

THE EARLY WORKS OF
WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

A Consideration of Thackeray
As a Critic of Contemporary Life at Home and Abroad
A Study of His Criticism and of His Literary Art
As Shown in
His Works Before Vanity Fair.

Frank Willis Plunkett

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Preface.

This thesis has been written as a partial fulfillment of requirements for the M. A. degree at The Rice Institute. In its preparation, I have received encouragement from friends in the student body; and from the officers of The Institute. I wish to acknowledge excellent advice given by the Librarian, Miss Alice Crowell Dean; and the helpfulness of the Library Staff, to whom I am most grateful for many courtesies.

I owe most to Dr. DeWitt Talmage Starnes, Professor Alan Dugald McKillop, and Professor Stockton Axson. Professor McKillop suggested the subject of this thesis. His encouragement and advice inspired me to undertake the task; and his constructive criticisms helped me to complete it. Professor Axson's rare ability in interpreting literature as a criticism of life made his lectures invaluable in the preparation of this thesis.

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Introduction.

Comparatively little attention has been paid to the early works of William Makepeace Thackeray; to his essays, criticisms, and stories written before the appearance of Vanity Fair. Nevertheless, there is here a wealth of material that no serious student of nineteenth century prose can afford to neglect, for in this early work, the later Thackeray is clearly foreshadowed. It is my purpose, therefore, to consider Thackeray as a critic of contemporary life at home and abroad: to make a study of his criticism and of his literary art as shown in his works before Vanity Fair.

Before, however, entering upon this rather serious study, it is first necessary to consider some general propositions concerning Thackeray's work. His method is that of a critic, not a reformer. He observes keenly the life of his own time and points out the shortcomings of its systems, and its people. His criticisms are usually as cool as those of Addison and Steele; lacking in the bitterness of Swift or the earnestness of Dickens. It is true that some of his criticisms are so keen and so often reiterated that they come finally to have a certain reformatory value. For example, he so often ridi-

cules gambling and an undue striving after social position that he finally emphasizes the wickedness of the one, the foolishness of the other, and the inexpediency of both. Yet in but few essays or stories does he zealously insist on his own views about any problems.

Thackeray does not consciously lay down any broad general principles of behavior. He points out in detail the failures of institutions and laws; and he satirizes the small offenses of society. No offense is too trifling for his comment; even the mispronunciation of a proper name is ridiculed.* Nevertheless, his writing is permeated with a love of truth and a hatred of pretence and sham. Brownell says that this love of truth "absorbed his mind and inspired his activity."² Nowhere is he more in earnest than when he is making war on humbugs.

In The Second Funeral of Napoleon Thackeray's discussion of humbug is bitter. In the opening pages he explains that History is made up of humbug and humbugs; that "History

* Book of Snobs, Chapter XLII. "Laura and Mrs. Chuff (he said Laurar.....)..... "

² Victorian Prose Masters, page 17.

is written on fig leaves" which cover the vices of the characters portrayed; that men are humbugs and "humbug they will have. Humbugs themselves, they will respect numbugs. Their daily victuals of life must be seasoned with humbug. Certain things are there in the world that they will not allow to be called by their right names, and will insist upon our admiring, whether we will or no. Woe be to the man who would enter too far into the recesses of that magnificent temple where our goddess is enshrined, peep through the vast embroidered curtains indiscreetly, penetrate the secret of secrets, and expose the Gammon of Gammons! And as you must not peer too curiously within, so neither must you remain scornfully without. Humbug-worshippers, let us come into our great temple regularly and decently; take our seats, and settle our clothes decently; open our books, and go through the service with decent gravity....."* This passage is surely in the style of Dean Swift; but nowhere else does Thackeray indulge in such invective. Nevertheless, everything that he wrote is more or less colored by this hatred of humbug; without this love of the true and truthful there could be no Thackeray.

* The Second Funeral of Napoleon. Chapter I.

The thesis which follows is divided into two major parts:

- I. Thackeray's criticism of contemporary life:
 - A. In England;
 - B. Abroad;
- II. Thackeray's literary art:
 - A. Thackeray's relations with his public;
 - B. His methods of criticism.

The two parts may sometimes overlap in thought and citations; but each has its own distinct purpose.

PART I.

THACKERAY'S CRITICISM OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE.

A. ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

PUBLIC PROBLEMS.

Thackeray is interested in the life of his day, both at home and abroad, but it is contemporary life in England that engages the greater part of his attention. Though he was not in any sense a practical politician,* yet he was alive to the public problems of his day. While his criticisms are not always constructive, they are always bold.

In his discussions of political institutions and conditions he is democratic but not revolutionary. He has the Englishman's respect for what is, though he is capable of seeing in it the false, the absurd, and the ridiculous. He is not afraid of touching the highest political institutions and the most difficult national problems: royalty, the nobility and the House of Lords, the army, and international relations.

* Thackeray, by Trollope, page 49.

