard Simpson*, ed. Joseph L. Altholz, Damian McErath, James C. Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), iii. 158–61, at 160.

¹⁰ Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (1749), ed. Fredson Bowers, with an introduction and commentary by Martin C. Battestin, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), i. 129 (Bk III, Ch. iv).

Fielding in offering less by way of positive representation of an ideal standard, though various ideals are implicit in the disappointment felt at their absence: the prudent father, the wise mother, the loving home, the perfect marriage, the great military leader, the true monarch. There is, to invoke Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* gave Thackeray his title, no Celestial City in view; the novel remains amid the booths of the fair, where everything is for sale, 'Places, Honours, Preferments . . . Lusts, Pleasures . . . Wives, Children . . . Souls'.¹¹ The subtitle (and first working title for the novel) is explicit: 'A Novel without a Hero'. Imagine a *Tom Jones* without Squire Western, in which Sophia Western claims the same liberties Tom enjoys, and in which Waterloo replaces the Jacobite Rising, and you have a template for *Vanity Fair*.¹²

'*Risque*' is the *mot juste* (though not one employed in the novel). The French language saturates *Vanity Fair*. It is at once the language of licence and the language of condescension: Jos 'that fat *gourmand*'; Amelia, '*fade* and insipid'; rich, fickle, far-from-stupid Miss Crawley in the grip of her latest '*engouement*'. Thackeray knew German too, from months in 1830–1 that he spent living and studying in Weimar immediately after leaving Cambridge: he has a great deal of fun with Weimar's culinary and social heavinesses in *Vanity Fair*, where the city features as 'Pumpnickel'.¹³ But he was in love with France and with most things French from that first visit to Paris as an undergraduate between university terms. French is the preferred language in *Vanity Fair* for culinary and sexual appetites and for the discriminating palate in all matters aesthetic (faces, bodies, clothes, comportment, speech, social *cachet*); its nicety of expression in all these areas indicates an attention to taste that is at once endorsed (extensively and wittily employed) and disavowed (it remains audibly 'foreign').

It is also, of course, the language of Napoleon. When Becky 'routs' Miss Pinkerton in Ch. I by speaking the language, knowing full well that her headmistress lacks the competence to follow, she performs the

¹¹ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. with an introduction and notes by W. R. Owens, World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 86.

¹² The critical literature on Thackeray's debt to Fielding has tended, rather, to focus on the relationship between Fielding's *Amelia* and *Vanity Fair*—not least because of the congruence in the names of the leading female characters. See, especially, E. D. H. Johnson, 'Vanity Fair and Amelia: Thackeray in the Perspective of the Eighteenth Century', *Modern Philology*, 59 (1961), 100–13.

¹³ As S. S. Praver has shown, Thackeray's inclusion of German terms in some of his English writings also 'signals a distant [and perhaps surprising] respect for metaphysics and transcendentalisms'. *Breeches and Metaphysics: Thackeray's German Discourse* (Oxford: Legenda, 1997), 496.

opening gesture in what Patricia Marks aptly describes as ‘the novel’s dismantling of British moral smugness at defeating Bonaparte’.¹⁴ Once beyond the school gates, she is still more outrageous (remember that this is 1813): ‘thank Heaven for French. *Vive la France! Vive l’Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!*’ (p. 14). From that point on, Becky conducts a quasi-Napoleonic ‘war’ on English and the English—theatrical, rather than military, in character, and waged in defiance of hypocrisy and inequality of opportunity, not the power of nations. The famous capital vignette at the head of Ch. LXIV, reworking Benjamin Haydon’s painting *Napoleon Musing at St. Helena* (1830) to depict Becky, thrown back on her own resources and plotting possible routes of return to respectable society, makes the point explicit, lest any reader has missed it. The spoof substitution of Becky for Napoleon also warns against taking Becky’s situation too seriously: Becky, even in exile, is having more fun than Napoleon.

Vanity Fair is far too limber in its style, and complex in its morality, to settle for sustained allegorical paralleling of the French/English, libertarian/conventional, bad/good variety. Andrew Miller nicely describes Thackeray as an ‘allegorist *manqué*’,¹⁵ for his realism, like most versions of realism, necessarily declines allegory’s invitation to abstraction, committed as it is to the particular and the detailed (‘a coat is a coat and a poker a poker; and must be nothing else according to my ethics’).¹⁶ When Lewes, in 1848, praises Thackeray’s effort ‘to represent human nature in its truth’, ‘unfettered by political or social theories’,¹⁷ one can see a germ of what would emerge in the practice of George Eliot as ‘moral realism’—the sympathetic rendition of the inner life of others, differently placed but equipped with similar needs and feelings to our own; but this was three years before Lewes met Marian Evans, and more than a decade before *Adam Bede*. The dominant literary figure of the day, Dickens, was and is the obvious point of comparison. When Lewes and others praised Thackeray’s non-dogmatic, non-didactic, unshowy style, they were, implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, defining him as a counter-voice to Dickensian dogmatism, didacticism, and rhetorical show. And in so far as they

¹⁴ “‘*Mon pauvre prisonnier*’”: Becky Sharp and the Triumph of Napoleon’, *Studies in the Novel*, 28 (1996), 76–92, at 80.

¹⁵ *Novels behind Glass: Commodity Culture and Victorian Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 37.

¹⁶ *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ii: 1841–1851, ed. Gordon N. Ray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 773; quoted in Miller, *Novels behind Glass*, 35.

¹⁷ Lewes, in Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 45.

praised Thackeray's moral frankness (which they did, with reservations), they were typically defining it against early Dickensian moral sentimentalism—the endorsement of the unrealistic proposition that 'virtue is invariably its own reward'.¹⁸

Thackeray had, moreover, a historian's documentary and analytic interest in what had happened at Waterloo and its tenure in the nation's cultural and political memory, which is sometimes underrated by critics who focus on the unmooring effects of parody, and take at face value the celebrated disavowal: 'We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants' (p. 361). A major debt was to George Robert Gleig, Chaplain-General to the British forces from 1844 to 1875. Gleig had served in the 85th Regiment during the Napoleonic Wars, joining Wellington's forces in Spain in 1813, and seeing action at Bayonne, Orthez, and Toulouse, though not at Waterloo. He entered the Church somewhat reluctantly in the early 1820s, and began a parallel career as a writer on military, church, and imperial affairs. Always pressed for money, Gleig wrote too much and too quickly for the quality to be high (his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes him as having the reputation of a 'sturdy workhorse . . . of the cut-and-paste school'). *Story of the Battle of Waterloo* fits that mould. It draws efficiently on John Gurwood's 12-volume edition of *The Dispatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington* (1834–8) and Captain H. T. Siborne's *History of the War in France and Belgium, in 1815* (1844) to produce a condensed narrative with some novelistic touches. Thackeray must have encountered Gleig's text late on in the composition process: passages of Chs. XXVIII–XXXII seem to have been written with the book, recently published by John Murray, literally to hand.¹⁹ The descriptions of British soldiers taking wives and children with them to Brussels, unaware that war was so close; the Countess of Richmond's ball; a British soldier rocking a Flemish cradle; the sudden call to arms; panic in the streets of Brussels as rumours of defeat reached the city; and, after the victory, the wagon-loads of wounded returning, are all indebted to Gleig's writing (he is footnoted on p. 336).

Thackeray also had some knowledge of the work of Siborne, whose *History* rapidly became a standard source on the war. Siborne's celebrated scale model of the field of Waterloo (which can be seen at

¹⁸ [Hayward], repr. in Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 39.

¹⁹ Gleig's *Story of the Battle of Waterloo* appeared as part of Murray's Home and Colonial Library series ('Cheap Literature for All Classes'), 2 vols. (London, 1847).

the National Army Museum in London) was commissioned in 1830, and he laboured over it lovingly for eight years; he never recouped the costs of its research and construction, despite exhibiting in London and elsewhere during the early 1840s. It is not known whether Thackeray ever saw it, but he certainly met Siborne himself in 1842 on a visit to the Irish novelist Charles Lever. Picking up on Thackeray's curiosity about Waterloo, Siborne encouraged him to attend a military review the following day. The conversation and the subsequent visit were recorded by Captain Francis Dwyer, who was present on both occasions and gave Thackeray (shortsighted, and nervous about being in the way of a 'well executed' charge of heavy cavalry) a running commentary on the parade. Afterwards, Dwyer observed, Thackeray remarked with curiosity that 'the British public' seemed 'never to tire' of Waterloo:

he had been thinking since we met at dinner of writing something on the subject himself, but he did not see his way clearly. Lever's treatment of it in 'O'Malley' seemed to him much too imaginative and high-flown, in fact audacious and regardless of all probability. This I could scarcely deny, but said that Lever thought only of his hero, and used the battle itself just as the manager of a theatre does the scenes which he gets painted to suit the dialogue. Thackeray thought that the amount of interest shown was proof of the existence of a very deep-seated national feeling, and having survived so long, 'how intense,' said he, 'must it have been at the time, and how widely spread amongst all classes of society'.²⁰

'Inclined to "laugh at military might"' (Dwyer sensed (415)), Thackeray clearly thought the emotional experience of the war that ended Napoleon's imperial ambitions a good subject, not requiring the hyped-up intensity it had received from Lever. French fiction had recently produced a superb treatment of the chaos of Waterloo in Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), but Stendhal, a survivor of the 1812 retreat from Moscow, had himself been a combatant in Napoleon's army: 'the smoke and din of the action' was not something Thackeray felt equivalently able to tackle. There's no record of him reading Stendhal, but given the success of that novel and Thackeray's close interest in French literature it is a reasonable assumption that he did. Clearly deterred by his conversation with Siborne from attempting 'anything in the way of military scene-painting that could

²⁰ Francis Dwyer, 'Reminiscences of Lever and Thackeray, by Major D—', in W. J. Fitzpatrick, *The Life of Charles Lever*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), ii. 405–21, at 414.

lay the slightest claim to correctness', he nevertheless felt the time had come to extract Waterloo from the specialist military writers and undisciplined romanticists.

Although Dwyer opposed a 'theatrical' view of war, Thackeray, realist strictures notwithstanding, did not. The narrative construction of the Waterloo chapters follows a familiar pattern in writing for the novel and for the stage (Shakespeare, Fielding, Scott), whereby war is narrated through its peripheral action, rather than the large-scale, necessarily long-range conflict of armies. To take up a place 'among the non-combatants' is, given the nature of the fighting at Waterloo, to be very close to the action, caught up in the moving of regiments, and the preparations for engagement—and liable suddenly to be lifted out of the comic mode into something that commands respect. That redoubtable non-combatant Peggy O'Dowd spends the eve of battle making ready uniform, weapons, and food for her sleeping husband, the major; working devotedly and silently, she is raised, for the duration, above her comic function as a vigorous caricature of Irishness. The scene is deftly juxtaposed with Rawdon advising Becky how best to secure some financial return on the few valuables he can leave with her ('put *that* up the spout' (p. 367)), before he leaves her to the comfortable sleep of the heartless.

The narrative of the day of battle extends this pattern, offering scenes of intense feeling, offset by a hinterland of farce. Amelia is in pieces from the moment George leaves. The cook appeals for some stoicism (a freer translation from her French than will be found in the notes is: 'pull yourself together; you're not the only one with a man in the field today'), but Emmy is oblivious both to the equivalent situations of others and to the pantomime going on around her: Jos desperately sheds the fashionable military image he has cultivated (it belatedly strikes him as hazardous, in the event of a Napoleonic victory); his servant takes a cut-throat razor to his master's moustaches and calculates the profit to be made in portable goods left behind; Becky flirts aggressively with Jos, ensuring that he won't do a runner without taking her along. Farce comes to a characteristically sudden, Thackerayan stop as 'this dauntless worldling' (p. 381) then trips into Amelia's room, not stopping to think that the last time Amelia saw her she was doing her level best to seduce George—though whether his note, 'coiled like a snake' (p. 357) in Becky's bouquet, caught Emmy's eye, Becky cannot be sure. What follows is a brilliant confrontation between Emmy's hysterical distress and Becky's wariness—she 'like[s] Amelia rather than otherwise' (p. 384),

but cannot proceed without knowing how much the other woman knows.

The decision to treat Waterloo within a frame where seriousness struggles against comedy appears to answer more than one purpose for Thackeray: it reflects his distaste for the complacency of the ruling British élite in the wake of Waterloo—especially in the higher ranks of society, where the military officer classes were still, in 1847, propping up an aristocratic system resistant to reform. One consequence of having to confront the Napoleonic threat in the 1810s had been a degree of imperative change to the organization and pay of the army; but the commissioning system remained far from meritocratic in practice in the 1840s, and the only partly democratized system of political representation left plenty of point to a satire on the well-guarded privileges and gross incompetencies of pre-reform England. The political settlement after Waterloo was, at the time *Vanity Fair* appeared, once again on the verge of upheaval across much of Europe: Britain would, as it turned out, emerge ‘uniquely unscathed’ from the revolutions of 1848, and, as Susan Watson observes, it would be inclined once again to ‘self-congratulation’.²¹ *Vanity Fair* thus hit, in part through happenstance, a moment in history when its historical satire had topical thrust.

Thackeray’s reflections on the military are broadly of a piece with his view of the other major institutions of English life. The established Church in *Vanity Fair* is incoherently split between the athletically secular, huntin’, shootin’, and fishin’ Reverend Bute Crawley (‘Buty and the Beast’, as old Sir Pitt likes to say) and the ghastly Lady Southdown, pressing her evangelical texts and her equally baleful quack medicines on all and sundry. The empire, as we glimpse it at long range in the civil administration of India, is a licence to print money, making individual civil servants of Jos Sedley’s ilk very fat on its material and human resources. India is in part a metonym for domestic financial mismanagement in *Vanity Fair*: Anglo-Indian returnees have established a ‘black hole’ in the city of London, out of which they operate as agents of financial ruin to Britain and its colonies alike (these passages were written with the raw experience of Thackeray’s having lost his entire inheritance to a series of Indian bank failures). Not least, Thackeray exhibits a pretty dim view of the peerage. The two Sir Pitt Crawleys are locked in mutual loathing: the

²¹ *Imagining Soldiers and Fathers in the Mid-Victorian Era: Charlotte Yonge’s Models of Manliness* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 34.

older illiterate, lecherous, raucous, penny-pinching, and in legal dispute with all and sundry; the younger insufferably refined, committed to restoring the estate but easily swayed by flattery. Together they sit in a long line of Crawley political opportunists, who have blown incompetently with the prevailing political winds. Lord Steyne, more important than either in the world, is a wonderfully licentious old goat, with a very funny line in literary flirtation ('My wife is as gay as Lady Macbeth, and my daughters as cheerful as Regan and Goneril. I daren't sleep in what they call my bedroom' (p. 607))—but he is more dangerous than Becky understands; and, in the end, he is a political survivor.

In all these aspects, the novel mixes a radical impulse towards reform with, in Saintsbury's just phrase, 'a good deal of pure Toryism'.²² The political mix may be summed up in the image of George IV, who presides symbolically over *Vanity Fair*, figuring political decadence in its most unapologetic, complacent, and expensive form. He earns from Thackeray evident disgust, ready laughter, but more than either a frank incredulity: 'I believe it is certain about George IV', he would later ruminate in *The Four Georges* (1860),

that he had heard so much of the war, knighted so many people, and worn such a prodigious quantity of marshal's uniforms, cocked-hats, cock's feathers, scarlet and bullion in general, that he actually fancied he had been present in some campaigns, and, under the name of General Brock, led a tremendous charge of the German legion at Waterloo.²³

What does it say about the British political system and about British culture (not least, about the artists of the day) that the nation could have bent the knee before such clownish vanity? This is caustic, but it is not a call to revolution: rather, it puts its faith implicitly in political gradualism, looking back on the 1820s as the irrational youth of the century ('While the present century was in its teens' (3)).

On close scrutiny Thackeray's version of Waterloo is, moreover, not as entirely allergic to the concept of heroism as its satiric elements might suggest. William Dobbin, 'spoony' though he may be where Amelia is concerned, works his way up from captain to major to lieutenant-colonel on merit. He is 'greatly respected' in his own regiment, where he is known as 'the best officer and the cleverest man in

²² George Saintsbury, Introduction to *Henry Esmond*, *The English Humorists*, *The Georges* (from 'Punch'), *The Four Georges*, vol. xiii of *The Oxford Thackeray* (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. xxiv.

²³ *Henry Esmond*, . . . *The Four Georges*, vol. xiii of *The Oxford Thackeray*, xiii. 792.

it' (p. 291). The filtering of this view through the somewhat green Ensign Stubble, who will be wounded at Waterloo, aids rather than detracts from its authority. Dobbin earns the reader's respect largely through what he does behind the scenes. He acquires a mode of authority implicitly akin to that of the narrator himself—who at several points characterizes himself as a personal friend of Dobbin and Amelia, since their time at Pumpernickel. Dobbin's role as 'the great promoter, arranger, and manager of the match between George Osborne and Amelia' (p. 235) is of a piece with this alliance—quieter and more permanent than the narrator's teasing relationship with Becky. Playing the manager to that particular drama commits Dobbin, of course, to irony—labouring for a cause he does not want, consistently undervalued by the beneficiaries of his emotional and material generosity.

He is a melancholy figure, and a clumsy one (like the narrator—fool as pictured on the frontispiece and title-page, and like Thackeray himself as he appears in the endearingly boyish self-caricature at the end of Ch. IX), but he is always 'manly', and, as in so much Victorian literature, that adjective has a privileged immunity from satire. Here, Dobbin takes on the blustering Mr. Osborne, who is thrashing around in his grief at the death of George, bitterly blaming Amelia for the break between father and son:

'I have a message for you.'

'From that woman?' said Osborne, fiercely.

'No,' replied the other, 'from your son'; at which Osborne fell back into the corner of his carriage, and Dobbin allowing it to pass on, rode close behind it, and so through the town until they reached Mr. Osborne's hotel, and without a word. There he followed Osborne up to his apartments. George had often been in the rooms; they were the lodgings which the Crawleys had occupied during their stay in Brussels.

'Pray, have you any commands for me, Captain Dobbin, or, I beg your pardon, I should say *Major* Dobbin, since better men than you are dead, and you step into their *shoes*,' said Mr. Osborne, in that sarcastic tone which he sometimes was pleased to assume.