Kings and their characters are the primary considerations of only three articles;* yet many English monarchs and their families as well as several French kings are commented on incidentally. Thackeray's attitude towards the sovereign is much like the typical American attitude towards the President. He is merely a man holding an important public office; to be praised or censured according to his character and his deeds. The only difficulty is that good kings are rare. "We have had just fifty since Alfred's time and he the only great one."*2

In his praise of Alfred, Thackeray is almost extravagant.*2 For Richard I., although "he knows it is wrong, he cannot help having a sneaky regard."*3 Edward I. was "gallant";*4 the wife of Edward III., Queen Philippa, was "kind-hearted" and "brave."*5

* Skimmings from "The Dairy of George IV.," in the Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush; Miss Tickletoby's Lectures on English History; and The Georges. The Second Funeral of Napoleon is not primarily a comment on the character of the Emperor.

*2 Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture II.

*3 Ibid., Lecture VII.

*4 Ibid., Lecture VIII.

*5 Ibid., Lecture X.

It is for Victoria's Prince Consort that Thackeray reserves a touch of affectionate admiration. "We have among us, thank Heaven! a Field Marshal whose oaton has been waved over fields of triumph the least sanguinary that ever the world has known."*

Generally, the tone of the comments on royalty is either flippant or condemnatory. Of this, The Georges is the best long example. Here are pointed out George I.'s "preference for every kind of corruption;" the falseness, avarice and cruelty of George II.; the incompetency and insanity of George III., and the falseness and ignorance of George IV. In The Irish Sketch Book he ridicules a statue of George II. "for whom no breathing soul cares a halfpenny."*² George IV. is his pet aversion among the sovereigns. His pretensions to being the first gentleman in Europe arouse Thackeray's ire. "It's a wonder to think what is the gentle folk's opinion of a gentleman, when they gave Georgius such a title."*³ Charles Yellowplush compares his own gentlemanly qualities to those of George IV.;*⁴ and Thackeray feels the "proper degree of reverence

* Snob and Proser Papers: On the Snob Civilian.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter I.

*³ The Book of Snobs, Chapter II.

*⁴ Fashionable Fax and Polite Annygoats.

for the elegant costume and "sham smile" of the King.*

Nor is sham and wickedness confined to recent monarchs. Canute committed "sins, robberies, and murders;"* Edward the Confessor was "silly;"* William I. looked after his own interests.* About the death of William II., "nobody cares."*² Henry II. was unfaithful to his wife;*³ than King John, "a greater rascal never lived;*⁴ and Edward II. was idle.*⁵ Henry VIII. was a ruffian.*⁶ James I. was a "wretch"*⁶ and "appears to have not one of the good qualities of a man.*⁷ Charles II. was a "rogue"*⁷ and did no good.*⁸

In all his statements about royalty, Thackeray is only interpreting history. He has no reform to propose concerning any problem connected with the royalty. In fact, for him there is

* Men and Coats.

*² Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IV.

*³ Ibid., Lecture V.

*⁴ Ibid., Lecture VI.

*⁵ Ibid., Lecture VIII.

*⁶ Ibid., Lecture IX.

*⁷ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIII.

*⁸ Ibid., Chapter II.

*⁹ Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture II.

no problem. He admires the good and condemns the evil in the characters of those who have sat on the throne; and leaves the suggestion that as spokesman for the British nation he hopes the characters of those who succeed may be worthy of the great office they hold.

Thackeray's attitude towards aristocracy and gentility is decidedly honest. The man who questions the worth of an honorable pedigree or gentle blood, he says, is a dullard. Nevertheless, he realizes there is "something better than gentility in this wicked world."* He even wishes that titles had not been invented because society would be much more honest, instead of always trying to imitate the nobility.*²

Thackeray really believes that the nobles are largely degenerates. In this degeneracy, they are encouraged by the snobs who purchase their foolish poems, pardon their dishonesty at cards, and respect them though they may be asses.*³ Mr. Yellowplush, typical of the vulgar snob, illustrated this when he says of gambling: "For a real thoroughbred gentlemen it's the

* The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter III.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XII..

*³ Ibid., Chapter V.

easiest, and most profitable line he can take."* The general tone of Thackeray's opinion of the nobles may be gathered from his portraits of lords and ladies. Aside from a few really noble and kind aristocrats, such as Lord and Lady Tiptoff in The Great Hoggarty Diamond, most of his characters drawn from high life are either avaricious, stupid, haughty, or vulgar and rude. The avaricious old aristocrat, Stiffneck, sells his beloved daughter, Blanche Stiffneck, to young Pump and Aldgate for a hundred thousand pounds to pay off his mortgages;*² the Earl of Crabs is always ready to change his politics as it may advantage him financially.* The stupidity of the little cigarrified Cornet of dragoons, Lord Gules, who can hardly write his name;*³ and of the ninny, Lord Cinqbars, is conspicuous.*⁴ The haughtiness of the aristocracy is suggested in their "killing civility" to artists.*⁵ Vulgarinity in high life is illustrated in The

* The Amours of Mr. Deuceace in The Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter VIII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXX.