'Better men *are* dead,' Dobbin replied. 'I want to speak to you about one.'

'Make it short, sir,' said the other with an oath, scowling at his visitor.

'I am here as his closest friend,' the major resumed, 'and the executor of his will. He made it before he went into action. Are you aware how small his means are, and of the straitened circumstances of his widow?' (pp. 445–6)

There is tact in the last question, but there is also courageous directness, since the straitened circumstances of the widow are of Mr. Osborne's doing: he ruined her father (a painful portrait in humiliation) then cut his son out of his inheritance for marrying her.

Earlier information that we, as readers, have picked up in the course of comic satire, here tugs at the memory, pointing up Dobbin's decency: the last time the narrative occupied this room, Becky was profiteering ruthlessly at Jos's expense, setting an eye-popping price on Rawdon's horse, with a cheque on Mr. Osborne's account already in her pocket—his son's settlement of gambling debts, left with Becky as part of the financial protection plan should Rawdon be killed in action. Now Dobbin is here to push for a restoration of Amelia's rights, given that George can no longer make up for his imprudence. It is, in effect, a scene of moral combat: Dobbin matches Osborne's thuggish jabs ('Make it short') with equal plainness.

The fact that Dobbin achieves his prize only at the point where he comprehends that he has over-valued it is perhaps the sharpest satire on human wishes in the book—together with the fact that he owes his eventual happiness to Becky's readiness to undeceive Amelia about the calibre of her husband. It is a gesture of rich moral complexity. There is some small measure of generosity in it ('to do her justice', she is protecting Amelia from the ruffians who might otherwise have her), but it is 'a sort of contemptuous kindness' (p. 865). One senses a venting of Becky's pent up exasperation at the stupidity of innocence; also a kind of satisfaction in outing George as another, like her, with a 'faithless heart'. George, of course, never had a chance to act on his impulse towards infidelity. The question is: did Becky?

That strain of conservatism in the novel which seems to require the repudiation of Becky is never an unambiguous conservatism. She is, without question, a bad mother and a treacherous wife. But just how much she gives Lord Steyne is opaque. The circumstantial evidence of adultery is strong. How many cheques and diamonds will a man give a woman before demanding a tangible return? But the technical undecidability of her guilt is crucial to the novel's dramatic subtlety and to its retention of a space for moral liberalism, even at the point where it seems to bow to the conventional sexual proprieties. Rawdon Crawley, hopelessly smitten with his wife and willing to be guided by her much greater cleverness, though troubled by her palpable dislike of their child, returns unexpectedly from incarceration in a sponging-house. He finds his wife in intimate physical proximity with Lord Steyne: they have been dining and drinking wine, she has been singing, Steyne is all applause, hanging over her about to kiss her hand. Becky dazzles—'all her fingers sparkling with bracelets and rings; and the brilliants on her breast which Steyne had given her' (p. 675)—but she has her clothes on (confirmation on that point

comes a little late (p. 677)) and there is a sofa back between her and Lord Steyne. Steyne thinks Rawdon's arrival is a pre-arranged blackmail set-up. Not a fool about the risk of such betrayals, he turns rabid, and is quickly laid out by a punch from Rawdon (Becky's admiration has an erotic charge to it, but too late). A search of Becky's private desk then reveals, among many other hidden valuables, a bank-note from the marquess for £10,000.

Up till this point Becky's panicked protestations 'I am innocent' have been repudiating the assumption of adultery, but her private stock of wealth reveals to Rawdon that when she wrote to the sponging-house declaring herself distressingly unable to find bail money before the morning, she was lying. The financial betrayal goes as deep as, or deeper than, sexual betrayal: 'You might have spared me a hundred pounds, Becky, out of all this'.

'I am innocent,' said Becky. And he left her without another word.

What were her thoughts when he left her? She remained for hours after he was gone, the sunshine pouring into the room, and Rebecca sitting alone on the bed's edge. The drawers were all opened and their contents scattered about—dresses and feathers, scarfs and trinkets, a heap of tumbled vanities lying in a wreck. Her hair was falling over her shoulders; her gown was torn where Rawdon had wrenched the brilliants out of it. . . . He was gone for ever. Would he kill himself?—she thought—not until after he had met Lord Steyne. She thought of her long past life, and all the dismal incidents of it. Ah, how dreary it seemed, how miserable, lonely and profitless! Should she take laudanum, and end it, too—have done with all hopes, schemes, debts, and triumphs? The French maid found her in this position—sitting in the midst of her miserable ruins with clasped hands and dry eyes. The woman was her accomplice and in Steyne's pay. '*Mon Dieu*, madame, what has happened?' she asked.

What *had* happened? Was she guilty or not? She said not; but who could tell what was truth which came from those lips; or if that corrupt heart was in this case pure? (p. 677)

The scene begins as a genre painting of the adulterous woman discovered: the scattered clothes and trinkets are debased 'vanities' that key the reader into decoding her guilt. But when the narrative shifts inside Becky's head. 'He was gone forever', the moral clarity starts to blur: she contemplates likely steps in what will happen next, along the lines of French melodrama or some of its more hectic English derivatives (a duel? two suicides?), but there's not much interest or conviction in her speculations. Amid the sense of oppressive cliché bearing down on her, practical reason for fear can be heard: 'hopes,

schemes, . . . triumphs' sounds self-aggrandizing, but the 'debts' smuggled into the list are real—a constant financial liability that has driven her on in her deceptions. The vocabulary tellingly prevaricates between reproach and sympathy: the 'miserable' woman is 'miserable' in the common punitive sense ('miserable sinner') but the word admits the non-judgemental sense, profoundly unhappy ('wretched' performs a similar ambiguity earlier in the scene). And what to make of the echo of Hamlet in her confrontation with the dreariness of the future now ahead: 'how miserable, lonely and profitless!' (*Hamlet*, I. ii: 'How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable')? Is this theatrical self-aggrandizement, or is it a bid on Thackeray's part to persuade us to view her in a tragic light?

The maid's entrance similarly tells for and against Becky. She is named, belatedly, as an 'accomplice'—but an accomplice to what degree? Her shock is evidently specious, and her next act will be entirely self-interested: she will steal the scattered valuables rather than return them to Lord Steyne, using the proceeds to set up a business in Paris, and leaving Becky without financial gain from her dangerous liaison. When, at the end of all this, the narrator asks for a summary judgement on what has happened, he mixes a prejudicial statement of her character ('that corrupt heart') with a legalistic insistence that the case remains unproven: the question 'What *had* happened?' comes first, and it reminds us that we do not, strictly, know, 'in this case'. The subtlest touch in this subtle passage may be the allure of dangerous romanticism about that phrase 'corrupt heart', which might alert us—as perhaps only Balzac among Thackeray's contemporary novelists would care to do—to the fact that we have a vested readerly interest in her guilt.²⁴

Even some of Thackeray's keenest admirers thought he was taking even-handedness too far. 'His impartiality has something terrible in it', Lewes wrote: 'so complete is the irony that he turns it even on himself.'²⁵ One can call the result liberalism, or one can call it cynicism. Plenty of critics over the years have thought the latter, and that it compromises the 'genius' of *Vanity Fair*. One paragraph particularly bothered Lewes:

²⁴ See also Thackeray's reply (1 May 1848) to a letter from the Duke of Devonshire asking what becomes of Becky after the end of the novel: Thackeray's letter tickles the reader's palate for more evidence of Becky's dalliance bringing her few rewards—but persists in the emphatic refusal to clarify her guilt. *The Letters and Private Papers of . . . Thackeray*, ii. 375–7.

²⁵ In Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 46.

'I think I could be a good woman [Rebecca thought] if I had five thousand a year. I could dawdle about in the nursery, and count the apricots on the wall. . . . I could ask old women about their rheumatisms, and order half a crown's worth of soup for the poor. . . . I could pay everybody, if I had but the money . . .' And who knows but Rebecca was right in her speculations—and that it was only a question of money and fortune which made the difference between her and an honest woman? (p. 532)

Lewes found this 'detestable'. Only culpable carelessness, or unguarded misanthropy, could let into print such a refusal to acknowledge 'how many of the poor are heroically honest' in spite of temptation (and how many of the rich are not). Almost every critic thereafter followed suit: 'taunting, cynical, sarcastic' (John Forster in *The Examiner*); there is 'a want of attractive sympathy' (R. S. Rintoul in *The Spectator*); 'one of the most amusing, but also one of the most distressing books we have read for many a year . . . We almost long for [something] to relieve us of that sense of dead truthfulness' (Elizabeth Rigby in the *Quarterly Review*).²⁶ The cumulative weight of these criticisms makes *Vanity Fair* a curious, though not a unique, phenomenon in its time: attracting intense resistance even as it gave immense pleasure.

The most potent expression of conflicted admiration came from Ruskin in a private note written on the manuscript of *Modern Painters*. He was reacting to 'the hammerstroke at the close of the [32nd] chapter of *Vanity Fair*':

'Darkness came down on the field and the city; and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.' A great deal might have been said about it. The writer is very sorry for Amelia, neither does he want faith in prayer. He knows as well as any of us that prayer must be answered in some sort; but those are the facts. The man and the woman sixteen miles apart—one on her knees on the floor, the other on his face in the clay. So much love in her heart, so much lead in his. Make what you can of it.²⁷

Lewes's complaint had been moral and in a sense political—room should have been made, within the scope of realism, for those who are not dishonest or corrupt. Ruskin's reaction strikes deeper, identifying something in Thackeray's writing that goes beyond an assertion of reason to become actively corrosive of faith. Death, Thackeray—

²⁶ [Forster], *The Examiner*, 22 July 1848, [Rintoul], *The Spectator*, Dec. 1848, [Rigby], *Quarterly Review*, 22 July 1848; repr. in Tiltolton and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 53–8, at 57; 58–61, at 60; 77–86, at 79–80.

²⁷ In Tiltolton and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 87.

perhaps alone among early Victorian writers—was prepared to say, is impervious to faith, hope, desire. The material facts (face on the earth, bullet in the heart) are, as he presents them, without consolation or counter-force. The sentence flirts with melodrama ('Darkness came down . . . bullet through his heart'), but rejects melodrama's moralization of emotion, seeing love as incompetent in relation to the brute facts. The sheer command of the style ('praying' pressed into brutal syntactic parallelism with 'lying') augmented Ruskin's distress. 'Blasphemy', he called it elsewhere, 'of the most fatal and subtle kind'.²⁸

Many subsequent critics have defended Thackeray against the charge of cynicism. Their apologies have taken various courses. Trollope, writing in 1879, thought that if the offended reader looked more closely, he or she would find in almost every character a 'little trait of humanity by which the sinner shall be relieved from the absolute darkness of utter iniquity'²⁹ (even the stupid Cambridge toff James Bute Crawley has some appeal, drunkenly bungling his attempt on Miss Crawley's good graces—but so patently more at home among working-class dog-racers and boxers). Lambert Ennis, in his classic study *Thackeray: The Sentimental Cynic* (1950), offers a psychological explanation of cynicism: it is a 'protective' mask over sympathy and tenderness, resorted to when painful experience creates a need for the tougher covering.³⁰ There is ample pain to refer to in Thackeray's life: above all the incurable insanity of his young wife, which became apparent in 1840, shortly after the birth of their second surviving daughter. (The threat of mental collapse haunts the margins of *Vanity Fair*—that energetic old satyr Old Sir Pitt cut down by a stroke; Lord Steyne's son George, sometime diplomat, under private care in St. John's Wood, where 'sometimes' he knows his poor mother, 'oftener he forgot her, as he had done wife, children, love, ambition, vanity' (p. 595)). Juliet McMaster maintains, on stylistic rather than biographical grounds, that cynicism is one among many robust narrative postures that goad the reader into reaction, underwriting the realist effect of the novel: in reacting strongly you buy into the novel's terms.³¹ Nicholas Dames, more recently, argues that Thackeray's

²⁸ In Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 87.

²⁹ Anthony Trollope, *Thackeray*, English Men of Letters (London: Macmillan, 1879), 95.

³⁰ *Thackeray: The Sentimental Cynic* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), esp. Ch. 1 (on 'protection', 3).

³¹ *Thackeray: The Major Novels* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 42–3.

apparent devaluation of ‘expected, valorized norms’ for reading (he is continually depicting readers who do not seem to value reading, or do not do it well) does not signal a ‘cynic or defeatist’ view of the condition of the novel, but a libertarian concern for our freedom to step out of line, not least in the privacy of our own minds.³²

This last, especially, gets at something positive in Thackeray’s resistance to conventional novelistic values which was too heavily rebuked by the early reviewers. But it also leads one to wonder whether resistance to the term ‘cynicism’ is necessary. Thackeray replied, privately, to Lewes in 1848, assuring him that he did not mean that honesty is the preserve of the fortunate; he went on, nevertheless, to restate the core proposition: ‘If Becky had had 5000 a year I have no doubt in my mind that she would have been respectable.’³³ ‘What satire is so awful’, he added, ‘as Lead us not into temptation?’ It is a profoundly cynic observation—the implication being that if the honesty of respectable people were put to the test, most would cease to be honest. But it is ‘cynic’ in the older, classical sense of the word, rather than the later casualized meaning. *Vanity Fair* possesses, as Ruskin saw, a sense of the ideal, but it insists that our idealism be set in the light of our material condition as human beings, with bodily needs and desires, inhabiting a marketplace where the goods of life are traded, not freely provided. In Thackeray’s view, no system of morality that forgets those immovable facts can serve us well.

³² *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 78–9.

³³ Letter to G. H. Lewes, 6 March 1848; repr. in Tillotson and Hawes (eds.), *Thackeray: The Critical Heritage*, 50.

THE COMPOSITION AND PUBLICATION OF *VANITY FAIR*¹

THE composition and publication of *Vanity Fair* raise a number of crucial and sometimes controversial issues. It is not certain when Thackeray first conceived the novel. Thackeray's daughter Lady Ritchie suggested that he began writing in 1841; the Tillotsons, assessing the evidence, surmised that he began rather in late 1844. Gordon Ray considered February 1845 more likely (see n. to p. 36), and, after carefully reviewing all the evidence again, John Sutherland concluded that Ray's view was the most plausible: 'Thackeray began to write *Vanity Fair* in February 1845 or very shortly thereafter.' But it remains a point of dispute, with Shillingsburg arguing for January as a more credible start point (Garland edition; *Thackeray Newsletter*, 6–7, 1977–8). At whatever date he put pen to paper, Lady Ritchie and the Tillotsons are right to point out that Thackeray had a germ of the novel in mind some years earlier. On a visit to Charles Lever's Dublin home in 1842 he 'seemed much inclined to "laugh at martial might"', but warmed to the idea that "'something might be made out of Waterloo", even without the smoke and din of the action being introduced'.

The surviving manuscript of *Vanity Fair* is incomplete and enigmatic as regards composition. It comprises twelve chapters and various notes, in some 110 handwritten pages, taking the narrative up to the end of Ch. XIII, and a few fragments from later chapters. It is generally agreed that the earliest layer of composition is represented by Chs. I–IV, substantially as we have them in the serialized text, together with an early version (A) of Ch. VI ('Vauxhall'). Ch. V, which introduces Dobbin, was evidently an afterthought. When Thackeray devised Dobbin and inserted Ch. V before the Vauxhall visit is unclear, but since the chapter contains no reference to 'Vanity Fair' one assumes that it was some time before October–November 1846, when he hit on the novel's eventual title. At the same time as Dobbin was introduced, Thackeray would seem to have written a new

¹ This summary of the composition and publication substantially reproduces John Sutherland's account of these issues for the 1983 World's Classics edition, updating it in the light of subsequent editorial work on *Vanity Fair* (primarily by Peter Shillingsburg, for the Garland edition, 1989) and making further small adjustments. Works cited can be found in the section '*Vanity Fair* Textual Bibliography' in the Select Bibliography.

Ch. VI (hereafter 'VIB'), substantially cannibalizing the old VIA, but accommodating Dobbin in place of his morally neutral precursor, Captain Tawney. By this date, Thackeray evidently knew that his novel was to be brought out in monthly numbers, and he formulated the cunning courtship of Jos by Becky as the climax of the first number, and the debacle at Vauxhall as the nucleus of the second. This spreading out of material left some gaps. Ch. VII does not exist in manuscript, and may have been written late in the day to plump out the second number. (It contains nothing in terms of narrative information that is not given, briefly, at the beginning of Ch. VIII.) Ch. VIII bears evidence of two stages of composition—one early, and one very late, since it incorporates sententious allusions to 'Vanity Fair', and a reference to the novel's monthly cover illustration.

It is logical to assume that Thackeray made up the original group of I-IV and VIA to show interested publishers. It could stand as the introduction to a three-volume novel, or to a serial either in magazine or monthly part form. That Thackeray intended this unit as a sample is borne out by the neatness with which he put these opening chapters on paper, in his 'sloping' hand. At this time, the work was entitled, provisionally, 'Novel without a Hero' and 'Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society' (both survive as subtitles). It is known that Thackeray submitted the opening of 'Novel without a Hero' to the publisher Colburn, since a fragment of letter has survived, dated May 1845, asking for his 'Novel without a Hero' material back. Presumably, what Colburn had (and evidently gave an advance for) was I-IV and VIA. He was, on the face of things, an unlikely publisher for Thackeray to have chosen, had he foreseen the success of *Vanity Fair*—legitimately regarded as a book-trade rogue.

Nevertheless, Thackeray was clearly in with Colburn in 1844-5, and in that year contributed regularly to his *New Monthly Magazine*, with a string of Launcelot Wagstaff papers. Colburn himself edited his magazine from 1843 to June 1845, but it was not his proper line of work and he was apparently on the lookout for an editor to take over. It is conceivable that Thackeray had himself in mind for this post; he was keen for anything that paid, at this time. If so, he was disappointed when, in June 1845, Colburn sold the *New Monthly* to Harrison Ainsworth, who took over as proprietor, distributor, and main contributor. One of Ainsworth's first acts, according to his biographer S. M. Ellis, was to mollify Thackeray over the rejection of his 'Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society'.

For whatever reason, Thackeray at this period suddenly turned angry and somewhat spiteful towards Colburn and Ainsworth. On taking over Colburn's journal, Ainsworth put out an advertisement that henceforth it would be notable not just for the quality of its contributions but for the 'eminence' of its contributors. This provoked Thackeray to an immediate squib in *Punch* ('Immense Opportunity', 5 July 1845). Later, Thackeray was to expand his indignation into the full-blown parodic series, 'Novels by Eminent Hands' (April–October 1847). In *The Snobs of England*, he attacked the injudicious 'eminent hands' advertisement again (see Ch. XXXVIII) and was further sarcastic about Mrs. 'Wallop' and the 'Countess of L——' (see Chs. III and XVI). Thackeray had been a regular, if not frequent, contributor to the *New Monthly Magazine* since 1838; after 1845 he never published in the magazine again. In *Pendennis* (1848–50), Colburn is lampooned as the publisher Bungay—a portrait which implies no lost love.

It is part of literary lore that, as well as being rejected by (or withdrawn from) Colburn, the *Vanity Fair* proposal was turned down by a string of other imperceptive publishers. Thackeray himself testified to this, in a letter to an unknown correspondent in the early 1860s, claiming that he had 'tried 3 or 4 publishers' with the novel, before finding one who would take it. In America in 1855 he was evidently telling the same tale. A reporter in the *New York Daily Times* (19 Dec. 1855) records:

I have seen Mr. Thackeray for the first time and a stately man he is and a kindly . . . I learned to my astonishment that his novel of 'Vanity Fair', the first of his series of successful novels, was refused by the magazine editor to whose order it had been written, price five dollars a page, by Mr. Thackeray's own publisher and by sundry others, before he could find any of 'the trade' willing to undertake it.

There is some mystery here. In 1845 Thackeray was far from unknown or struggling in his profession, though he had not yet attained the status of a bestseller. He had numerous contacts and had published with several of the great houses and in the leading journals of the day. If he was repeatedly turned down, he may have been asking too much, or offering too little by way of a sample—or there may of course have been a serial lapse of judgement in the London publishing trade.

If it was the I–IV and VIA group that Colburn had, we can be fairly sure that Thackeray did not foresee *Vanity Fair* as it was to emerge in

all its narrative complexity two years later. There are some internal clues as to what he may originally have had in mind. Without Dobbin, the whole conception would have been more negative. Becky's epistolary narrative is extensively used in the earliest layer of composition, and it is possible Thackeray felt he might rest a substantial part of the subsequent narrative on her outrageously amoral communications with Amelia. 'Novel without a Hero' implies a Carlylean corrective bite, and something less morally sententious than what later emerged in 1847. 'Pen and Pencil Sketches' promises fiction less structured, something along the lines of the opportunistic and panoramic *The Snobs of England* (which ran in *Punch* from February 1846 to February 1847). Having just finished a male rogue's progress, *Barry Lyndon* (published in *Fraser's Magazine*, Jan.–Dec. 1844) Thackeray may have intended a comparable female rogue's progress for Colburn's magazine.

Thackeray made a number of local revisions (Shillingsburg counts approximately 4,000) when he read the proofs of the first printed text (two sets in the case of Chs. I–IV and VI; a few portions of the second survive, pasted into the MS.). Some bring the text to the required length, some correct typographical or factual errors, some 300 or so were apparently made for characterological or other artistic reasons. At this point we encounter a major controversy. Gordon Ray deduced from late corrections which Thackeray made to the MS., especially in Chs. VIII and IX, that the writer underwent a 'change of heart' in the period 1846–7. One record of this change, he argues, is to be found in textual additions—particularly the long, sententious tailpiece which directly addresses the reader at the end of Ch. VIII. Ray points out that Thackeray's life was revolutionized during these two years. He had his first literary successes. He was reunited with his two little daughters, after a period, following the diagnosis of their mother's insanity, when they lived with Thackeray's parents in Paris, and he set up home at 13 Young Street. The shift from bohemian-club to domestic-familial lifestyle was radical. It resulted, according to Ray, in a new sense of 'responsibility' in the author. The Thackeray of I–IV and VIA was caustic, performatively misanthropic, after the manner of *Barry Lyndon*, that most cynical of fictions. The early sections of *Vanity Fair* tend the same way. A new Thackeray of 1846–7 is evident in the additions to the second and third numbers (they are written in Thackeray's later upright hand). A morally positive dimension is laid over the early narrative and substantially informs the later composition of the bulk of the novel.

The change of heart, and its allegedly critical impact on the composition of *Vanity Fair*, is controversial. But it is undeniable that, as well as settling down with his family, Thackeray in 1845–6 settled down for the first time with an employer. The proprietors of *Punch* were Bradbury and Evans. Good-natured and easy-going, they tended to let the journal run itself under the genial management of Mark Lemon. Bradbury and Evans were also Dickens's publishers, since his break with Chapman and Hall in 1845. For Dickens, they provided a form of publication specially tailored to his unique talents. This was the novel in twenty monthly numbers, issued in nineteen instalments, the last being a double number. Each instalment was of thirty-two pages (the last sixty-four), with illustrations, costing one shilling.

Fortified by his growing reputation as the leading *Punch* man, Thackeray evidently tried his 'Novel without a Hero' sample on *Punch's* proprietors. His encounter is recalled by Henry Vizetelly, who met Thackeray on his way to see Bradbury and Evans:

In little more than half-an-hour Mr Thackeray again made his appearance, and with a beaming face gleefully informed me that he had settled the business. 'B. & E.' said he, 'accepted so readily, that I am deuced sorry I didn't ask them another tenner. I am certain they would have given it.' He then explained to me that he had named fifty guineas per part, including the two sheets of letterpress, a couple of etchings, and the initials at the commencement of the chapters. He reckoned the text, I remember, at no more than five-and-twenty shillings a page, the two etchings at six guineas each, while, as for the few initials at the beginning of the chapters, he threw these in. Such was Mr Thackeray's own estimate of his commercial value as an author and illustrator, A.D. 1846.

(Thackeray eventually got £60 per number.) In coming to terms with him, it was natural for Bradbury and Evans to offer the Dickensian serial form, just as a year earlier it had been logical for the magazine proprietor Colburn to offer serialization in the *New Monthly Magazine* at a pound a page.

The contract with Bradbury and Evans was a great step for Thackeray. But triumph was by no means guaranteed. Other writers pulled at the Dickensian bow, but found the novel in monthly numbers too much for them. (Charles Lever, for instance, was taken up by Chapman and Hall, after Dickens's defection, but had a notable failure with the *Knight of Gwynne* in 1847. Harrison Ainsworth's *Mervyn Clitheroe*, in 1851, was so unsuccessful that serial publication was aborted after the fourth number.) Ominously, the contract that Bradbury and Evans made with Thackeray did not specify how many

instalments *Vanity Fair* was to run to. There was, reportedly, some gloomy thought of closing down after the third number; and as late as the fifteenth it was apparently unclear whether the novel was to go to eighteen or the full Dickensian twenty.

Thackeray was well used to magazine serialization (*Barry Lyndon* and *Catherine*, for instance, had been serialized in *Fraser's Magazine*). But he had done nothing in monthly numbers. Unlike portions for magazines, the length of the Dickensian instalment was inflexible; and chapters needed to be shorter and tighter. More than with magazine serialization it was necessary to devise suspenseful climaxes (Thackeray entirely rewrote the fine ending to the first number, 'Mr Joseph Entangled', see n. to p. 43). And there was the added pressure of the intratextual illustrations, which Thackeray himself was to provide for *Vanity Fair*. But length and pace were probably Thackeray's main problem. Before 'Novel without a Hero' was renamed *Vanity Fair* (i.e. before October/November 1846) he had the group I–IV and VIA set up in galley and page proof. (We know this, since he cannibalistically used bits of the proof in putting together Ch. VIB.) It overran to thirty-five or more pages—which may have been another reason for splitting up and dispersing his material, postponing Vauxhall to the second number.

Thackeray was evidently pleased with his deal with Bradbury and Evans. The novel was to be advertised and published under his own name. Moreover, he was allowed some idiosyncratic variation from the Dickensian pattern. *Vanity Fair* would be published from the *Punch* office, which was now Thackeray's main literary base. The work was to have an appropriately jaunty *Punch* flavour to it, with cartoons, vignette illustrations, and a free-and-easy Charivari manner (see n. to p. 8).

This *Punch*-flavoured 'Novel without a Hero' was originally scheduled to start publication in May 1846. In the event it had to wait until January 1847. The reason for the delay may be guessed at. Possibly Thackeray was too busy with *Snobs*; but it is more likely that the publication of *Dombey and Son* (which came out in October 1846) pushed Thackeray's serial aside. Dickens was surefire, and Bradbury and Evans's main literary property. Whether or not Dickens's precedence was the cause, the delay allowed Thackeray leisure to work over his manuscript (he evidently had about three numbers to hand by the end of 1846). The Bunyanesque title reportedly came to him on a visit to Brighton in October or November 1846: 'ransacking his brain for a name for his novel, it came to him unawares, in the middle of the

night, as if a voice had whispered, "Vanity Fair." (He said,) "I jumped out of bed and ran three times round my room, uttering as I went, "Vanity Fair, Vanity Fair, Vanity Fair"" (K. E. Perry, *Reminiscences of a London Drawing Room*, 1883?, 3). Less dramatically, Brighton would also seem to have inspired the names of principal characters—notably Steyne and Crawley; doubtless the Prince Regent's favourite residence also heightened Thackeray's sense of the novel's period.

Thackeray by this stage had made two significant design changes to his original 'Novel without a Hero'. The innovation of Dobbin and the degradation of George Osborne into a despicable, underbred dandy (see n. to p. 48) gave him the opposition required for his 'redefinition of the gentlemanly ideal' theme. And 'Vanity Fair' gave him the perfect moral perspective on the social world of the novel. In themselves, Bunyanesque denunciations of modern times were nothing new. In the May 1846 issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* there was, for instance, an article by George Moir, 'The Modern Pilgrim's Progress', which satirized the contemporary world as a new Vanity Fair. In 1843 Nathaniel Hawthorne brought out a short story, 'The Celestial Railroad', which employed the same extended literary allusion.

But Thackeray's use of the 'Vanity Fair' motif is more subtle than Moir's or Hawthorne's. This is a novel principally set in Mayfair—then, as now, the most fashionable area of residential London. Mayfair is so called because the old May Fair used to be held there, just north of Piccadilly, from the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth century. As Timbs's *Curiosities of London* describes this annual orgy, the May Fair was:

not for trade . . . but for musicke, showes, drinking, gaming, raffling, lotteries, stage plays and drolls . . . with booths for jugglers . . . prize fighters . . . mountebanks, fire-eaters, ass racing, sausage tables, dice tables, ups and downs, merry go rounds, bull baiting, grinning for a hat, running for a shift, hasty pudding eating, eel divers, etc.

Thackeray would have known about the May Fair from his beloved *Tatler*, papers 4 and 20. And, of course, the fair inspires 'Before the Curtain'. Thackeray was probably tickled by the fact that the old May Fair took place on a site where the modern Curzon Street (Becky and Rawdon live at no. 20) and Hertford Street (named after Steyne's original) now stand.

Vanity Fair, the old May Fair, and metropolitan Mayfair thus mingle in one, complex, saturnalian image. And once he had hit upon

it, the 'fair' idea provided a theme that Thackeray could thread right through the novel: from riotous Vauxhall night in 1813, to Brussels *en fête* before Waterloo, to the junket at Gaunt House before Becky's Luciferian fall, to the Pumpernickel grand-ducal gala at which she bounces back, to the demure little charity 'fair'—or bazaar—where Amelia finally encounters a rehabilitated 'Lady' Crawley.

The novel, having been so usefully delayed, began to appear in monthly instalments from January 1847 onwards (see Note on the Text, p. xxxix). According to Thackeray's daughter, the opening numbers 'hung fire'. Not until the fourth or so did the work begin to catch on with the public. Sales built up Thackeray's determination to hook the reader—evident in the suspenseful endings to the early numbers (see particularly that to 4, which kept the subscriber waiting a month to find out whom Becky has 'already' married). Later numbers tend to rank emotional resonance above narrative propulsion: Amelia, for example, at the end of 10, thoughtlessly rebuking Dobbin for his heavy departing tread, as she hangs over little Georgy's cradle.

Extensive bibliographic work by Peter Shillingsburg has established that Thackeray was closely involved in the printing process, introducing numerous changes to the text (some small, others more substantive) between printings of the sheets (or gatherings) prior to the casting of the text in stereotyped plates. (Whether he was involved in changes after that point is less clear.) Some alterations were characterological (e.g. the almost complete elimination of Dobbin's lisp); some rectified mistakes (the deletion of a reference to life insurance as part of Rawdon Crawley's settlement on Becky after their separation, for example, brings that passage into line with the earlier observation that his removal to Coventry Island disqualified him from life insurance). Shillingsburg makes the important observation that 'Following the completion of the parts issue on 1 July 1848 and during the succeeding fifteen years, Bradbury and Evans issued the first edition of *Vanity Fair* continuously in parts and volume forms.' The novel remained available in parts long after it had become available in book form (negating the idea that volume publication rendered part publication obsolete). Customers (or dealers) would order parts (including individual, perhaps replacement, parts) as needed. The book form of the first edition was bound in small lots ordered as needed for distribution, and it constitutes various hybrids or mixtures of sheets from different printings of the numbers—with the result that individual copies incorporate variants of the text unsystematically.

Serialization in monthly numbers set up peculiar relationships and conditions. It encouraged, famously, intimacy with the reading-buying public, who could write in to the author giving their opinions about the unfolding novel (see the opening to Ch. XII), or silently vote their (dis)approval by (dis)continuing purchase. The serialist writing month by month, like Dickens or Thackeray, required a greater technical precision, in some respects, from his colleague writing in volumes. The serialist was also more of a performer—with all the risks entailed in performance art. It was, for example, quite possible to dry up, or say something injudicious in the press of month-to-month composition. Another aspect (more than with the magazine serials to which Thackeray was used) was the need to write to ‘two unities’. Each number had to be complete in itself, yet consonant with the larger whole. Thackeray’s skill in this respect is not intrusive. But Edgar F. Harden has shown convincingly a system of unifying patterning in *Vanity Fair*. John Lester, in another important article, has analysed the ‘redoublings’ of Thackeray’s narrative manner. Apparently artless, Thackeray’s movements forwards and backwards in time are found to be both logical and artistically coherent.

Reading and writing a novel intermittently, at monthly intervals, put strain on the readers’ and author’s memories of foregoing events. Thackeray was obliged to recapitulate, or flash back, from time to time in his narrative. There was a compensating advantage, however, in the fuzzied recollection that resulted from having to hold events in the mind for a year or so. For local effect, liberties could be taken with what had been written months before. Thus, in number 17, when Amelia finally discovers who it was who gave her the little square piano in 1815 (it changes from a Broadwood to a ‘Stothard’, by the way), Dobbin is encouraged at last to speak out his love:

‘Amelia, Amelia . . . I did buy it for you. I loved you then as I do now. I must tell you. I think I loved you from the first minute that I saw you, when George brought me to your house, to show me the Amelia whom he was engaged to. You were but a girl in white, with large ringlets; you came down singing—do you remember?—and we went to Vauxhall.’ (p. 759)

It makes a powerfully poignant scene. But if we turn back to what was written fifteen months earlier, we discover that Dobbin knew Amelia when she was a little girl and had in fact ruined one of her juvenile birthday parties by upsetting a punch bowl. This unromantic encounter took place years before the Vauxhall trip in 1813 (p. 59).

A lot could happen to an author in eighteen months. *Vanity Fair* might 'make' him, Thackeray confided to his mother, a week before first publication day. Six months later, he was indeed 'made'. As his friend Edward Fitzgerald put it, he was now a 'great man' (see n. to p. 633). Quite possibly social and literary success had its inhibiting effect on the later parts of the novel. Thackeray might have been more direct in the Steyne–Hertford business had he not been meeting the marquess's kind socially in late 1847. Early critics were in no doubt that Thackeray, over 1847, grew socially and artistically into the role of great novelist. This was his first big enterprise, and he had 'to feel his way to a method'. Such was the opinion of the *Athenaeum* reviewer, who had the advantage of genuine first impressions of *Vanity Fair*:

In the early numbers of that week he kept the secret at once of his plans—if he had any—and of his power. So poor were the beginnings of the tale that the subsequent numbers ran a great chance of being thrown aside on the faith of the early ones. . . . It was interesting to see how the writer's power grew and accumulated by its own exercise. Number after number of the work seemed to present a new strength drawn out and nourished by the strength of that which preceded. No reader could have pre-pictured the final mastery of hand from the feeble workmanship that laid the first inadequate foundations of that remarkable book.

Most modern critics, following the work of Harden and many others subsequently, would now dispute that judgement, recognizing from the start a more thoughtful, careful, and painstaking Thackeray than the hand-to-mouth novelist who seemed to this early critic to have surprised himself and his public by the revelation of his 'power'.

THACKERAY AS ILLUSTRATOR

UNDER the terms of his January 1847 contract with Bradbury and Evans, Thackeray was to supply 'by the 15th of every month sufficient matter for at least Two printed sheets with Two Etchings on Steel, and as many drawings on Wood as may be thought necessary'. All in all, Thackeray provides nearly 200 'candles' to his own performance. *Vanity Fair's* illustrations fall into four categories. There are the two naturalistic full plates for each number (three for the last double number), etched on steel. There are woodcuts dropped strategically mid-text—in the main naturalistic, but often with elements of caricature and allegory, and tending to elaborate on, rather than just visualize, the text. There are pictorial capitals. And there are incidental allegorical designs, placed as frontis- or end-pieces.

Thackeray regarded himself as a poor draughtsman ('twentieth-rate' was his self-deprecating estimate) and the etchings on steel are usually regarded as his weakest illustrative work. His figures tend to be stilted, his faces (especially Becky's, unfortunately) unnatural. Nor is it always easy to see the relevance of picture to text (see, for instance, p. 333, 'Mrs. Osborne's Carriage Stopping the Way'). Thackeray's naturalistic woodcuts (which he could throw off spontaneously between writing) have been variously judged by critics. That of Amelia sitting woebegone in Russell Square pining for Georgy (p. 630) is generally deplored. On the other hand, the little sketch of the 'tainted' Gaunt girls, unconsciously reading with the Damoclean swords over their heads, shows Thackeray at his finest and deftest (p. 596). A nice example of how he may use illustration for ironic undercutting is to be found at the beginning of Ch. VIII (p. 88): the false sentimentality of Becky's effusive letter to Amelia juxtaposed with her very calculating examination of the first Lady Crawley's portrait.