*⁴ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter VIII.

*⁵ The Ravenswing, Chapter IV.

Diary Illustrative of the Time of George IV.; and rudeness and ruffianism, in the behavior of the young nobles present at a public execution.*

Holding such opinions of the nobility, it is no wonder that Thackeray sneers at the hereditary succession in the House of Lords. "Your merits are so great," says the nation, "that your children shall be allowed to reign over us. It does not in the least matter that your eldest son be a fool."*²

In his discussion of the army, Thackeray approaches the tone of a reformer. His three main propositions are that officers should be mature men chosen solely for their military ability; that privates should not be neglected and abused; and that corporal punishment should be abolished. Thackeray condemns the practice of setting up a "little creature (who was flogged only last week because he could not spell) to command great whiskered warriors."*³ He ironically remarks that the army is safe under the supervision of such brilliant young

* Going to See a Man Hanged, in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter III.

*³ Ibid., Chapter IX.

gentlemen as Captain Famish;* and that it is a "comfort to think" that the "little creature" "five feet high, if an inch, an ensign, and sixteen," "would be at hand in case of danger to give help."*² Ensign Snooke (who is too young and weak to carry his flag) with his little sword and feeble huzza is merely contemptible.*³

The abuse and neglect of privates is even more glaring than the youth and incompetency of the officers. Corporal Smith has no chance to have his gallantry rewarded;*⁴ on the contrary, if the common soldiers "are heroes, heroes they may be, but they remain privates still."*³ The most servile obedience is demanded;* and the pay is only a shilling a day,*⁵ and no chance for old age, but Chelsea Hospital.* But all these hardships are nothing compared to the system of flogging in vogue in the early nineteenth century. Barry Lyndon in his Memoirs is indignant at the flogging inflicted in the "Prussian" army. "I have seen a little ensign of fifteen call out a man of

* On The Snob Civilian, in The Snob and Proser Papers.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXI.

*³ Waterloo, in Little Travels and Roadside Sketches.

*⁴ The Book of Snobs, Chapter IX.

*⁵ A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter II.

fifty from the ranks, and he has stood....howling like a baby, while the young wretch lashed him."* It is in The Snob Civilian, however, that Thackeray tells most forcefully what he thinks of floggings in the army. To lash fellow creatures like hounds is indecent, degrading, and inhumane. "As the farriers whirled the Cat over that poor wretched fellow not only men but officers turned sick and fainted at the horrible spectacle." And the chapter ends with a powerful appeal to Prince Albert to put a stop to the floggings.

In his idea of what international relations ought to be, Thackeray anticipates many of the fundamental ideas of the League of Nations. War, as a means of settling international difficulties, he shows to be morally wrong, ineffectual, and full of horrors. The glow of national pride which often leads to war is "an unchristian feeling... There ought to be peace and good will amongst men."*² Glory belongs to God. The absurd feeling of national superiority is wicked, "and murder again is the consequence."*³ International robbery cannot be excused. Edward III.'s conquests in France were

* The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., Chapter VI.

*² Waterloo, in Little Travels and Roadside Sketches.

*³ On Men and Pictures.

robbery;* King Frederic killed hundreds of thousands to get Silesia.*² The injustice of England's conquest of Gioraltar is shown by imagining the feelings of the English were the Spaniards established at Land's End.*³

The futility of war is evident, because "you can't satisfy both parties with it."⁴ "The conqueror is thus filled with national pride, and the conquered with national hatred and a desire to do better next time."*⁵

To the argument of the futility of war is added the argument of its horrors. The burning of towns* is one of the "items of human crime, misery, and slavery that go to form that sum-total of glory!"*⁶ Moreover, there is no romance in war;*⁶ and in the end, it is always the poor subjects who suffer and pay for the wars.*⁷

* Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture X.

*² The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., Chapter VI.

*³ A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter IV.

*⁴ Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IV.

*⁵ On Men and Pictures.

*⁶ The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., Chapter IV.

*⁷ Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture VII.

Thackeray's discussions of royalty, the nobility, and the army have only an historical interest, for indecency on the throne is no longer tolerated; the nobility has now no real power; and the floggings in the army are abolished. But the world's slow progress in improving international relations, makes what he says on that topic as important today as when he wrote.

The principal public social problem that Thackeray discusses is the methods of dealing with criminals. Here, as in his treatment of war, he is far ahead of his age. To be sure, he does not show any profound knowledge of sociology or criminology; but always he takes an enlightened stand.

He has no delusion concerning the evil nature of many criminals. "Keep your sympathy," he says, "for those who deserve it; don't carry it... to the Old Bailey and grow maudlin over the company assembled there."* Again, the notorious fellows in Guttlebury jail rob the Reverend Pettipois who is trying to help them by offering them tracts.*²

Imprisonment for debt is dealt with in The Great Hoggarty Diamond. Samuel Titmarsh, in prison for debts that he does

* Catherine, Chapter III.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXX.

not owe and denied the privilege of doing any work, remarks that it is silly "to deprive honest men of the means of labor just at the moment when they most want it."* The utter wickedness of the system is shown when Mr. B. is dragged from a sick bed to a debtors' prison and left to die from exposure.*2

Thackeray's zeal against capital punishment is not less than that of a real reformer. He rarely misses an occasion to express his disapproval of hangings. Miss Tickletoby intimates that people who tolerate laws ordering "a fellow creature to be killed before the Old Bailey" have not progressed far beyond the savagery of the Middle Ages.*3 "Such disgusting emblems" as cast-iron skulls fastened to the ends of a gibbet "ought no longer to disgrace a Christian land;"*4 because the law ought to hold "a man's life so sacred that it will on no account take it away."*5 Killing a human being is murder whether "performed by ruffian's knife or hangman's rope." The prayer of the judge that Heaven may have mercy

* The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter XIII.

*2 Ibid., Chapter XI.

*3 Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IX.

*4 The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXVI.

*5 Ibid., Chapter VIII.

on their souls is cant.*

Two rather long sketches are masterful arguments against capital punishment. In The Case of Peytel*² and in Going to See a Man Hanged*³ Thackeray gives all the disgusting details of a legal execution so vividly that one feels the horrors of the situation. Then, lest there might still be any doubt of his meaning, he tells us what he thinks of such executions. "Who gave you the right to do so?" he asks in the first essay. "What use is there in killing him? You deter no one else from committing the crime by so doing." The second and more powerful essay he ends with the earnest prayer to "Almighty God to cause this disgraceful sin to pass from among us, and to cleanse our land of blood." These articles are as timely now as they ever were. May we not find many echoes of them in the editorials that occasionally appear in our best and most enlightened daily papers?

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter I.

*² In The Paris Sketch Book.

*³ In Sketches and Travels in London.

CHAPTER II.

RELIGION AND EDUCATION.

Thackeray's comments on religious and educational problems are worthy of the closest study. For real religion he has a deep respect, though none for superstitious beliefs. He himself is a thoroughly orthodox Church of England man, but his attitude towards the clergy of all churches is that of a cultured liberal gentleman.

Respect for religion must not suffer because there are many hypocrites.* Religious observances, such as family prayers,*² have not made these people hypocrites;*³ they are wicked in spite of their religion. In his discussion of George Sand, in The Paris Sketch Book, Thackeray honors true religion. Reformers of the George Sand type find no favor in his eyes,

* The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter XI.

*² Ibid., Chapter VII.

*³ Men's Wives, last paragraph.

and the present day modernists would get little comfort from him. For the really holy places around Jerusalem and for the Christ that they recall, Thackeray has the greatest reverence. In the thirteenth chapter of his Journey from Cornhill to Cairo he reaches Jerusalem and sees the Mount of Olives. "Bethany lies beyond it. The most sacred eyes that ever looked on this world have gazed on these ridges..... With shame and humility one looks towards the spot where that inexpressible Love and Benevolence lived and breathed; where the great yearning heart of the Savior interceded for all our race."

In the same chapter, however, Thackeray has only contempt for the impostures, lies, and legends of the Christian priests concerning such improbable places as the Tomb of Adam, the Rock of Golgotha, and the Grotto of the Blessed Nativity at Bethlehem. Certain religious superstitions which he found in Ireland, he says, ought to be discouraged by the priests.* *2

Thackeray is firm in his conviction that the Church of England is right and all others wrong. But with all this firm belief, he tries not to be intolerant. He thinks that every man has a right to his own reasonable religious convictions. How-

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXI.

*2 Ibid., Chapter XX.

ever, his great difficulty here is that most beliefs not conforming to those of the Established Church are foolish and absurd.

In many passages, I find Thackeray expressing the widest religious tolerance. He thinks that even the religions of the Turk and the Jew should not be sneered at.* He does not think that clergymen should abuse other sects.*² He points out that some ceremonies of the Anglican Church may be as unreasonable as some in the Catholic Church.*³ He admires the constancy with which the Catholics attend their own churches;*⁴ and thinks the Confessional has done much good in helping to keep Irish girls pure.*⁵ The graveyards in which Protestants and Catholics lie side by side suggest the pleasant thought that here is no unseemly religious wrangling.*⁶

In spite of his religious tolerance, he ridicules the Quakers for their silence in church and their peculiar dress.*⁷

* A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, last paragraph.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXV.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter VI.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter XII.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter V. and VI.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter IV.