The density of illustration varies according, presumably, to the time Thackeray had at his disposal (thus, the first number has thirteen illustrations, the ninth only nine). But as Edgar Harden shows, in *The Emergence of Thackeray's Serial Fiction*, the novelist took great pains to 'place' his woodcuts, and certainly did not regard them as mere space-fillers. In the MS., he specified that the illustration of Dobbin's awkwardness on being introduced to Amelia (p. 58) should follow exactly on 'one of the clumsiest bows that was ever performed by a mortal'. And on p. 122, he added to his MS. the comment that 'the

Colonel and poor little Rebecca had just performed a dance together', specifying that this was precisely where the illustration was to be. As Harden notes, not even Thackeray's first printers, Bradbury and Evans, were always able to locate his illustrations as exactly in the text as he would have liked.

The allegorical cover wrapper for serial publication, title-page, final full-page steel engraving, and end-piece to the novel are magnificent (see Explanatory Notes, *ad loc.*). In the first, the puppeteer, mounted on a beer barrel, dangles his puppet before an audience: he and they wear donkey's ears; in the distance can be seen two public vanities in the form of lately erected national monuments. On the title-page, Harlequin leans against his box of puppets (the Becky doll lies on the ground, forming a continuous line with his body), ruefully regarding his own face in a cracked mirror; the background shows the church towers of Ottery St. Mary, where Thackeray spent happy childhood holidays. With the last full-page engraving, the novel returns us to Bunyan and completes a circle of allusion—depicting Becky as the proprietor of an embroidery stall in 'Vanity Fair', her eyes demurely half lowered, as Dobbin, Amelia, and Georgy regard her with wariness and the child Janey shows naïve interest in one of the pieces on display. The curtains framing the stall suggest (not for the first time in the illustrations) a proscenium arch, under which Becky plays her latest role: 'Lady Crawley', raising money for one of her irreproachable charities. The end-piece shows two children putting the novel's characters (reduced to puppets and dolls) away in a box—the wicked nobleman and Becky have fallen out, we notice. The faint allusion to the coffin reminds us, with a pang, that most of the characters in *Vanity Fair* will by now (i.e. 1848) be in the ground, their place assumed by the new generation: *Vanitas Vanitatum!* (The wayside allegorical sketches found in the text are similarly felicitous: see, for instance, Thackeray's little self-portrait of himself glum and unmasked at the end of Ch. IX.)

Thackeray's talent for incidental cartoon is probably best evident in the pictorial capitals with which he begins his chapters. These are invariably amusing, and often subtle. Some contain topical allusion (see the *Daily News* allusion in Ch. V). More often they make a moral point. See, for instance, the 'I' (p. 140) which is transmuted into an image of egoistic George Osborne, preening himself in a mirror. His son, on being 'made a gentleman' (p. 707), is pictured as the monarch, George IV, in his notoriously extravagant coronation robes. In Ch. LXIV Becky's continental exile is given an ironic resonance by

allusion to Haydon's grand historical study of *Napoleon Musing at St. Helena*. As Joan Stevens has persuasively argued, the pictorial capitals (omitted, together with all the other illustrations, from the revised 1853 'cheap' edition) are a necessary feature of any complete *Vanity Fair* and constitute much more than incidental embellishment.

See the section 'Thackeray as Illustrator' in the Select Bibliography for further reading.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THIS edition reproduces with photographic fidelity George Saintsbury's 1908 text, prepared for volume xi of the complete *Oxford Thackeray*. Saintsbury's was the first attempt to establish an authoritative text of *Vanity Fair*. Although modern scholarship will no longer trust it as such, the modern reader may confidently use it as a 'practical' edition (to employ Fredson Bowers's distinction). Saintsbury elected to present what he described as 'the latest form [of the text] printed in Thackeray's own life, and to add the important omitted passages of the original versions at the end of each volume' (Introduction, p. xxii). A separate note to the Contents page (p. vii) specified 'the revised edition of 1864'. In fact, as Peter Shillingsburg has shown, Saintsbury drew eclectically on a first printing of 1847-8, a second printing of 1848, and the 'revised "cheap" edition' of 1853 for his text ('a' not 'the' first or second printing, given the practice of local revision between printings of each number and subsequent hybrid collation—see *Composition and Publication*, p. xxxii). Hence Thackeray's revisions in 1853 (such as the short opening of Ch. VI) co-exist with the full range of illustrations (1853 jettisoned all of them).

The result may be considered a less than satisfactory eclecticism, but the same must be said of any edition of *Vanity Fair*, including the Garland Critical Edition, edited by Peter Shillingsburg, with commentary by Nicholas Pickwoad and Robert Colby (New York, 1989), which provided the text for the Norton 'Authoritative Edition' (1994). Shillingsburg used the one-volume first edition as his main copy text, but reintroduced Thackeray's manuscript punctuation for Chs. I-VI and VIII-XIII (the chapters for which the MS. survives) in order to restore the more 'subtle and flexible' rhetorical style in evidence there. The contentiousness of Shillingsburg's decisions is conveyed by his article 'Editing Thackeray', *Studies in the Novel*, 27 (1995), 363-74. There he records that, though completed in 1983, his *Vanity Fair* was delayed by disagreements between himself, the general editor for Garland's Thackeray Edition, and the CSE (the Modern Language Association of America's Committee on Scholarly Editions). The MLA eventually gave Shillingsburg's further-revised edition its imprimatur, but the process towards that decision was

rocky, with more than one press withdrawing along the way. Textual purism, in short, is not an option here.

In the first serial edition of *Vanity Fair*, the divisions in the narrative were as follows:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Chapters</i>
1	January 1847	I–IV
2	February 1847	V–VII
3	March 1847	VIII–XI
4	April 1847	XII–XIV
5	May 1847	XV–XVIII
6	June 1847	XIX–XXII
7	July 1847	XXIII–XXV
8	August 1847	XXVI–XXIX
9	September 1847	XXX–XXXII
10	October 1847	XXXIII–XXXV
11	November 1847	XXXVI–XXXVIII
12	December 1847	XXXIX–XLII
13	January 1848	XLIII–XLVI
14	February 1848	XLVII–L
15	March 1848	LI–LIII
16	April 1848	LIV–LVI
17	May 1848	LVII–LX
18	June 1848	LXI–LXIII
19 and 20	July 1848	LXIV–LXVII

The surviving manuscript chapters of *Vanity Fair* are in the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York. Fragments and original illustrations are also held by the Berg Collection, New York Public Library; the Robert H. Taylor Collection, Princeton University Library; the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; The King's School, Canterbury; and the Rosenbach Museum, Philadelphia. Some further fragments are in private ownership (for details see Garland edn., 675).

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Criticism

EARLY RESPONSES

Selections from the most significant first reviews, including pieces by Henry Chorley, David Masson, Robert Rintoul, and John Forster, can be found in

- Geoffrey Tillotson and Donald Hawes (eds.), *William Thackeray: The Critical Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968). Anthony Trollope's volume on Thackeray, for the English Men of Letters series (London: Macmillan, 1879) is also of historical interest.
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A CHRONOLOGY OF THACKERAY'S LIFE AND WORKS

- 1811 Born 18 July, in Calcutta, India.
- 1815 His father, Richmond Thackeray, dies in Sept.
- 1817 His mother, Anne, marries Henry Carmichael-Smyth. Thackeray is sent to England; en route, the ship stops at St. Helena, where he observes Bonaparte walking in a garden. Attends school in Southampton.
- 1818 Enters a school at Chiswick.
- 1819 Major and Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth return from India.
- 1820 Thackeray's cousin Mary Graham comes to live with the family, after the death of her parents.
- 1821 Enrolled at Charterhouse School in Dec. Thackeray later writes of flogging and fagging as endemic to English public schooling. His nose is broken in a fight with a Charterhouse schoolmate.
- 1825 Major and Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth move from Addiscombe, near Croydon, to Larkbeare, near Ottery St. Mary and Exeter.
- 1828 His last year at Charterhouse. He later claims that, falling ill in summer, he took to his bed measuring 5 ft 6 in. and rose at 6 ft 3 in. (his mature height).
- 1829 Matriculates at Trinity College, Cambridge, in Feb. (delayed because of illness). Tutored by Henry Fawcett. Sees little of his personal tutor, William Whewell. Contributes pieces to university magazines (*The Snob*, then *The Gownsmen*). Over summer, he travels to Paris to learn French, and acquires an expensive taste for gambling. Starts his second year at Cambridge, and soon gives up on 'Academical honours'.
- 1830 Cambridge friends include Henry Alford, James Spedding, A. W. Kinglake, William Brookfield, Richard Monckton Milnes, Alfred Tennyson, and Edward Fitzgerald. His habits of dissipation deepen, as do the gambling debts. He is placed in the second class in the examinations, ending all hopes of an honours degree. Spends the Easter vacation in Paris with Fitzgerald (unknown to his parents). Possibly contracts venereal disease. Spends time with a woman ten to twelve years his senior, whom he meets at a masquerade ball. Leaves Cambridge finally in June. Spends several months in Weimar. Meets Goethe. Studies with Dr. Friedrich August Wilhelm Wiessenborn, acquiring a good knowledge of German literature and language.
- 1831 Returns to London and enters the Middle Temple to study law.
- 1832 Forms a friendship with William Maginn, editor of *Fraser's Magazine*. Helps Charles Buller to campaign for a seat in Parliament for Cornwall. Spends several months pleasurably in Paris.

- 1833 Purchases the *National Standard* newspaper. Joins the Garrick Club. Works briefly in bill discounting. Returns to France, styling himself Paris correspondent for the *National Standard*. Studies painting. In Dec. a series of bank failures in India wipes out most of his inheritance, leaving him without income.
- 1834 The *National Standard* folds. In Sept. his grandmother, Harriet Butler, moves to Paris. He moves in with her and starts an intended three-year apprenticeship with a French artist.
- 1835 Abandons his apprenticeship, deeming himself insufficiently talented. Falls in love with Isabella Gethin Shawe (b. 1816); determination to make himself eligible leads to new industry. His first book, *Flore et Zéphyr*, a collection of captioned lithographs, is published; it is largely ignored. His stepfather underwrites a new journal of radical politics, the *Constitutional and Public Ledger*, paying Thackeray 8 guineas a week to act as Paris correspondent.
- 1836 Marries Isabella, 20 Aug. Returns to London and begins ten years' arduous hack work.
- 1837 Daughter Anne Isabella ('Anny'), later Lady Ritchie, born 9 June. The *Constitutional* fails in July. *The Yellowplush Papers* begins serialization in *Fraser's Magazine* in Nov.
- 1838 *Yellowplush Papers* concludes. Daughter Jane born 9 July.
- 1839 Jane dies, 14 March. Thackeray marks her death date in his diary and letters for years to come. *Catherine* (a female 'rogue's life') begins serialization in *Fraser's* in May.
- 1840 Daughter Harriet Marian ('Minnie'), later Mrs. Leslie Stephen, born 27 May. *Catherine* concludes. *The Paris Sketch Book* by 'Mr. Titmarsh' published by John Macrone in July. Chapman and Hall commission a short guidebook on Belgium and the Rhine (never completed), to be followed by a larger book on Ireland. *A Shabby Genteel Story* serialized in *Fraser's* from June. Isabella is increasingly seriously depressed. In Sept., en route to Ireland with Thackeray, she attempts suicide several times. When relations with Isabella's mother break down he takes his family to Paris, where the Carmichael-Smyths are residing, and in Nov. commits her to Jean Esquirol's Maison de Santé, at Ivry.
- 1841 *The Second Funeral of Napoleon* published in Jan. *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond* written Jan.–Feb., serialized from Sept. in *Fraser's Magazine*. *Punch* founded.
- 1842 The first of his many *Punch* contributions appears in June.
- 1843 *The Irish Sketch-Book* published.
- 1844 *Barry Lyndon* serialized in *Fraser's Magazine*. In Aug. Thackeray begins travelling through Spain, Greece, Turkey, the Holy Land, and Egypt, leaving his daughters in Paris.

- 1845 Early in the year he begins writing *Vanity Fair*, under the provisional title 'Novel without a Hero'. Returns to London in April. Submits a sample of the novel to Colburn, who rejects it. In Oct., Isabella, now deemed incurable, is moved into private care in Camberwell, with a Mrs. Bakewell, where she remains for the rest of her life.
- 1846 *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* published, Jan. *The Snobs of England: By One of Themselves* begins serialization in *Punch* in February. First number of 'Novel without a Hero' set in type, then abandoned. Moves, in June, from bachelor lodgings to 13 Young Street, where his daughters are able once more to live with him. In autumn adopts *Vanity Fair* as a title and revises the first number. *Mrs. Perkins's Ball* (a Christmas book) published in Dec.; sells 1,500 copies.
- 1847 *Vanity Fair* is contracted to Bradbury and Evans in Jan. and begins part publication later that month. It receives early critical recognition and, from May, increasingly general acclaim and popular success. *The Snobs of England* concludes in Feb. *Punch's Prize Novelists* (parodies of leading contemporary novelists) serialized in *Punch*, April to Oct. In the six years from the manifestation of Isabella's insanity he is known to have written 386 magazine pieces and three books, under twenty pseudonyms.
- 1848 Finishes writing *Vanity Fair* in June (concludes publication in July). *Pendennis* begins serialization in Nov. *Dr. Birch and His Young Friends* published Dec.
- 1849 Almost dies, probably from cholera or typhoid. Publication of *Pendennis* consequently interrupted for three months at the end of the year. *Rebecca and Rowena* published in Dec.
- 1850 Debates the 'dignity of literature' with John Forster, who thought that *Pendennis* disparaged the profession of writing. Opposes Forster's and Dickens's attempts to promote state support for writers. *Pendennis* finished in Nov. Begins work on *English Humorists*.
- 1851 Elected to the Athenaeum club. Lectures in London, Cambridge, Oxford, Scotland. Increasingly emotionally involved with Jane Brookfield, the wife of his old college friend William, matters coming to a crisis in Sept., when Brookfield bars Thackeray from further visits or correspondence with her. Resigns from *Punch* in Dec. following differences with the editors and fellow contributor Douglas Jerrold.
- 1852 *The History of Henry Esmond* published by George Smith in Oct., Thackeray's contract having bound him to publish nothing else for six months before. Enjoys a flirtatious relationship with Sally Baxter. In Oct. begins a five-month lecture tour of America.
- 1853 Returns to England. Revised edition of *Vanity Fair* published (revisions sent to press in January). Travels on the Continent. *The Newcomes* begins serialization with Bradbury and Evans in Oct. In Nov. to Dec. primarily in Rome and Naples.

- 1854 Begins *The Rose and the Ring* in Jan. Moves in May to Onslow Square, Brompton. *The Rose and the Ring* published Dec.
- 1855 *The Newcomes* concludes publication in Aug. Second lecture tour of America, speaking on the subject of *The Four Georges*.
- 1856 Some initial work on *The Virginians*, a sequel to *Henry Esmond*. In Nov. to Dec. lectures on *The Four Georges* in England and Scotland.
- 1857 *The Virginians* resumed in May and begins serialization with Bradbury and Evans in Nov. In July Thackeray fails in his bid for a parliamentary seat, standing as an Independent Liberal for Oxford.
- 1858 Relations with Dickens—uneasy for some time—break down. Enters into controversy with Edmund Yates over the ‘Garrick Club Affair’.
- 1859 *The Virginians* completes serialization in Oct.
- 1860 In Jan. takes on the editorship of George Smith’s new *Cornhill Magazine*, quickly establishing it as a leading literary magazine. *The Four Georges* published there July–Oct. Purchases 2 Palace Green, Kensington, and has it completely rebuilt. *Lovel the Widower* published in the *Cornhill* and the first of the *Roundabout Papers*.
- 1861 *The Adventures of Philip* begins publication in the *Cornhill* in Jan.
- 1862 Resigns as editor of the *Cornhill*. Moves into 2 Palace Green with his daughters in March. *Adventures of Philip* completes serialization Aug.
- 1863 Begins *Denis Duval*. Last of the *Roundabout Papers* published. In mid–Dec. he approaches Dickens on the steps of the Reform Club and the two shake hands. On 23 Dec. he suffers a stroke, and is found dead in bed the next morning. An estimated 7,000 people attend his funeral at Kensington Gardens. Buried on 29 Dec. at Kensal Green cemetery.
- 1864 *Denis Duval* published, incomplete. Thackeray’s estate is valued at £20,000.
- 1865 A bust, by Carlo, Baron Marochetti (Thackeray’s friend and neighbour), is placed in Poet’s Corner, Westminster Abbey, petitioned for by numerous leading writers and artists, Dickens among them.



VANITY FAIR.

PEN AND PENCIL SKETCHES OF ENGLISH SOCIETY.

BY W. M. THACKERAY,

Author of "The Irish Sketch Book;" "Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo;" of "Jeanie's Diary" and the "Snob Papers" in Punch: &c. &c.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE PUNCH OFFICE, 55, FLEET STREET.

J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH; J. M'LEOD, GLASGOW; J. M'GLASHAN, DUBLIN.

1847.

PRINTED BY
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[Facsimile of wrapper to one of the original monthly numbers.]

MINY-FAR

A Novel without a Hero.

BY

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY



LONDON

BRADBURY & EVANS BOUVERIE STREET.

1848

[Facsimile of title page to the first edition.]

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BEFORE THE CURTAIN

As the Manager of the Performance sits before the curtain on the boards, and looks into the Fair, a feeling of profound melancholy comes over him in his survey of the bustling place. There is a great quantity of eating and drinking, making love and jilting, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling : there are bullies pushing about, bucks ogling the women, knaves picking pockets, policemen on the look-out, quacks (*other* quacks, plague take them !) bawling in front of their booths, and yokels looking up at the tinselled dancers and poor old rouged tumblers, while the light-fingered folk are operating upon their pockets behind. Yes, this is VANITY FAIR ; not a moral place certainly ; nor a merry one, though very noisy. Look at the faces of the actors and buffoons when they come off from their business ; and Tom Fool washing the paint off his cheeks before he sits down to dinner with his wife and the little Jack Puddings behind the canvas. The curtain will be up presently, and he will be turning over head and heels, and crying ‘ How are you ? ’

A man with a reflective turn of mind, walking through an exhibition of this sort, will not be oppressed, I take it, by his own or other people’s hilarity. An episode of humour or kindness touches and amuses him here and there ;—a pretty child looking at a gingerbread stall ; a pretty girl blushing whilst her lover talks to her and chooses her fairing ;—poor Tom Fool, yonder behind the wagon, mumbling his bone with the honest family which lives by his tumbling ;—but the general impression is one more melancholy than mirthful. When you come home, you sit down, in a sober, contemplative, not uncharitable frame of mind, and apply yourself to your books or your business.