He is not liberal enough to allow that the Irish Catholics have a right to a bishop of their own faith.* For the Catholic monasteries and convents he has no use. The altar at which the young girl takes her vows is "infernal, wicked, unnatural,cursed Paganism."*³

I find an inconsistency in Thackeray's statements about dissenters and Catholics. Apparently, he wishes to be liberal, but is so thoroughly saturated in the "decent observances"*³ and "noblest service"*⁴ of "our church" that he "finds it impossible to comprehend the source and nature of the Roman Catholic devotion It is difficult to give the Catholics credit for honesty."*⁵

In Chapter XI. of The Book of Snobs it is stated that clergymen are generally good, poorly paid, generous men. My Lord Bishop may be selfish and stingy;*⁶ but the curate, Frank White-

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter I.

*² Ibid., Chapter VI.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XXIV.

*⁵ A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter XIII.

*⁶ Beatrice Merger in The Paris Sketch Book.

stock, is a father to his parishioners;* and the Vicar of Dundalk is kind, generous, and devoted to his work.*² Thackeray's attitude towards clergymen and even Roman Catholic priests is courteous, respectful, and sympathetic.

Thackeray's criticism of the educational systems and problems of his day is no doubt colored by his unpleasant recollections of his own school days. At ten years old he was sent to the Charter House. He was rather a timid boy, and his experience there was not pleasant. The head-master was stern and unsympathetic.*³ His frequent references to the Slaughter House "where he learned nothing useful"*⁴ show his feeling toward the Charter House.*⁴

The gravest indictment against the schools of the early nineteenth century is that too many of the teachers were incompetent, brutal, vulgar bullies. A father did not bestow on the selection of teacher for his son the ordinary care that he used in employing a butler.*⁵ His parents gave over little

* The Curate's Walk in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXVI.

*³ Life of Thackeray, by Anthony Trollope, Chapter I.

*⁴ Dorothea, in The Fitz*Boodle Papers.

*⁵ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIII.

"Michael Angelo to the discipline of vulgar bullies, who, in order to lead tender young children to the Temple of Learning, drive them on with clenched fists and low abuse; if they fainted, revived them with a thump, or assailed them with a curse."* Many a teacher was "a brute of a schoolmaster," coarse-grained, vulgar, and abusive.*2

The public schools could naturally be no better than the average teachers. "There are at this present writing, five hundred boys at Eton, kicked, licked, and bullied by another hundred,.... scrubbing shoes, running errands, making false concords, and putting their posteriors on a block for Dr. Hawtrey to lash at; and still calling it education. They are proud of it.....as what dull barbarians are not proud of their dullness and barbarism?"*3 The public school gives a boy some Latin, Greek, and a competent knowledge of boxing, swimming, rowing, and cricket which are rather costly benefits at the price of two thousand pounds and ten years' time. Besides all this the school teaches the boy contempt for religion, a disregard for the ties and natural affection of home, disnon-

* A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter V.

*2 Papers by the Fat Contributor, Chapter III.

*3 The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXXI.

esty, and obsequiousness to his betters.

Of the University, not so much is said, but that is far from complimentary. "Because a lad is a lord the University gives him a degree at the end of two years, which another is seven in acquiring." Many "wicked and shameful distinctions" set up during feudal times are kept because "Universities are the last places into which Reform penetrates."*² Blades, the Professor of the Madingo language, and Trumps, the Professor of Phlebotomy*³ are mentioned as illustrative of the useless information handed out by the Universities.

In spite of schools and Universities the general educational level was low, and the people often satisfied with a superficial smattering. Lord Gules, a product of Eton, "can't write" or spell.*⁴ Captain Bull speaks an "abominable little jargon of half-a-dozen languages, and knows nothing."*⁵ "Young artists are not generally as well instructed as they should be."*⁶

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter II.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XV.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XXIX.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter XXI.

*⁶ The Artists.

The education of women is shown as superficial. Miss Wirt instructed her pupils, the Misses Ponto, in the modern languages, Latin, Greek, mathematics, sciences, and history. But in one of Miss Ponto's manuscripts were five faults of French in four words; and she knew nothing of Dante.* The instruction at Bulgaria House, a young ladies' school, is hardly more thorough.*²

Thackeray's ideas on religion and education are wholesome, although he is sometimes unfair to those who disagree with him. His whole-hearted belief in the fundamentals of Christianity, and his condemnation of the incompetency and brutality of schoolmasters still command attention. In his evident reluctant admission that the Established Church has not a monopoly of Christianity, and in his rather wholesale condemnation of the public schools and the Universities he shows bias. But religious tolerance is the rarest of virtues, and impartial criticism of educational institutions almost impossible. On the whole, the churchman and the educator have much to learn from Thackeray.

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXVI.

*² The Professor, Chapter I.

CHAPTER III.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

Thackeray's criticisms of social conditions include a wide range of topics. His thoughts here are uniformly sound, leaving nothing to be apologized for. This subject falls naturally into four divisions: the author's discussion of certain moral questions; of some foolish personal weaknesses; of a few social expedients; and of domestic life.

Several vices are touched on lightly. The disgusting aspect of scandal mongery is shown in the person of Captain Bull, who knows the ugly stories about people of prominence.* The incessant gossip of the small town makes Thackeray glad he is a cockney and doesn't know the name of his next door neighbor.*² The laziness of Ponto, who sleeps twelve hours daily; the cowardice of Mr. Preston, who is childishly afraid

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXI.

*2 The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXIX.

of his riding horse; and the lack of physical cleanliness of many people who "neglect the use of that admirable cosmetic, cold water,"* are examples of the way in which small vices are rapped.

Social exclusiveness and the lack of real democracy in social relations are shown to be more serious. Englishmen of the genteel class have too much pride.*³ The upper classes never speak a word to their servants*³ and are generally insolent to strangers and inferiors. In the description of the Australian emigrants, the lack of sympathy between the well-to-do and the poverty-oppressed is deplored.*³ "As a rule, and to a cosmopolite, every man ought to be welcome. I do not mean to your intimacy and affection, but to your society."*⁴ "The honest proletaire in a black snirt" may have read many books; and the common people have vigorous, orderly good sense and intelligence.*⁵

* On Tailoring..... and Toilettes in General, in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, Chapter II.

*³ Waiting at the Station, in Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁴ Out of Town in Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁵ Going to See a Man Hanged in Sketches and Travels in London.

Thackeray himself loved to mingle in the picture galleries with "happy people of the working sort."*

The lack of social democracy is a danger to the stability of the government. It were well for the nobles to recognize this and make less ostentatious display."*2

Exclusiveness is morally wrong, for it excludes love, which should "bind together the whole family of Adam."*3 The Court Circular is the symbol of fashionable exclusiveness. Of this, Chapter Last of The Book of Snobs says: "I am sick of Court Circulars. I loathe haut-ton intelligence. I believe such words as Fashionable, Exclusive, Aristocratic, and the like, to be wicked, unchristian epithets, that ought to be banished from honest vocabularies."

Friends exert a strong influence on the moral character of individuals; therefore, the choice of friends is important and the duties of friendship sacred. "Mr. Brown" advises his nephew, Bob, to associate with his superiors. The tone of the advice here seems to indicate that by superiors is meant not those richer or of higher social position, but those more

* On Men and Pictures.

*2 Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, Chapter I.

*3 A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter IV.

intelligent, better educated, and morally stronger. This seems evident, for a little further on, Bob is warned against the worthless, jolly good fellows and the dissipated friends of the club smoking room.*

The worthlessness of badly chosen friends and their lack of faithfulness is shown in the desertion of Mr. Cox's fine acquaintances,*² and the failure of Mr. Walker's friends to help him out of jail.*³

On the other hand, many are the examples in Thackeray of the fidelity of real friends. Mr. Orlando Crump helps restore Cox to prosperity;*⁴ Gus Hoskins looks after Samuel Titmarsh in prison;*⁵ and even Barry Lyndon's streak of good compels him to befriend Nora and her husband in their poverty.*⁶

There is an apparent contradiction in Thackeray's attitude on smoking. I believe that this is more apparent than real.

* On Friendship in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² Cox's Diary, November.

*³ The Ravenswing, Chapter V.

*⁴ Cox's Diary, December.

*⁵ The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter XII.

*⁶ The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVIII.

The stale smell of tobacco in the chambers* and a mingled odor of smoke and spirits in a dismal room*² are objectionable. The habits of little Lord Gules, a tobacco smoking youth, who smokes as much as two officers, are contemptible on account of his size and age. In brief, certain people under certain conditions should not smoke.

However, vigorous defenses of smoking are made in several long passages. The playful condemnation of Sackville Maine's smoking amounts to a defense of the habit.*³ "Mr. Brown" thinks smoking a great aid to conversation;*⁴ and Men and Coats asserts "that a pipe of tobacco in many an hour in the day is a thousand times better and more agreeable society than the best Miss." George Fitz-Boodle, in the Preface to his Papers, expresses at great length the same opinion, asserting that a combat is going on between the ladies and cigar-smoking, and that the enemy will win. Titmarsh, in the first chapter of Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, gives a really beautiful eulogy of cigar smoking.

* Mr. Brown's Letter to his Nephew in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXIII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XLIV.

*⁴ Mr. Brown the Elder takes Mr. Brown the Younger to a Club, in Sketches and Travels in London.

Thackeray enjoyed his smoke, and never really admits that any evils are connected with the habit.

Thackeray expresses the general opinion of his countrymen concerning liquors. He thanks heaven that teetotalism does not prevail among the Irish gentry.* In Barmecide Banquets, George Fitz-Boodle gives an autobiographical eulogy of champagne. "May I die but I will not be ashamed to proclaim my love for you! You have given me much pleasure and never any painyou have stood by me in many bad moments,you have whipped up many flagging thoughts,you have made me hope, ay, and forget."

If Mr. Fitz-Boodle thinks that elegant liquors are suitable for the genteel, Sketches and Travels in London gives a most disgusting picture of the poor man's pawning his goods for money to spend at the gin-shop;*² and of the old sot with his five glasses of whiskey and water every night.*³ In The Paris Sketch Book the wine bottle is severely condemned. "I never knew a good feeling come from it It only entices

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter II.