I have no other moral than this to tag to the present story of *Vanity Fair*. Some people consider Fairs immoral

altogether, and eschew such, with their servants and families : very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lazy, or a benevolent, or a sarcastic mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all sorts ; some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed ; some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business ; the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery, and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles.

What more has the Manager of the Performance to say ?—To acknowledge the kindness with which it has been received in all the principal towns of England through which the Show has passed, and where it has been most favourably noticed by the respected conductors of the Public Press, and by the Nobility and Gentry. He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire : the Amelia Doll, though it has had a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist : the Dobbin Figure, though apparently clumsy, yet dances in a very amusing and natural manner : the Little Boys' Dance has been liked by some ; and please to remark the richly-dressed figure of the Wicked Nobleman, on which no expense has been spared, and which Old Nick will fetch away at the end of this singular performance.

And with this, and a profound bow to his patrons, the Manager retires, and the curtain rises.

LONDON, June 28, 1848.

VANITY FAIR.

A NOVEL WITHOUT A HERO



CHAPTER I

CHISWICK MALL



WHILE the present century was in its teens, and on one sunshiny morning in June, there drove up to the great iron gate of Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, on Chiswick Mall, a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour. A black servant, who reposed on the box beside the fat coachman, uncurled his bandy legs as soon as the equipage drew up opposite Miss Pinkerton's shining brass plate, and as he pulled the bell, at least a score of young heads were seen peering out of the narrow windows of the stately old brick house. Nay, the acute observer might have recognized the little red nose of good-natured Miss Jemima Pinkerton herself, rising over some geranium-pots in the window of that lady's own drawing-room.

'It is Mrs. Sedley's coach, sister,' said Miss Jemima. 'Sambo, the black servant, has just rung the bell; and the coachman has a new red waistcoat.'

'Have you completed all the necessary preparations incident to Miss Sedley's departure, Miss Jemima?' asked Miss Pinkerton herself, that majestic lady; the Semiramis of Hammersmith, the friend of Doctor Johnson, the correspondent of Mrs. Chapone herself.

'The girls were up at four this morning, packing her trunks, sister,' replied Miss Jemima; 'we have made her a bow-pot.'

'Say a bouquet, sister Jemima, 'tis more genteel.'

'Well, a booky as big almost as a haystack; I have



put up two bottles of the gillyflower-water for Mrs. Sedley, and the receipt for making it, in Amelia's box.'

'And I trust, Miss Jemima, you have made a copy of Miss Sedley's account. This is it, is it? Very good—ninety-three pounds, four shillings. Be kind enough to address it to John Sedley, Esquire, and to seal this billet which I have written to his lady.'

In Miss Jemima's eyes an autograph letter of her sister, Miss Pinkerton, was an object of as deep veneration, as would have been a letter from a sovereign. Only when her pupils quitted the establishment, or when they were about to be married, and once, when poor Miss Birch died of the scarlet fever, was Miss Pinkerton known to write personally to the parents of her pupils; and it was Jemima's opinion that if anything *could* console Mrs. Birch for her daughter's loss, it would be that pious and eloquent composition in which Miss Pinkerton announced the event.

In the present instance, Miss Pinkerton's 'billet' was to the following effect :—

THE MALL, CHISWICK, June 15, 18—.

MADAM,—After her six years' residence at the Mall, I have the honour and happiness of presenting Miss Amelia Sedley to her parents, as a young lady not unworthy to occupy a fitting position in their polished and refined circle. Those virtues which characterize the young English gentlewoman, those accomplishments which become her birth and station, will not be found wanting in the amiable Miss Sedley, whose *industry* and *obedience* have endeared her to her instructors, and whose delightful sweetness of temper has charmed her *aged* and her *youthful* companions.

In music, in dancing, in orthography, in every variety of embroidery and needlework, she will be found to have realized her friends' *fondest wishes*. In geography there is still much to be desired ; and a careful and undeviating use of the backboard, for four hours daily during the next three years, is recommended as necessary to the acquirement of that dignified *deportment and carriage*, so requisite for every young lady of *fashion*.

In the principles of religion and morality, Miss Sedley will be found worthy of an establishment which has been honoured by the presence of *The Great Lexicographer*, and the patronage of the admirable Mrs. Chapone. In leaving the Mall, Miss Amelia carries with her the hearts of her companions, and the affectionate regards of her mistress, who has the honour to subscribe herself,

Madam,

Your most obliged humble servant,

BARBARA PINKERTON.

PS.—Miss Sharp accompanies Miss Sedley. It is particularly requested that Miss Sharp's stay in Russell Square may not exceed ten days. The family of distinction with whom she is engaged desire to avail themselves of her services as soon as possible.'

This letter completed, Miss Pinkerton proceeded to write her own name, and Miss Sedley's, in the fly-leaf of a Johnson's Dictionary—the interesting work which she invariably presented to her scholars, on their departure from the Mall. On the cover was inserted a copy of 'Lines addressed to a young lady on quitting Miss Pinkerton's school, at the Mall ; by the late revered Doctor Samuel Johnson.' In fact, the lexicographer's name was always on the lips of this majestic woman, and a visit he had paid to her was the cause of her reputation and her fortune.

Being commanded by her elder sister to get 'the Dictionary' from the cupboard, Miss Jemima had extracted

two copies of the book from the receptacle in question. When Miss Pinkerton had finished the inscription in the first, Jemima, with rather a dubious and timid air, handed her the second.

‘For whom is this, Miss Jemima?’ said Miss Pinkerton, with awful coldness.

‘For Becky Sharp,’ answered Jemima, trembling very much, and blushing over her withered face and neck, as she turned her back on her sister. ‘For Becky Sharp: she’s going too.’

‘MISS JEMIMA!’ exclaimed Miss Pinkerton, in the largest capitals. ‘Are you in your senses? Replace the Dixonary in the closet, and never venture to take such a liberty in future.’

‘Well, sister, it’s only two-and-ninepence, and poor Becky will be miserable if she don’t get one.’

‘Send Miss Sedley instantly to me,’ said Miss Pinkerton. And so venturing not to say another word, poor Jemima trotted off, exceedingly flurried and nervous.

Miss Sedley’s papa was a merchant in London, and a man of some wealth; whereas Miss Sharp was an artied pupil, for whom Miss Pinkerton had done, as she thought, quite enough, without conferring upon her at parting the high honour of the Dixonary.

Although schoolmistresses’ letters are to be trusted no more nor less than churchyard epitaphs; yet, as it sometimes happens that a person departs this life, who is really deserving of all the praises the stone-cutter carves over his bones; who *is* a good Christian, a good parent, child, wife or husband; who actually *does* leave a disconsolate family to mourn his loss; so in academies of the male and female sex it occurs every now and then, that the pupil is fully worthy of the praises bestowed by the disinterested instructor. Now, Miss Amelia Sedley was a young lady of this singular species, and deserved not only all that Miss Pinkerton said in her praise, but had many charming qualities which that pompous old Minerva of a woman could not see, from the differences of rank and age between her pupil and herself.

For she could not only sing like a lark, or a Mrs. Billington, and dance like Hillisberg or Parisot; and embroider beautifully; and spell as well as the Dixonary itself; but she had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous

heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came near her, from Minerva herself down to the poor girl in the scullery, and the one-eyed tartwoman's daughter, who was permitted to vend her wares once a week to the young ladies in the Mall. She had twelve intimate and bosom friends out of the twenty-four young ladies. Even envious Miss Briggs never spoke ill of her : high and mighty Miss Saltire (Lord Dexter's granddaughter) allowed that her figure was genteel : and as for Miss Swartz, the rich woolly-haired mulatto from St. Kitts, on the day Amelia went away, she was in such a passion of tears, that they were obliged to send for Dr. Floss, and half tipsify her with sal volatile. Miss Pinkerton's attachment was, as may be supposed, from the high position and eminent virtues of that lady, calm and dignified ; but Miss Jemima had already whimpered several times at the idea of Amelia's departure ; and, but for fear of her sister, would have gone off in downright hysterics, like the heiress (who paid double) of St. Kitts. Such luxury of grief, however, is only allowed to parlour-boarders. Honest Jemima had all the bills, and the washing, and the mending, and the puddings, and the plate and crockery, and the servants to superintend. But why speak about her ? It is probable that we shall not hear of her again from this moment to the end of time, and that when the great filigree iron gates are once closed on her, she and her awful sister will never issue therefrom into this little world of history.

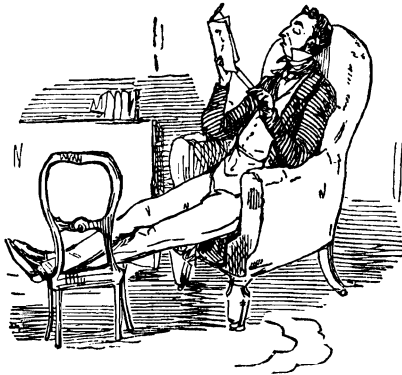
But as we are to see a great deal of Amelia, there is no harm in saying, at the outset of our acquaintance, that she was a dear little creature ; and a great mercy it is, both in life and in novels, which (and the latter especially) abound in villains of the most sombre sort, that we are to have for a constant companion, so guileless and good-natured a person. As she is not a heroine, there is no need to describe her person ; indeed I am afraid that her nose was rather short than otherwise, and her cheeks a great deal too round and red for a heroine ; but her face blushed with rosy health, and her lips with the freshest of smiles, and she had a pair of eyes, which sparkled with the brightest and honestest good-humour, except indeed when they filled with tears, and that was a great deal too often ; for the silly thing would cry over a dead canary bird ; or over a mouse, that the cat haply had seized upon ;

or over the end of a novel, were it ever so stupid ; and as for saying an unkind word to her, were any persons hard-hearted enough to do so—why, so much the worse for them. Even Miss Pinkerton, that austere and god-like woman, ceased scolding her after the first time, and though she no more comprehended sensibility than she did algebra, gave all masters and teachers particular orders to treat Miss Sedley with the utmost gentleness, as harsh treatment was injurious to her.

So that when the day of departure came, between her two customs of laughing and crying, Miss Sedley was greatly puzzled how to act. She was glad to go home, and yet most wofully sad at leaving school. For three days before, little Laura Martin, the orphan, followed her about, like a little dog. She had to make and receive at least fourteen presents,—to make fourteen solemn promises of writing every week : ‘ Send my letters under cover to my grandpapa, the Earl of Dexter,’ said Miss Saltire (who, by the way, was rather shabby) : ‘ Never mind the postage, but write every day, you dear darling,’ said the impetuous and woolly-headed, but generous and affectionate Miss Swartz ; and the orphan, little Laura Martin (who was just in round-hand), took her friend’s hand and said, looking up in her face wistfully, ‘ Amelia, when I write to you I shall call you mamma.’ All which details, I have no doubt, Jones, who reads this book at his Club, will pronounce to be excessively foolish, trivial, twaddling, and ultra-sentimental. Yes ; I can see Jones at this minute (rather flushed with his joint of mutton and half-pint of wine), taking out his pencil and scoring under the words ‘ foolish, twaddling,’ &c., and adding to them his own remark of ‘ *quite true*’. Well, he is a lofty man of genius, and admires the great and heroic in life and novels ; and so had better take warning and go elsewhere.

Well, then. The flowers, and the presents, and the trunks, and bonnet-boxes of Miss Sedley having been arranged by Mr. Sambo in the carriage, together with a very small and weather-beaten old cow’s-skin trunk with Miss Sharp’s card neatly nailed upon it, which was delivered by Sambo with a grin, and packed by the coachman with a corresponding sneer—the hour for parting came ; and the grief of that moment was considerably lessened by the admirable discourse which Miss Pinkerton addressed to her

pupil. Not that the parting speech caused Amelia to philosophize, or that it armed her in any way with a calmness, the result of argument ; but it was intolerably dull, pompous, and tedious ; and having the fear of her schoolmistress greatly before her eyes, Miss Sedley did not venture, in her presence, to give way to any ebullitions of private grief. A seed-cake and a bottle of wine were produced in the drawing-room, as on the solemn occasions of the visit



of parents, and these refreshments being partaken of, Miss Sedley was at liberty to depart.

'You'll go in and say good-bye to Miss Pinkerton, Becky !' said Miss Jemima to a young lady of whom nobody took any notice, and who was coming downstairs with her own bandbox.

'I suppose I must,' said Miss Sharp calmly, and much to the wonder of Miss Jemima ; and the latter having knocked at the door and receiving permission to come in, Miss Sharp advanced in a very unconcerned manner, and said in French, and with a perfect accent, '*Mademoiselle, je viens vous faire mes adieux.*'

Miss Pinkerton did not understand French ; she only directed those who did : but biting her lips and throwing up her venerable and Roman-nosed head (on the top of

which figured a large and solemn turban), she said, 'Miss Sharp, I wish you a good morning.' As the Hammersmith Semiramis spoke, she waved one hand, both by way of adieu, and to give Miss Sharp an opportunity of shaking one of the fingers of the hand which was left out for that purpose.

Miss Sharp only folded her own hands with a very frigid smile and bow, and quite declined to accept the proffered honour; on which Semiramis tossed up her turban more indignantly than ever. In fact, it was a little battle between the young lady and the old one, and the latter was worsted. 'Heaven bless you, my child,' said she, embracing Amelia, and scowling the while over the girl's shoulder at Miss Sharp. 'Come away, Becky,' said Miss Jemima, pulling the young woman away in great alarm, and the drawing-room door closed upon them for ever.

Then came the struggle and parting below. Words refuse to tell it. All the servants were there in the hall—all the dear friends—all the young ladies—the dancing-master who had just arrived; and there was such a scuffling, and hugging, and kissing, and crying, with the hysterical *yoops* of Miss Swartz, the parlour-boarder, from her room, as no pen can depict, and as the tender heart would fain pass over. The embracing was over; they parted—that is, Miss Sedley parted from her friends. Miss Sharp had demurely entered the carriage some minutes before. Nobody cried for leaving *her*.

Sambo of the bandy-legs slammed the carriage-door on his young weeping mistress. He sprang up behind the carriage. 'Stop!' cried Miss Jemima, rushing to the gate with a parcel.

'It's some sandwiches, my dear,' said she to Amelia. 'You may be hungry, you know; and Becky, Becky Sharp, here's a book for you that my sister—that is, I—Johnson's Dictionary, you know; you mustn't leave us without that. Good-bye. Drive on, coachman. God bless you!'

And the kind creature retreated into the garden, overcome with emotions.

But, lo! and just as the coach drove off, Miss Sharp put her pale face out of the window, and actually flung the book back into the garden.

This almost caused Jemima to faint with terror. 'Well,



REBECCA'S FAREWELL

I never,'—said she—'what an audacious——' Emotion prevented her from completing either sentence. The carriage rolled away; the great gates were closed; the bell rang for the dancing lesson. The world is before the two young ladies; and so, farewell to Chiswick Mall.



CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MISS SHARP AND MISS SEDLEY PREPARE TO OPEN
THE CAMPAIGN

WHEN Miss Sharp had performed the heroical act mentioned in the last chapter, and had seen the Dixonary flying over the pavement of the little garden, fall at length at the feet of the astonished Miss Jemima, the young lady's countenance, which had before worn an almost livid look of hatred, assumed a smile that perhaps was scarcely more agreeable, and she sank back in the carriage in an easy frame of mind, saying, 'So much for the Dixonary; and, thank God, I'm out of Chiswick.'

Miss Sedley was almost as flurried at the act of defiance as Miss Jemima had been; for, consider, it was but one minute that she had left school, and the impressions of six years are not got over in that space of time. Nay, with some persons those awes and terrors of youth last

for ever and ever. I know, for instance, an old gentleman of sixty-eight, who said to me one morning at breakfast, with a very agitated countenance, 'I dreamed last night that I was flogged by Dr. Raine.' Fancy had carried him back five-and-fifty years in the course of that evening. Dr. Raine and his rod were just as awful to him in his heart, then, at sixty-eight, as they had been at thirteen. If the Doctor, with a large birch, had appeared bodily to him, even at the age of three score and eight, and had said in awful voice, 'Boy, take down your pant——'? Well, well, Miss Sedley was exceedingly alarmed at this act of insubordination.

'How could you do so, Rebecca?' at last she said, after a pause.

'Why, do you think Miss Pinkerton will come out and order me back to the black-hole?' said Rebecca, laughing.

'No: but——'

'I hate the whole house,' continued Miss Sharp, in a fury. 'I hope I may never set eyes on it again. I wish it were in the bottom of the Thames, I do; and if Miss Pinkerton were there, I wouldn't pick her out, that I wouldn't. Oh, how I should like to see her floating in the water yonder, turban and all, with her train streaming after her, and her nose like the beak of a wherry.'

'Hush!' cried Miss Sedley.

'Why, will the black footman tell tales?' cried Miss Rebecca, laughing. 'He may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her with all my soul; and I wish he would; and I wish I had a means of proving it, too. For two years I have only had insults and outrage from her. I have been treated worse than any servant in the kitchen. I have never had a friend or a kind word, except from you. I have been made to tend the little girls in the lower school-room, and to talk French to the misses until I grew sick of my mother-tongue. But that talking French to Miss Pinkerton was capital fun, wasn't it? She doesn't know a word of French, and was too proud to confess it. I believe it was that which made her part with me; and so thank Heaven for French. *Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!*'

'O Rebecca, Rebecca, for shame!' cried Miss Sedley; for this was the greatest blasphemy Rebecca had as yet uttered; and in those days, in England, to say 'Long live

Bonaparte !' was as much as to say ' Long live Lucifer !' ' How can you—how dare you have such wicked, revengeful thoughts ?'