*² The Curate's Walk, Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ A Night's Paradise, Sketches and Travels in London.

men and ruins them."* The Irish coachman preaches a good temperance sermon, which apparently meets Thackeray's entire approval. For the poor, he thinks total abstinence an excellent thing; he failed, like most of his contemporaries, in seeing that it is also good for the gentlemen.

For gambling and gamblers Thackeray has an abhorrence. The heartlessness of the gamblers is illustrated in the young man who in a turf transaction, "would try to get the better of his father;"*² and in the professional card players who bid you bon jour when you are done with, caring not if you go and drown yourself.*³ In several stories and articles gambling is shown in all its ugliness, and two essays or stories are really fables teaching the evils of gambling.*⁴ Cox is cured of gambling when he loses a thousand pounds.*⁵ In the dice throwing scene, third chapter of Catherine, gambling is made disgusting.

* A Gambler's Death in The Paris Sketch Book.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXXIX.

*³ Mr. Brown etc. in Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁴ Amours of Mr. Deuceace in Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush.

*⁴ Captain Fook and Mr. Pigeon.

*⁵ Cox's Diary, April.

The dishonest tricks of the professional gambler are told in Barry Lyndon.* "The poor devils of soldiers played away their pay."*² The vile character of Lyndon turns his defense of himself as a gambler into the severest censure.*³ The sure tone of Thackeray in condemnation of this social evil, is rather remarkable, considering the prevalence of gambling in his time.

Gambling is reprehensible; but dishonesty in business dealing is much worse. Extravagance may be a form of dishonesty. Several examples of this are given. The Earl of Loughcorrib gives a *dejeuner dansant* where the flowers cost four hundred pounds, but will not pay his bills.*⁴ Young Jones, at the University, cripples his younger brother's outset in life for the pleasure of entertaining my lord.*⁵ Pump Temple defrauds his sister Folly of money to pay for his wild extravagances.*⁶

There are many little dishonest tricks in business that are shown up in all their meanness. Captain Ray sells his

* The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter VIII.

*² Ibid., Chapter X.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

*⁴ The Book of Snobs, Chapter VI.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter XV.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XXXVI

brother officers lame horses as sound ones.* Lady Prigby attempts to pawn jewels which are already mortgaged.*² Young Stubbs exacts exorbitant interest from his schoolfellows.*³ Brough compels his servants to invest in worthless stock.*⁴

The fraudulent stock companies are the ruin of many poor people, such as Fred Timmins.*⁵ The worthless rascals, such as Walker,*⁶ who promote these companies are satirized in The Paris Sketch Book. But the archvillain in Thackeray's gang of promoters is Mr. Brough, in The Great Hoggarty Diamond. Indeed, the purpose of this long story is told in the last paragraph in which Samuel Titmarsh "bids all gents who peruse this" to be cautious when investing money.

In his discussions of moral questions Thackeray raps many petty vices. He shows that exclusiveness is the result of a false pride; that it excludes people from much agreeable society;

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter X.

*² The Curate's Walk in Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ The Fatal Boots, February.

*⁴ The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter VI.

*⁵ Jeames on Time Bargings in The Diary of C. Jeames de la Pluche.

*⁶ The Ravenswing, Chapter V.

that it is dangerous to the stability of the country, and morally wrong. The choice of friends is a moral responsibility and the duties of friendship sacred. On certain practices, sometimes called dissipations, Thackeray takes a sensible position, condemning the worse of these: excessive drinking and gambling. His love of honesty is a part of his very being and he cannot endure any business dealing even suspected of being dishonest.

A strong man of sterling worth naturally despises the foolish weaknesses of small people. Many pretenses are especially despicable, since they are purposeless. To pretend to imaginary wealth by "instructing my lawyers to pay"* and by advertising for mythical lost necklaces*² is just a little more contemptible than starving one's self to keep a fine carriage in order to keep up appearances.*³ Still more foolish are those poor people who attempt to give an impression of being wealthy by hiring green grocers to act as footmen,*⁴ or by dressing the stable boy to act in that capacity.*⁵

* The Ravenswing, Chapter V.

*² The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter V.

*³ The Book of Snobs, Chapter VI.

*⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter XIX.

*⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter XXV.

The pretense of knowing persons of importance is ridiculed in the portrait of Mrs. Ponto, who claims Lord Rubadub as a cousin;* of Mrs. Chuff, who tells intimate stories of naval heroes;*² of Jawkins, who likes to quote a scrap of a conversation with Sir Robert Peel;*³ and of Mrs. Gann whose "dear girls are relatedto some of the first nobility in the land."*⁴

Of the pretenders to an education, Miss Wirt with her smattering of languages and sciences is the most notable example.*⁵ Ponto pretends to be interested in his library,*⁵ and Fitch in his art.*⁴ Miss Slamcoe exhibits drawings as her own work which are done by her teachers.*⁶ The use of French is considered very genteel by vulgar people,*⁷ and so old Mrs. Hoggarty exhibits her slim French vocabulary.*⁸

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXIV.