' Revenge may be wicked, but it's natural,' answered Miss Rebecca. ' I'm no angel.' And, to say the truth, she certainly was not.

For it may be remarked in the course of this little conversation (which took place as the coach rolled along lazily by the riverside) that though Miss Rebecca Sharp has twice had occasion to thank Heaven, it has been, in the first place, for ridding her of some person whom she hated, and secondly, for enabling her to bring her enemies to some sort of perplexity or confusion ; neither of which are very amiable motives for religious gratitude, or such as would be put forward by persons of a kind and placable disposition. Miss Rebecca was not, then, in the least kind or placable. All the world used her ill, said this young misanthropist, and we may be pretty certain that persons whom all the world treats ill, deserve entirely the treatment they get. The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you ; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly kind companion ; and so let all young persons take their choice. This is certain, that if the world neglected Miss Sharp, she never was known to have done a good action in behalf of anybody ; nor can it be expected that twenty-four young ladies should all be as amiable as the heroine of this work, Miss Sedley (whom we have selected for the very reason that she was the best-natured of all, otherwise what on earth was to have prevented us from putting up Miss Swartz, or Miss Crump, or Miss Hopkins, as heroine in her place ?)—it could not be expected that every one should be of the humble and gentle temper of Miss Amelia Sedley ; should take every opportunity to vanquish Rebecca's hard-heartedness and ill-humour ; and, by a thousand kind words and offices, overcome, for once at least, her hostility to her kind.

Miss Sharp's father was an artist, and in that quality had given lessons of drawing at Miss Pinkerton's school. He was a clever man ; a pleasant companion ; a careless student ; with a great propensity for running into debt, and a partiality for the tavern. When he was drunk, he

used to beat his wife and daughter ; and the next morning, with a headache, he would rail at the world for its neglect of his genius, and abuse, with a good deal of cleverness, and sometimes with perfect reason, the fools, his brother painters. As it was with the utmost difficulty that he could keep himself, and as he owed money for a mile round Soho, where he lived, he thought to better his circumstances by marrying a young woman of the French nation, who was by profession an opera-girl. The humble calling of her female parent, Miss Sharp never alluded to, but used to state subsequently that the Entrechats were a noble family of Gascony, and took great pride in her descent from them. And curious it is, that as she advanced in life this young lady's ancestors increased in rank and splendour.

Rebecca's mother had had some education somewhere, and her daughter spoke French with purity and a Parisian accent. It was in those days rather a rare accomplishment, and led to her engagement with the orthodox Miss Pinkerton. For her mother being dead, her father, finding himself not likely to recover, after his third attack of *delirium tremens*, wrote a manly and pathetic letter to Miss Pinkerton, recommending the orphan child to her protection, and so descended to the grave, after two bailiffs had quarrelled over his corpse. Rebecca was seventeen when she came to Chiswick, and was bound over as an articled pupil ; her duties being to talk French, as we have seen ; and her privileges to live cost free, and, with a few guineas a year, to gather scraps of knowledge from the professors who attended the school.

She was small and slight in person ; pale, sandy-haired, and with eyes habitually cast down : when they looked up they were very large, odd, and attractive ; so attractive, that the Reverend Mr. Crisp, fresh from Oxford, and curate to the Vicar of Chiswick, the Reverend Mr. Flowerdew, fell in love with Miss Sharp ; being shot dead by a glance of her eyes, which was fired all the way across Chiswick Church from the school-pew to the reading-desk. This infatuated young man used sometimes to take tea with Miss Pinkerton, to whom he had been presented by his mamma, and actually proposed something like marriage in an intercepted note, which the one-eyed applemoan was charged to deliver. Mrs. Crisp was summoned from

Buxton, and abruptly carried off her darling boy ; but the idea, even, of such an eagle in the Chiswick dovecot caused a great flutter in the breast of Miss Pinkerton, who would have sent away Miss Sharp, but that she was bound to her under a forfeit, and who never could thoroughly believe the young lady's protestations that she had never exchanged a single word with Mr. Crisp, except under her own eyes on the two occasions when she had met him at tea.

By the side of many tall and bouncing young ladies in the establishment, Rebecca Sharp looked like a child. But she had the dismal precocity of poverty. Many a dun had she talked to, and turned away from her father's door ; many a tradesman had she coaxed and wheedled into good humour, and into the granting of one meal more. She sat commonly with her father, who was very proud of her wit, and heard the talk of many of his wild companions—often but ill-suited for a girl to hear. But she never had been a girl, she said ; she had been a woman since she was eight years old. Oh, why did Miss Pinkerton let such a dangerous bird into her cage ?

The fact is, the old lady believed Rebecca to be the meekest creature in the world, so admirably, on the occasions when her father brought her to Chiswick, used Rebecca to perform the part of the *ingénue* ; and only a year before the arrangement by which Rebecca had been admitted into her house, and when Rebecca was sixteen years old, Miss Pinkerton majestically, and with a little speech, made her a present of a doll—which was, by the way, the confiscated property of Miss Swindle, discovered surreptitiously nursing it in school hours. How the father and daughter laughed as they trudged home together after the evening party (it was on the occasion of the speeches, when all the professors were invited), and how Miss Pinkerton would have raged had she seen the caricature of herself which the little mimic, Rebecca, managed to make out of her doll. Becky used to go through dialogues with it ; it formed the delight of Newman Street, Gerrard Street, and the artists' quarter : and the young painters, when they came to take their gin-and-water with their lazy, dissolute, clever, jovial senior, used regularly to ask Rebecca if Miss Pinkerton was at home : she was well known to them, poor soul ! as Mr. Lawrence or President West. Once she had the honour to pass a few days at Chiswick ; after which

she brought back Jemima, and erected another doll as Miss Jemmy; for though that honest creature had made and given her jelly and cake enough for three children, and a seven-shilling piece at parting, the girl's sense of ridicule was far stronger than her gratitude, and she sacrificed Miss Jemmy quite as pitilessly as her sister.

The catastrophe came, and she was brought to the Mall



as to her home. The rigid formality of the place suffocated her: the prayers and the meals, the lessons and the walks, which were arranged with a conventual regularity, oppressed her almost beyond endurance; and she looked back to the freedom and the beggary of the old studio in Soho with so much regret, that everybody, herself included, fancied she was consumed with grief for her father. She had a little room in the garret, where the maids heard her

walking and sobbing at night ; but it was with rage, and not with grief. She had not been much of a dissembler, until now her loneliness taught her to feign. She had never mingled in the society of women : her father, reprobate as he was, was a man of talent ; his conversation was a thousand times more agreeable to her than the talk of such of her own sex as she now encountered. The pompous vanity of the old schoolmistress, the foolish good humour of her sister, the silly chat and scandal of the elder girls, and the frigid correctness of the governesses equally annoyed her ; and she had no soft maternal heart, this unlucky girl, otherwise the prattle and talk of the younger children, with whose care she was chiefly entrusted, might have soothed and interested her ; but she lived among them two years, and not one was sorry that she went away. The gentle tender-hearted Amelia Sedley was the only person to whom she could attach herself in the least ; and who could help attaching herself to Amelia ?

The happiness—the superior advantages of the young women round about her, gave Rebecca inexpressible pangs of envy. ‘What airs that girl gives herself, because she is an earl’s granddaughter,’ she said of one. ‘How they cringe and bow to that Creole, because of her hundred thousand pounds ! I am a thousand times cleverer and more charming than that creature, for all her wealth. I am as well-bred as the earl’s granddaughter, for all her fine pedigree ; and yet every one passes me by here. And yet, when I was at my father’s, did not the men give up their gayest balls and parties in order to pass the evening with me ?’ She determined at any rate to get free from the prison in which she found herself, and now began to act for herself, and for the first time to make connected plans for the future.

She took advantage, therefore, of the means of study the place offered her ; and as she was already a musician and a good linguist, she speedily went through the little course of study which was considered necessary for ladies in those days. Her music she practised incessantly, and one day, when the girls were out, and she had remained at home, she was overheard to play a piece so well, that Minerva thought wisely, she could spare herself the expense of a master for the juniors, and intimated to Miss Sharp that she was to instruct them in music for the future.

The girl refused ; and for the first time, and to the astonishment of the majestic mistress of the school. ' I am here to speak French with the children,' Rebecca said abruptly, ' not to teach them music, and save money for you. Give me money, and I will teach them.'

Minerva was obliged to yield, and, of course, disliked her from that day. ' For five-and-thirty years,' she said, and with great justice, ' I never have seen the individual who has dared in my own house to question my authority. I have nourished a viper in my bosom.'

' A viper—a fiddlestick,' said Miss Sharp to the old lady, almost fainting with astonishment. ' You took me because I was useful. There is no question of gratitude between us. I hate this place, and want to leave it. I will do nothing here but what I am obliged to do.'

It was in vain that the old lady asked her if she was aware she was speaking to Miss Pinkerton ? Rebecca laughed in her face, with a horrid sarcastic demoniacal laughter, that almost sent the schoolmistress into fits. ' Give me a sum of money,' said the girl, ' and get rid of me—or, if you like better, get me a good place as governess in a nobleman's family—you can do so if you please.' And in their further disputes she always returned to this point, ' Get me a situation—we hate each other, and I am ready to go.'

Worthy Miss Pinkerton, although she had a Roman nose and a turban, and was as tall as a grenadier, and had been up to this time an irresistible princess, had no will or strength like that of her little apprentice, and in vain did battle against her, and tried to overawe her. Attempting once to scold her in public, Rebecca hit upon the before-mentioned plan of answering her in French, which quite routed the old woman. In order to maintain authority in her school, it became necessary to remove this rebel, this monster, this serpent, this firebrand ; and hearing about this time that Sir Pitt Crawley's family was in want of a governess, she actually recommended Miss Sharp for the situation, firebrand and serpent as she was. ' I cannot, certainly,' she said, ' find fault with Miss Sharp's conduct, except to myself ; and must allow that her talents and accomplishments are of a high order. As far as the head goes, at least, she does credit to the educational system pursued at my establishment.'

And so the schoolmistress reconciled the recommendation to her conscience, and the indentures were cancelled, and the apprentice was free. The battle here described in a few lines, of course lasted for some months. And as Miss Sedley, being now in her seventeenth year, was about to leave school, and had a friendship for Miss Sharp ('tis the only point in Amelia's behaviour,' said Minerva, 'which has not been satisfactory to her mistress'), Miss Sharp was invited by her friend to pass a week with her at home, before she entered upon her duties as governess in a private family.

Thus the world began for these two young ladies. For Amelia it was quite a new, fresh, brilliant world, with all the bloom upon it. It was not quite a new one for Rebecca (indeed, if the truth must be told with respect to the Crisp affair, the tart-woman hinted to somebody, who took an affidavit of the fact to somebody else, that there was a great deal more than was made public regarding Mr. Crisp and Miss Sharp, and that his letter was *in answer* to another letter). But who can tell you the real truth of the matter? At all events, if Rebecca was not beginning the world, she was beginning it over again.

By the time the young ladies reached Kensington turnpike, Amelia had not forgotten her companions, but had dried her tears, and had blushed very much and been delighted at a young officer of the Life Guards, who spied her as he was riding by, and said, 'A dem fine gal, egad!' and before the carriage arrived in Russell Square, a great deal of conversation had taken place about the Drawing-room, and whether or not young ladies wore powder as well as hoops when presented, and whether she was to have that honour: to the Lord Mayor's ball she knew she was to go. And when at length home was reached, Miss Amelia Sedley skipped out on Sambo's arm, as happy and as handsome a girl as any in the whole big city of London. Both he and coachman agreed on this point, and so did her father and mother, and so did every one of the servants in the house, as they stood bobbing, and curtsying, and smiling, in the hall, to welcome their young mistress.

You may be sure that she showed Rebecca over every room of the house, and everything in every one of her drawers; and her books, and her piano, and her dresses, and all her necklaces, brooches, laces, and gimcracks.

She insisted upon Rebecca accepting the white cornelian and the turquoise rings, and a sweet sprigged muslin, which was too small for her now, though it would fit her friend to a nicety ; and she determined in her heart to ask her mother's permission to present her white Cashmere shawl to her friend. Could she not spare it ? and had not her brother Joseph just brought her two from India ?

When Rebecca saw the two magnificent Cashmere shawls which Joseph Sedley had brought home to his sister, she said, with perfect truth, ' that it must be delightful to have a brother,' and easily got the pity of the tender-hearted Amelia, for being alone in the world, an orphan without friends or kindred.

' Not alone,' said Amelia ; ' you know, Rebecca, I shall always be your friend, and love you as a sister—indeed I will.'

' Ah, but to have parents, as you have—kind, rich, affectionate parents, who give you everything you ask for ; and their love, which is more precious than all ! My poor papa could give me nothing, and I had but two frocks in all the world ! And then, to have a brother, a dear brother ! Oh, how you must love him !'

Amelia laughed.

' What ! *don't* you love him ? you, who say you love everybody ?'

' Yes, of course, I do—only——'

' Only what ?'

' Only Joseph doesn't seem to care much whether I love him or not. He gave me two fingers to shake when he arrived after ten years' absence ! He is very kind and good, but he scarcely ever speaks to me ; I think he loves his pipe a great deal better than his——' but here Amelia checked herself, for why should she speak ill of her brother ? ' He was very kind to me as a child,' she added ; ' I was but five years old when he went away.'

' Isn't he very rich ?' said Rebecca. ' They say all Indian nabobs are enormously rich.'

' I believe he has a very large income.'

' And is your sister-in-law a nice pretty woman ?'

' La ! Joseph is not married,' said Amelia, laughing again.

Perhaps she had mentioned the fact already to Rebecca, but that young lady did not appear to have remembered

it; indeed, vowed and protested that she expected to see a number of Amelia's nephews and nieces. She was quite disappointed that Mr. Sedley was not married; she was sure Amelia had said he was, and she doted so on little children.

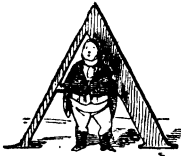
'I think you must have had enough of them at Chiswick,' said Amelia, rather wondering at the sudden tenderness on her friend's part; and indeed in later days Miss Sharp would never have committed herself so far as to advance opinions, the untruth of which would have been so easily detected. But we must remember that she is but nineteen as yet, unused to the art of deceiving, poor innocent creature! and making her own experience in her own person. The meaning of the above series of queries, as translated in the heart of this ingenious young woman, was simply this:— 'If Mr. Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him? I have only a fortnight, to be sure, but there is no harm in trying.' And she determined within herself to make this laudable attempt. She redoubled her caresses to Amelia; she kissed the white cornelian necklace as she put it on; and vowed she would never, never part with it. When the dinner-bell rang she went downstairs with her arm round her friend's waist, as is the habit of young ladies. She was so agitated at the drawing-room door, that she could hardly find courage to enter. 'Feel my heart, how it beats, dear!' said she to her friend.

'No, it doesn't,' said Amelia. 'Come in, don't be frightened. Papa won't do you any harm.'



CHAPTER III

REBECCA IS IN PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY



VERY stout, puffy man, in buckskins and hessian boots, with several immense neckcloths, that rose almost to his nose, with a red striped waistcoat and an apple-green coat with steel buttons almost as large as crown pieces (it was the morning costume of a dandy or blood of those days), was reading the paper by the fire when the two girls entered, and bounced off his arm-chair, and blushed excessively, and hid his entire face almost in his neckcloths at this apparition.

‘It’s only your sister, Joseph,’ said Amelia, laughing and shaking the two fingers which he held out. ‘I’ve come home *for good*, you know; and this is my friend, Miss Sharp, whom you have heard me mention.’

‘No, never, upon my word,’ said the head under the neckcloth, shaking very much,—‘that is, yes,—what abominably cold weather. miss;’—and herewith he fell to poking the fire with all his might, although it was in the middle of June.

‘He’s very handsome,’ whispered Rebecca to Amelia, rather loud.

‘Do you think so?’ said the latter. ‘I’ll tell him.’

‘Darling! not for worlds,’ said Miss Sharp, starting back as timid as a fawn. She had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsy to the gentleman, and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him.

‘Thank you for the beautiful shawls, brother,’ said Amelia to the fire-poker. ‘Are they not beautiful, Rebecca?’

‘Oh, heavenly!’ said Miss Sharp, and her eyes went from the carpet straight to the chandelier.

Joseph still continued a huge clattering at the poker and tongs, puffing and blowing the while, and turning as red as his yellow face would allow him. ‘I can’t make you such handsome presents, Joseph,’ continued his sister,

‘but while I was at school, I have embroidered for you a very beautiful pair of braces.’

‘Good Gad! Amelia,’ cried the brother, in serious alarm, ‘what do you mean?’ and plunging with all his might at the bell-rope, that article of furniture came away in his hand, and increased the honest fellow’s confusion. ‘For heaven’s sake see if my buggy’s at the door. I *can’t* wait. I must go. D—— that groom of mine. I must go.’

At this minute the father of the family walked in, rattling his seals like a true British merchant. ‘What’s the matter, Emmy?’ says he.

‘Joseph wants me to see if his—his *buggy* is at the door. What is a *buggy*, papa?’

‘It is a one-horse palanquin,’ said the old gentleman, who was a wag in his way.

Joseph at this burst out into a wild fit of laughter; in which, encountering the eye of Miss Sharp, he stopped all of a sudden, as if he had been shot.

‘This young lady is your friend? Miss Sharp, I am very happy to see you. Have you and Emmy been quarrelling already with Joseph, that he wants to be off?’

‘I promised Bonamy of our service, sir,’ said Joseph, ‘to dine with him.’

‘Oh, fie! didn’t you tell your mother you would dine here?’

‘But in this dress it’s impossible.’

‘Look at him, isn’t he handsome enough to dine anywhere, Miss Sharp?’

On which, of course, Miss Sharp looked at her friend, and they both set off in a fit of laughter, highly agreeable to the old gentleman.

‘Did you ever see a pair of buckskins like those at Miss Pinkerton’s?’ continued he, following up his advantage.

‘Gracious heavens! father,’ cried Joseph.

‘There now, I have hurt his feelings. Mrs. Sedley, my dear, I have hurt your son’s feelings. I have alluded to his buckskins. Ask Miss Sharp if I haven’t? Come, Joseph, be friends with Miss Sharp, and let us all go to dinner.’

‘There’s a pillau, Joseph, just as you like it, and papa has brought home the best turbot in Billingsgate.’

‘Come, come, sir, walk downstairs with Miss Sharp, and I will follow with these two young women,’ said the father,

and he took an arm of wife and daughter and walked merrily off.

If Miss Rebecca Sharp had determined in her heart upon making the conquest of this big beau, I don't think, ladies, we have any right to blame her; for though the task of husband-hunting is generally, and with becoming modesty, entrusted by young persons to their mammams, recollect that Miss Sharp had no kind parent to arrange these delicate matters for her, and that if she did not get a husband for herself, there was no one else in the wide world who would take the trouble off her hands. What causes young people to 'come out', but the noble ambition of matrimony? What sends them trooping to watering-places? What keeps them dancing till five o'clock in the morning through a whole mortal season? What causes them to labour at pianoforte sonatas, and to learn four songs from a fashionable master at a guinea a lesson, and to play the harp if they have handsome arms and neat elbows, and to wear Lincoln green toxophilite hats and feathers, but that they may bring down some 'desirable' young man with those killing bows and arrows of theirs? What causes respectable parents to take up their carpets, set their houses topsy-turvy, and spend a fifth of their year's income in ball suppers and iced champagne? Is it sheer love of their species, and an unadulterated wish to see young people happy and dancing? Psha! they want to marry their daughters; and, as honest Mrs. Sedley has, in the depths of her kind heart, already arranged a score of little schemes for the settlement of her Amelia, so also had our beloved but unprotected Rebecca determined to do her very best to secure the husband, who was even more necessary for her than for her friend. She had a vivid imagination; she had, besides, read the *Arabian Nights* and *Guthrie's Geography*; and it is a fact, that while she was dressing for dinner, and after she had asked Amelia whether her brother was very rich, she had built for herself a most magnificent castle in the air, of which she was mistress, with a husband somewhere in the background (she had not seen him as yet, and his figure would not therefore be very distinct); she had arrayed herself in an infinity of shawls, turbans, and diamond necklaces, and had mounted upon an elephant to the sound of the march in Bluebeard,

in order to pay a visit of ceremony to the Grand Mogul. Charming Alnaschar visions ! it is the happy privilege of youth to construct you, and many a fanciful young creature besides Rebecca Sharp has indulged in these delightful day-dreams ere now !

Joseph Sedley was twelve years older than his sister Amelia. He was in the East India Company's Civil Service, and his name appeared, at the period of which we write, in the Bengal division of the East India Register, as collector of Boggley Wollah, an honourable and lucrative post, as everybody knows : in order to know to what higher posts Joseph rose in the service, the reader is referred to the same periodical.

Boggley Wollah is situated in a fine, lonely, marshy, jungly district, famous for snipe-shooting, and where not unfrequently you may flush a tiger. Ramgunge, where there is a magistrate, is only forty miles off, and there is a cavalry station about thirty miles farther ; so Joseph wrote home to his parents, when he took possession of his collectorship. He had lived for about eight years of his life, quite alone, at this charming place, scarcely seeing a Christian face except twice a year, when the detachment arrived to carry off the revenues which he had collected, to Calcutta.

Luckily, at this time he caught a liver complaint, for the cure of which he returned to Europe, and which was the source of great comfort and amusement to him in his native country. He did not live with his family while in London, but had lodgings of his own, like a gay young bachelor. Before he went to India he was too young to partake of the delightful pleasures of a man about town, and plunged into them, on his return, with considerable assiduity. He drove his horses in the Park ; he dined at the fashionable taverns (for the Oriental Club was not as yet invented) ; he frequented the theatres, as the mode was in those days, or made his appearance at the opera, laboriously attired in tights and a cocked hat.

On returning to India, and ever after, he used to talk of the pleasure of this period of his existence with great enthusiasm, and give you to understand that he and Brummell were the leading bucks of the day. But he was as lonely here as in his jungle at Boggley Wollah. He scarcely knew a single soul in the metropolis : and were it not for

his doctor, and the society of his blue-pill, and his liver complaint, he must have died of loneliness. He was lazy, peevish, and a *bon-vivant*; the appearance of a lady frightened him beyond measure; hence it was but seldom that he joined the paternal circle in Russell Square, where there was plenty of gaiety, and where the jokes of his good-natured old father frightened his *amour-propre*. His bulk caused Joseph much anxious thought and alarm; now and then he would make a desperate attempt to get rid of his superabundant fat; but his indolence and love of good living speedily got the better of these endeavours at reform, and he found himself again at his three meals a day. He never was well dressed; but he took the hugest pains to adorn his big person, and passed many hours daily in that occupation. His valet made a fortune out of his wardrobe: his toilet-table was covered with as many pomatums and essences as ever were employed by an old beauty: he had tried, in order to give himself a waist, every girth, stay, and waistband then invented. Like most fat men, he *would* have his clothes made too tight, and took care they should be of the most brilliant colours and youthful cut. When dressed at length, in the afternoon, he would issue forth to take a drive with nobody in the Park; and then would come back in order to dress again and go and dine with nobody at the Piazza Coffee-house. He was as vain as a girl; and perhaps his extreme shyness was one of the results of his extreme vanity. If Miss Rebecca can get the better of *him*, and at her first entrance into life, she is a young person of no ordinary cleverness.

The first move showed considerable skill. When she called Sedley a very handsome man, she knew that Amelia would tell her mother, who would probably tell Joseph, or who, at any rate, would be pleased by the compliment paid to her son. All mothers are. If you had told Sycorax that her son Caliban was as handsome as Apollo, she would have been pleased, witch as she was. Perhaps, too, Joseph Sedley would overhear the compliment—Rebecca spoke loud enough—and he *did* hear, and (thinking in his heart that he was a very fine man) the praise thrilled through every fibre of his big body, and made it tingle with pleasure. Then, however, came a recoil. ‘Is the girl making fun of me?’ he thought, and straightway he bounced towards

the bell, and was for retreating, as we have seen, when his father's jokes and his mother's entreaties caused him to pause and stay where he was. He conducted the young lady down to dinner in a dubious and agitated frame of mind. 'Does she really think I am handsome?' thought he, 'or is she only making game of me?' We have talked of Joseph Sedley being as vain as a girl. Heaven help us! the girls have only to turn the tables, and say of one of their own sex, 'She is as vain as a man,' and they will have perfect reason. The bearded creatures are quite as eager for praise, quite as finikin over their toilets, quite as proud of their personal advantages, quite as conscious of their powers of fascination, as any coquette in the world.

Downstairs, then, they went, Joseph very red and blushing, Rebecca very modest, and holding her green eyes downwards. She was dressed in white, with bare shoulders as white as snow—the picture of youth, unprotected innocence, and humble virgin simplicity. 'I must be very quiet,' thought Rebecca, 'and very much interested about India.'

Now we have heard how Mrs. Sedley had prepared a fine curry for her son, just as he liked it, and in the course of dinner a portion of this dish was offered to Rebecca. 'What is it?' said she, turning an appealing look to Mr. Joseph.

'Capital,' said he. His mouth was full of it: his face quite red with the delightful exercise of gobbling. 'Mother, it's as good as my own curries in India.'

'Oh, I must try some, if it is an Indian dish,' said Miss Rebecca. 'I am sure everything must be good that comes from there.'

'Give Miss Sharp some curry, my dear,' said Mr. Sedley, laughing.

Rebecca had never tasted the dish before.

'Do you find it as good as everything else from India?' said Mr. Sedley.

'Oh, excellent!' said Rebecca, who was suffering tortures with the cayenne pepper.

'Try a chili with it, Miss Sharp,' said Joseph, really interested.

'A chili,' said Rebecca, gasping. 'Oh, yes!' She thought a chili was something cool, as its name imported, and was served with some. 'How fresh and green they look,' she said, and put one into her mouth. It was hotter

than the curry; flesh and blood could bear it no longer. She laid down her fork. 'Water, for Heaven's sake, water!' she cried. Mr. Sedley burst out laughing (he was a coarse man, from the Stock Exchange, where they love all sorts of practical jokes). 'They are real Indian, I assure you,' said he. 'Sambo, give Miss Sharp some water.'

The paternal laugh was echoed by Joseph, who thought the joke capital. The ladies only smiled a little. They thought poor Rebecca suffered too much. She would have liked to choke old Sedley, but she swallowed her mortification as well as she had the abominable curry before it, and as soon as she could speak, said, with a comical good-humoured air, 'I ought to have remembered the pepper which the Princess of Persia puts in the cream-tarts in the *Arabian Nights*. Do you put cayenne into your cream-tarts in India, sir?'

Old Sedley began to laugh, and thought Rebecca was a good-humoured girl. Joseph simply said, 'Cream-tarts, miss? Our cream is very bad in Bengal. We generally use goats' milk; and, 'gad, do you know, I've got to prefer it?'

'You won't like *everything* from India now, Miss Sharp,' said the old gentleman; but when the ladies had retired after dinner, the wily old fellow said to his son, 'Have a care, Joe; that girl is setting her cap at you.'

'Pooh! nonsense!' said Joe, highly flattered. 'I recollect, sir, there was a girl at Dumdum, a daughter of Cutler of the Artillery, and afterwards married to Lance, the surgeon, who made a dead set at me in the year '4—at me and Mulligatawney, whom I mentioned to you before dinner—a devilish good fellow Mulligatawney—he's a magistrate at Budgebudge, and sure to be in council in five years. Well, sir, the Artillery gave a ball, and Quintin, of the King's 14th, said to me, "Sedley," said he, "I bet you thirteen to ten that Sophy Cutler hooks either you or Mulligatawney before the rains." "Done," says I; and egad, sir—this claret's very good. Adamson's or Carbonell's? —'

A slight snore was the only reply: the honest stock-broker was asleep, and so the rest of Joseph's story was lost for that day. But he was always exceedingly communicative in a man's party, and has told this delightful tale many scores of times to his apothecary, Dr. Gollop,

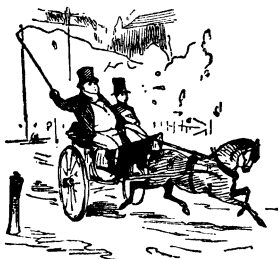
when he came to inquire about the liver and the blue-pill.

Being an invalid, Joseph Sedley contented himself with a bottle of claret, besides his madeira at dinner, and he managed a couple of plates full of strawberries and cream, and twenty-four little rout cakes, that were lying neglected in a plate near him, and certainly (for novelists have the privilege of knowing everything), he thought a great deal about the girl upstairs. 'A nice, gay, merry young creature,' thought he to himself. 'How she looked at me when I picked up her handkerchief at dinner! She dropped it twice. Who's that singing in the drawing-room? 'Gad! shall I go up and see?'

But his modesty came rushing upon him with uncontrollable force. His father was asleep: his hat was in the hall: there was a hackney-coach stand hard by in Southampton Row. 'I'll go and see the *Forty Thieves*,' said he, 'and Miss Decamp's dance; ' and he slipped away gently on the pointed toes of his boots, and disappeared, without waking his worthy parent.

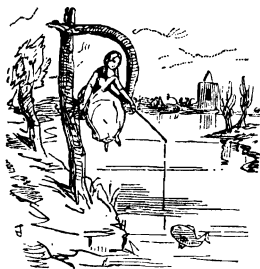
'There goes Joseph,' said Amelia, who was looking from the open windows of the drawing-room, while Rebecca was singing at the piano.

'Miss Sharp has frightened him away,' said Mrs. Sedley. 'Poor Joe, why *will* he be so shy?'



CHAPTER IV

THE GREEN SILK PURSE



FOR Joe's panic lasted for two or three days ; during which he did not visit the house, nor during that period did Miss Rebecca ever mention his name. She was all respectful gratitude to Mrs. Sedley ; delighted beyond measure at the bazaars ; and in a whirl of wonder at the theatre, whither the good-natured lady took her. One day, Amelia had a headache, and could

not go upon some party of pleasure to which the two young people were invited : nothing could induce her friend to go without her. ' What ! you who have shown the poor orphan what happiness and love are for the first time in her life—quit *you* ? never ! ' and the green eyes looked up to Heaven and filled with tears ; and Mrs. Sedley could not but own that her daughter's friend had a charming kind heart of her own.

As for Mr. Sedley's jokes, Rebecca laughed at them with a cordiality and perseverance which not a little pleased and softened that good-natured gentleman. Nor was it with the chiefs of the family alone that Miss Sharp found favour. She interested Mrs. Blenkinsop by evincing the deepest sympathy in the raspberry-jam preserving, which operation was then going on in the housekeeper's room ; she persisted in calling Sambo ' Sir ', and ' Mr. Sambo ', to the delight of that attendant ; and she apologized to the lady's maid for giving her trouble in venturing to ring the bell, with such sweetness and humility that the Servants' Hall was almost as charmed with her as the Drawing-room.

Once, in looking over some drawings which Amelia had sent from school, Rebecca suddenly came upon one which caused her to burst into tears and leave the room. It was on the day when Joe Sedley made his second appearance.

Amelia hastened after her friend to know the cause of this display of feeling, and the good-natured girl came back

without her companion, rather affected too. 'You know, her father was our drawing-master, mamma, at Chiswick, and used to do all the best parts of our drawings.'

'My love! I'm sure I always heard Miss Pinkerton say that he did not touch them—he only *mounted* them.'

'It was called mounting, mamma. Rebecca remembers the drawing, and her father working at it, and the thought of it came upon her rather suddenly—and so, you know, she——'

'The poor child is all heart,' said Mrs. Sedley.

'I wish she could stay with us another week,' said Amelia.

'She's devilish like Miss Cutler that I used to meet at Dumdum, only fairer. She's married now to Lance, the Artillery surgeon. Do you know, ma'am, that once Quintin, of the 14th, bet me——'

'Oh, Joseph, we know that story,' said Amelia, laughing. 'Never mind about telling that; but persuade mamma to write to Sir Something Crawley, for leave of absence for poor dear Rebecca:—here she comes, her eyes red with weeping.'

'I'm better now,' said the girl, with the sweetest smile possible, taking good-natured Mrs. Sedley's extended hand and kissing it respectfully. 'How kind you all are to me! All,' she added with a laugh, 'except you, Mr. Joseph.'

'Me!' said Joseph, meditating an instant departure. 'Gracious Heavens! Good Gad! Miss Sharp!'

'Yes; how could you be so cruel as to make me eat that horrid pepper dish at dinner, the first day I ever saw you? You are not so good to me as dear Amelia.'

'He doesn't know you so well,' cried Amelia.

'I defy anybody not to be good to you, my dear,' said her mother.

'The curry was capital; indeed it was,' said Joe, quite gravely. 'Perhaps there was *not* enough citron juice in it;—no, there was *not*.'

'And the chilis?'

'By Jove, how they made you cry out!' said Joe, caught by the ridicule of the circumstance, and exploding in a fit of laughter which ended quite suddenly, as usual.

'I shall take care how I let *you* choose for me another time,' said Rebecca, as they went down again to dinner. 'I didn't think men were fond of putting poor harmless girls to pain.'

‘By Gad, Miss Rebecca, I wouldn’t hurt you for the world.’

‘No,’ said she, ‘I *know* you wouldn’t;’ and then she gave him ever so gentle a pressure with her little hand, and drew it back quite frightened, and looked first for one instant in his face, and then down at the carpet-rods; and I am not prepared to say that Joe’s heart did not thump at this little involuntary, timid, gentle motion of regard on the part of the simple girl.

It was an advance, and as such, perhaps, some ladies of indisputable correctness and gentility will condemn the action as immodest; but, you see, poor dear Rebecca had all this work to do for herself. If a person is too poor to keep a servant, though ever so elegant, he must sweep his own rooms: if a dear girl has no dear mamma to settle matters with the young man, she must do it for herself. And oh, what a mercy it is that these women do not exercise their powers oftener! We can’t resist them, if they do. Let them show ever so little inclination, and men go down on their knees at once: old or ugly, it is all the same. And this I set down as a positive truth. A woman with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry WHOM SHE LIKES. Only let us be thankful that the darlings are like the beasts of the field, and don’t know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did.

‘Egad!’ thought Joseph, entering the dining-room, ‘I exactly begin to feel as I did at Dumdum with Miss Cutler.’ Many sweet little appeals, half tender, half jocular, did Miss Sharp make to him about the dishes at dinner; for by this time she was on a footing of considerable familiarity with the family, and as for the girls, they loved each other like sisters. Young unmarried girls always do, if they are in a house together for ten days.

As if bent upon advancing Rebecca’s plans in every way—what must Amelia do, but remind her brother of a promise made last Easter holidays. ‘When I was a girl at school,’ said she, laughing—a promise that he, Joseph, would take her to Vauxhall. ‘Now,’ she said, ‘that Rebecca is with us, will be the very time.’

‘Oh, delightful!’ said Rebecca, going to clap her hands; but she recollected herself, and paused, like a modest creature as she was.

‘To-night is not the night,’ said Joe.

‘Well, to-morrow.’

‘To-morrow your papa and I dine out,’ said Mrs. Sedley.

‘You don’t suppose that I’m going, Mrs. Sed.?’ said her husband, ‘and that a woman of your years and size is to catch cold, in such an abominable damp place?’

‘The children must have some one with them,’ cried Mrs. Sedley.

‘Let Joe go,’ said his father, laughing. ‘He’s *big* enough.’ At which speech even Mr. Sambo at the side-board burst out laughing, and poor fat Joe felt inclined to become a parricide almost.

‘Undo his stays!’ continued the pitiless old gentleman. ‘Fling some water in his face, Miss Sharp, or carry him upstairs: the dear creature’s fainting. Poor victim! carry him up; he’s as light as a feather!’

‘If he stand this, sir, I’m d——!’ roared Joseph.

‘Order Mr. Jos’s elephant, Sambo!’ cried the father. ‘Send to Exeter ’Change, Sambo;’ but seeing Jos ready almost to cry with vexation, the old joker stopped his laughter, and said, holding out his hand to his son, ‘It’s all fair on the Stock Exchange, Jos,—and, Sambo, never mind the elephant, but give me and Mr. Jos a glass of champagne. Boney himself hasn’t got such in his cellar, my boy!’

A goblet of champagne restored Joseph’s equanimity, and before the bottle was emptied, of which as an invalid he took two-thirds, he had agreed to take the young ladies to Vauxhall.

‘The girls must have a gentleman apiece,’ said the old gentleman. ‘Jos will be sure to leave Emmy in the crowd, he will be so taken up with Miss Sharp here. Send to 96, and ask George Osborne if he’ll come.’

At this, I don’t know in the least for what reason, Mrs. Sedley looked at her husband and laughed. Mr. Sedley’s eyes twinkled in a manner indescribably roguish, and he looked at Amelia; and Amelia, hanging down her head, blushed as only young ladies of seventeen know how to blush, and as Miss Rebecca Sharp never blushed in her life—at least not since she was eight years old, and when she was caught stealing jam out of a cupboard by her god-mother. ‘Amelia had better write a note,’ said her father; ‘and let George Osborne see what a beautiful handwriting we have brought back from Miss Pinkerton’s. Do you

remember when you wrote to him to come on Twelfth Night, Emmy, and spelt twelfth without the f ?’

‘That was years ago,’ said Amelia.

‘It seems like yesterday, don’t it, John ?’ said Mrs. Sedley to her husband ; and that night in a conversation which took place in a front room in the second floor, in a sort of tent, hung round with chintz of a rich and fantastic India pattern, and *doublé* with calico of a tender rose-colour ; in the interior of which species of marquee was a feather-bed, on which were two pillows, on which were two round red faces, one in a laced nightcap, and one in a simple cotton one, ending in a tassel :—in a *curtain lecture*, I say, Mrs. Sedley took her husband to task for his cruel conduct to poor Joe.

‘It was quite wicked of you, Mr. Sedley,’ said she, ‘to torment the poor boy so.’

‘My dear,’ said the cotton-tassel in defence of his conduct, ‘Jos is a great deal vainer than you ever were in your life, and that’s saying a good deal. Though, some thirty years ago, in the year seventeen hundred and eighty—what was it?—perhaps you had a right to be vain.—I don’t say no. But I’ve no patience with Jos and his dandified modesty. It is out-Josephing Joseph, my dear, and all the while the boy is only thinking of himself, and what a fine fellow he is. I doubt, ma’am, we shall have some trouble with him yet. Here is Emmy’s little friend making love to him as hard as she can ; that’s quite clear ; and if she does not catch him some other will. That man is destined to be a prey to woman, as I am to go on ‘Change every day. It’s a mercy he did not bring us over a black daughter-in-law, my dear. But, mark my words, the first woman who fishes for him, hooks him.’

‘She shall go off to-morrow, the little artful creature,’ said Mrs. Sedley, with great energy.

‘Why not she as well as another, Mrs. Sedley ? The girl’s a white face at any rate. I don’t care who marries him. Let Joe please himself.’

And presently the voices of the two speakers were hushed, or were replaced by the gentle but unromantic music of the nose ; and save when the church bells tolled the hour and the watchman called it, all was silent at the house of John Sedley, Esquire, of Russell Square, and the Stock Exchange.

When morning came, the good-natured Mrs. Sedley no longer thought of executing her threats with regard to Miss Sharp ; for though nothing is more keen, nor more common, nor more justifiable, than maternal jealousy, yet she could not bring herself to suppose that the little, humble, grateful, gentle governess, would dare to look up to such a magnificent personage as the collector of Boggley Wollah. The petition, too, for an extension of the young lady's leave of absence had already been dispatched, and it would be difficult to find a pretext for abruptly dismissing her.

And as if all things conspired in favour of the gentle Rebecca, the very elements (although she was not inclined at first to acknowledge their action in her behalf) interposed to aid her. For on the evening appointed for the Vauxhall party, George Osborne having come to dinner, and the elders of the house having departed, according to invitation, to dine with Alderman Balls, at Highbury Barn, there came on such a thunder-storm as only happens on Vauxhall nights, and as obliged the young people, perforce, to remain at home. Mr. Osborne did not seem in the least disappointed at this occurrence. He and Joseph Sedley drank a fitting quantity of port wine, *tête à tête*, in the dining-room,—during the drinking of which Sedley told a number of his best Indian stories ; for he was extremely talkative in man's society ;—and afterwards Miss Amelia Sedley did the honours of the drawing-room ; and these four young persons passed such a comfortable evening together, that they declared they were rather glad of the thunder-storm than otherwise, which had caused them to put off their visit to Vauxhall.

Osborne was Sedley's godson, and had been one of the family any time these three-and-twenty years. At six weeks old, he had received from John Sedley a present of a silver cup ; at six months old, a coral with gold whistle and bells ; from his youth, upwards, he was 'tipped' regularly by the old gentleman at Christmas : and on going back to school, he remembered perfectly well being thrashed by Joseph Sedley, when the latter was a big, swaggering hobbledehoy, and George an impudent urchin of ten years old. In a word, George was as familiar with the family as such daily acts of kindness and intercourse could make him.

‘Do you remember, Sedley, what a fury you were in, when I cut off the tassels of your Hessian boots, and how Miss—hem!—how Amelia rescued me from a beating, by falling down on her knees and crying out to her brother Jos, not to beat little George?’

Jos remembered this remarkable circumstance perfectly well, but vowed that he had totally forgotten it.

‘Well, do you remember coming down in a gig to Dr. Swishtail’s to see me, before you went to India, and giving me half a guinea and a pat on the head? I always had an idea that you were at least seven feet high, and was quite astonished at your return from India to find you no taller than myself.’

‘How good of Mr. Sedley to go to your school and give you the money!’ exclaimed Rebecca, in accents of extreme delight.

‘Yes, and after I had cut the tassels of his boots too. Boys never forget those tips at school, nor the givers.’

‘I delight in Hessian boots,’ said Rebecca. Jos Sedley who admired his own legs prodigiously, and always wore his ornamental *chaussure*, was extremely pleased at this remark, though he drew his legs under his chair as it was made.

‘Miss Sharp,’ said George Osborne, ‘you who are so clever an artist, you must make a grand historical picture of the scene of the boots. Sedley shall be represented in buckskins, and holding one of the injured boots in one hand; by the other he shall have hold of my shirt-frill. Amelia shall be kneeling near him, with her little hands up; and the picture shall have a grand allegorical title, as the frontispieces have in the *Medulla* and the spelling-book.’

‘I shan’t have time to do it here,’ said Rebecca. ‘I’ll do it when—when I’m gone.’ And she dropped her voice, and looked so sad and piteous, that everybody felt how cruel her lot was, and how sorry they would be to part with her.

‘Oh, that you could stay longer, dear Rebecca,’ said Amelia.

‘Why?’ answered the other, still more sadly. ‘That I may be only the more unhap—unwilling to lose you?’ And she turned away her head. Amelia began to give way to that natural infirmity of tears which, we have said,

was one of the defects of this silly little thing. George Osborne looked at the two young women with a touched curiosity ; and Joseph Sedley heaved something very like a sigh out of his big chest, as he cast his eyes down towards his favourite Hessian boots.

‘ Let us have some music, Miss Sedley—Amelia,’ said George, who felt at that moment an extraordinary, almost irresistible impulse to seize the above-mentioned young woman in his arms, and to kiss her in the face of the company ; and she looked at him for a moment, and if I should say that they fell in love with each other at that single instant of time, I should perhaps be telling an untruth, for the fact is, that these two young people had been bred up by their parents for this very purpose, and their banns had, as it were, been read in their respective families any time these ten years. They went off to the piano, which was situated, as pianos usually are, in the back drawing-room ; and as it was rather dark, Miss Amelia, in the most unaffected way in the world, put her hand into Mr. Osborne’s, who, of course, could see the way among the chairs and ottomans a great deal better than she could. But this arrangement left Mr. Joseph Sedley *tête à tête* with Rebecca, at the drawing-room table, where the latter was occupied in netting a green silk purse.

‘ There is no need to ask family secrets,’ said Miss Sharp. ‘ Those two have told theirs.’

‘ As soon as he gets his company,’ said Joseph, ‘ I believe the affair is settled. George Osborne is a capital fellow.’

‘ And your sister the dearest creature in the world,’ said Rebecca. ‘ Happy the man who wins her !’ With this, Miss Sharp gave a great sigh.

When two unmarried persons get together, and talk upon such delicate subjects as the present, a great deal of confidence and intimacy is presently established between them. There is no need of giving a special report of the conversation which now took place between Mr. Sedley and the young lady ; for the conversation, as may be judged from the foregoing specimen, was not especially witty or eloquent ; it seldom is in private societies, or anywhere except in very high-flown and ingenious novels. As there was music in the next room, the talk was carried on, of course, in a low and becoming tone, though, for the matter of that, the couple in the next apartment would not have

been disturbed had the talking been ever so loud, so occupied were they with their own pursuits.

Almost for the first time in his life, Mr. Sedley found himself talking, without the least timidity or hesitation, to a person of the other sex. Miss Rebecca asked him a great number of questions about India, which gave him an opportunity of narrating many interesting anecdotes about that country and himself. He described the balls at Government House, and the manner in which they kept themselves cool in the hot weather, with punkahs, tatties, and other contrivances; and he was very witty regarding the number of Scotchmen whom Lord Minto, the Governor-General, patronized; and then he described a tiger-hunt; and the manner in which the mahout of his elephant had been pulled off his seat by one of the infuriated animals. How delighted Miss Rebecca was at the Government balls, and how she laughed at the stories of the Scotch aides de camp, and called Mr. Sedley a sad wicked satirical creature; and how frightened she was at the story of the elephant! 'For your mother's sake, dear Mr. Sedley,' she said, 'for the sake of all your friends, promise *never* to go on one of those horrid expeditions.'

'Pooh, pooh, Miss Sharp,' said he, pulling up his shirt-collars; 'the danger makes the sport only the pleasanter.' He had never been but once at a tiger-hunt, when the accident in question occurred, and when he was half killed—not by the tiger, but by the fright. And as he talked on, he grew quite bold, and actually had the audacity to ask Miss Rebecca for whom she was knitting the green silk purse? He was quite surprised and delighted at his own graceful familiar manner.

'For any one who wants a purse,' replied Miss Rebecca, looking at him in the most gentle winning way. Sedley was going to make one of the most eloquent speeches possible, and had begun, 'Oh, Miss Sharp, how——' when some song which was performed in the other room came to an end, and caused him to hear his own voice so distinctly that he stopped, blushed, and blew his nose in great agitation.

'Did you ever hear anything like your brother's eloquence?' whispered Mr. Osborne to Amelia. 'Why, your friend has worked miracles.'

'The more the better,' said Miss Amelia; who, like

almost all women who are worth a pin, was a matchmaker in her heart, and would have been delighted that Joseph should carry back a wife to India. She had, too, in the course of this few days' constant intercourse, warmed into a most tender friendship for Rebecca, and discovered a million of virtues and amiable qualities in her which she had not perceived when they were at Chiswick together. For the affection of young ladies is of as rapid growth as Jack's beanstalk, and reaches up to the sky in a night. It is no blame to them that after marriage this *Sehnsucht nach der Liebe* subsides. It is what sentimentalists, who deal in *very* big words, call a yearning after the Ideal, and simply means that women are commonly not satisfied until they have husbands and children on whom they may centre affections, which are spent elsewhere, as it were, in small change.

Having expended her little store of songs, or having stayed long enough in the back drawing-room, it now appeared proper to Miss Amelia to ask her friend to sing. 'You would not have listened to me,' she said to Mr. Osborne (though she knew she was telling a fib), 'had you heard Rebecca first.'

'I give Miss Sharp warning, though,' said Osborne, 'that, right or wrong, I consider Miss Amelia Sedley the first singer in the world.'

'You shall hear,' said Amelia; and Joseph Sedley was actually polite enough to carry the candles to the piano. Osborne hinted that he should like quite as well to sit in the dark; but Miss Sedley, laughing, declined to bear him company any farther, and the two accordingly followed Mr. Joseph. Rebecca sang far better than her friend (though of course Osborne was free to keep his opinion), and exerted herself to the utmost, and, indeed, to the wonder of Amelia, who had never known her perform so well. She sang a French song, which Joseph did not understand in the least, and which George confessed he did not understand, and then a number of those simple ballads which were the fashion forty years ago, and in which British tars, our King, poor Susan, blue-eyed Mary, and the like, were the principal themes. They are not, it is said, very brilliant, in a musical point of view, but contain numberless good-natured, simple appeals to the affections, which people understood better than the milk-and-water

lagrime, sospiri, and *felicità* of the eternal Donizettian music with which we are favoured nowadays.

Among these ditties was one, the last of the concert, and to the following effect :—

Ah, bleak and barren was the moor !
 Ah, loud and piercing was the storm !
 The cottage roof was shelter'd sure,
 The cottage hearth was bright and warm—
 An orphan boy the lattice pass'd,
 And, as he mark'd its cheerful glow,
 Felt doubly keen the midnight blast,
 And doubly cold the fallen snow.

They mark'd him as he onward pressed,
 With fainting heart and weary limb ;
 Kind voices bade him turn and rest,
 And gentle faces welcomed him.
 The dawn is up—the guest is gone,
 The cottage hearth is blazing still ;
 Heaven pity all poor wanderers lone !
 Hark to the wind upon the hill !

It was the sentiment of the before-mentioned words, 'When I'm gone,' over again. As she came to the last words, Miss Sharp's 'deep-toned voice faltered'. Everybody felt the allusion to her departure, and to her hapless orphan state. Joseph Sedley, who was fond of music, and soft-hearted, was in a state of ravishment during the performance of the song, and profoundly touched at its conclusion. If he had had the courage ; if George and Miss Sedley had remained, according to the former's proposal, in the farther room ; Joseph Sedley's bachelorhood would have been at an end, and this work would never have been written. But at the close of the ditty, Rebecca quitted the piano, and giving her hand to Amelia, walked away into the front drawing-room twilight ; and, at this moment, Mr. Sambo made his appearance with a tray, containing sandwiches, jellies, and some glittering glasses and decanters, on which Joseph Sedley's attention was immediately fixed. When the parents of the house of Sedley returned from their dinner-party, they found the young people so busy in talking, that they had not heard the arrival of the carriage, and Mr. Joseph was in the act of saying, 'My dear Miss Sharp, one little teaspoonful of

jelly to recruit you after your immense—your—your *delightful* exertions.'

'Bravo, Jos!' said Mr. Sedley; on hearing the bantering of which well-known voice, Jos instantly relapsed into an alarmed silence, and quickly took his departure. He did not lie awake all night thinking whether or not he was in love with Miss Sharp; the passion of love never interfered with the appetite or the slumber of Mr. Joseph Sedley; but he thought to himself how delightful it would be to hear such songs as those after Cutcherry—what a *distinguée* girl she was—how she could speak French better than the Governor-General's lady herself—and what a sensation she would make at the Calcutta balls. 'It's evident the poor devil's in love with me,' thought he. 'She is just as rich as most of the girls who come out to India. I might go farther and fare worse, egad!' And in these meditations he fell asleep.

How Miss Sharp lay awake, thinking, will he come or not to-morrow? need not be told here. To-morrow came, and, as sure as fate, Mr. Joseph Sedley made his appearance before luncheon. He had never been known before to confer such an honour on Russell Square. George Osborne was somehow there already (sadly 'putting out' Amelia, who was writing to her twelve dearest friends at Chiswick Mall), and Rebecca was employed upon her yesterday's work. As Joe's buggy drove up, and while, after his usual thundering knock and pompous bustle at the door, the ex-collector of Boggley Wollah laboured upstairs to the drawing-room, knowing glances were telegraphed between Osborne and Miss Sedley, and the pair, smiling archly, looked at Rebecca, who actually blushed as she bent her fair ringlets over her netting. How her heart beat as Joseph appeared,—Joseph, puffing from the staircase in shining creaking boots,—Joseph, in a new waistcoat, red with heat and nervousness, and blushing behind his wadded neckcloth. It was a nervous moment for all; and as for Amelia, I think she was more frightened than even the people most concerned.

Sambo, who flung open the door and announced Mr. Joseph, followed grinning, in the collector's rear, and bearing two handsome nosegays of flowers, which the monster had actually had the gallantry to purchase in Covent Garden market that morning—they were not as

big as the haystacks which ladies carry about with them nowadays, in cones of filigree paper; but the young women were delighted with the gift, as Joseph presented one to each, with an exceedingly solemn bow.

‘Bravo, Jos,’ cried Osborne.

‘Thank you, dear Joseph,’ said Amelia, quite ready to kiss her brother, if he were so minded. (And I think for a kiss from such a dear creature as Amelia, I would purchase all Mr. Lee’s conservatories out of hand.)

‘O heavenly, heavenly flowers!’ exclaimed Miss Sharp, and smelt them delicately, and held them to her bosom, and cast up her eyes to the ceiling, in an ecstasy of admiration. Perhaps she just looked first into the bouquet, to see whether there was a *billet-doux* hidden among the flowers; but there was no letter.

‘Do they talk the language of flowers at Boggley Wollah, Sedley?’ asked Osborne, laughing.

‘Pooh, nonsense!’ replied the sentimental youth. ‘Bought ’em at Nathan’s; very glad you like ’em; and eh, Amelia, my dear, I bought a pineapple at the same time, which I gave to Sambo. Let’s have it for tiffin; very cool and nice this hot weather.’ Rebecca said she had never tasted a pine, and longed beyond everything to taste one.

So the conversation went on. I don’t know on what pretext Osborne left the room, or why, presently, Amelia went away, perhaps to superintend the slicing of the pineapple; but Jos was left alone with Rebecca, who had resumed her work, and the green silk and the shining needles were quivering rapidly under her white slender fingers.

‘What a beautiful, *byoo-ootiful* song that was you sang last night, dear Miss Sharp,’ said the collector. ‘It made me cry almost; ’pon my honour it did.’

‘Because you have a kind heart, Mr. Joseph; all the Sedleys have, I think.’

‘It kept me awake last night, and I was trying to hum it this morning in bed; I was, upon my honour. Gollop, my doctor, came in at eleven (for I’m a sad invalid, you know, and see Gollop every day), and, ’gad! there I was, singing away like—a robin.’

‘Oh, you droll creature! Do let me hear you sing it.’

‘Me? No, you, Miss Sharp; my dear Miss Sharp, do sing it.’



MR. JOSEPH ENTANGLED