*² Ibid., Chapter XLII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXXVIII.

*⁴ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter III.

*⁵ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXVI.

*⁶ The Artists.

*⁷ Second Profession in The Fitz-Boodle Papers.

*⁸ The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter I.

One sentence in the essay On Men and Pictures, sums up this whole matter of educational pretense: "Why the deuce will men make light of that golden gift of mediocrity which for the most part they possess, and strive so absurdly at the sublime?"

Canting hypocrisy is the worst of all pretenses. Of the hypocrites, Mr. Brough in The Great Hoggarty Diamond is the best example. But there are others, such as the Black Prince with his insincere attentions to the captured French King;* and Barry Lyndon who knows how to act the pious gentleman on occasions.*2

A true gentleman is free of all this pretense. "The great comfort of the society of great folks is that they take you for what you are. I have seen more noise made about a Knight's lady than about the Duchess of Fitzbattleaxe herself."*3 In The Snob Royal, the honesty of the true gentleman is emphasized.

Thackeray points out frequently the absurdity of overrating one's importance in the world. This may lead to an undue feeling of superiority to one's neighbors. Mrs. Ponto and

* Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IX.

*2 Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVII.

*3 A Word About Dinners, Sketches and Travels in London.

Miss Wirt snub the neighbors because of their imagined higher social position.*

Or a puffed-up self-importance may lead to a disagreeable condescension. The patronage of the Goldmores would be disgusting to people of less balance than the Grays.*² A noobleman remarked to a crowd of farmers that "it is pleasant to see the condescension with which the gentry mingled with the farmers;" at which Thackeray says he hissed.*³ The aristocracy knows how to condescend to poor artists.*⁴ Thackeray hates this attitude of implied superiority and inferiority; but he concludes, "You can't help that confounded condescension."*⁵

Again, it is easy to take one's self too seriously, and to overestimate the importance of one's work*⁶ and position. Crump thinks his position as President of St. Boniface College the highest in England.*⁷ Mrs. Gann imagined that she secured

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXVII.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXXIV.

*³ The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter V.

*⁴ The Ravenswing, Chapter IV.

*⁵ Waiting at the Station, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Prefatory Remarks.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XIV.

the new lodger, when really "the bright eyes of the young ladies had done the business."* Absurd dignity and swagger of young men,*² and the ridiculous wisdom of "goslings from the public schools in wine-judging" is not becoming.*³ Our ideas of our importance would be much less could we realize that as soon as we are dead the world will soon forget us.*⁴

Personal vanity is the least harmful .of these little weaknesses. Many people live on this food and scarcely any other.*⁵ A man is most interested in himself in this life and least inclined to forgive slights to his vanity.*⁶

The British are obsequious. They are "a miserable, truckling, cringing race."*⁷ "The freeborn Englishman of the respectable class is, of all others, the most slavish and truckling to a lord."*⁸ "There is about the freeborn Briton a cringing

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter II.

*² Mr. Brown etc.in Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XLI.

*⁴ The Ravenswing, Chapter V.

*⁵ The Artists.

*⁶ On a Lady in an Opera Box, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁷ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter III.

*⁸ Second Profession, The Fitz-Boodle Papers.

baseness andawe of rank."* "The sight of a lord does good to us commoners."*² "We" not only pardon stupidity in lords,*³ but "we" like being abused by nobles*⁴ and kicked by a lord.*⁵ These general statements are illustrated by concrete examples. Tutor Hughby's obsequiousness to young Lord Glenlivat was so pronounced that he cried when the latter apologized to him for a boyish prank.*⁶ The visit of Lord Gules, "a real live lord, and lord's son" to Mr. Ponto's house was preceded and welcomed by bowing and kotooing, raptures and flurry.*⁷ Mrs. Hornsby cuts her old friends for fashionable people.*⁸ Tom Tufthunt loved and respected a lord.*⁹ Timsen truckles to Lady Fanny Flummery.*¹⁰ Even the coachman of the public coach

* Catherine, Chapter II.

*² The Ravenswing, Chapter VII.

*³ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter VIII.

*⁴ Foring Parts, Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush.

*⁵ The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVIII.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIV.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XXIX.

*⁸ A Word About Balls, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁹ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter VII.

*¹⁰ The Fashionable Authoress.

"was quite anxious to conciliate the footman of the Duke of B's establishment."*

Somewhat like this obsequiousness, is the desire to climb socially. The absurdities of the social climber are best shown in the case of Mrs. Cox, in Cox's Diary. Her attempts to get into society by means of her opera box, her suppers, her rides in the park, and the entertainment of such of the nobility as she could reach all ended disastrously and brought her only contempt. Mrs. Hoggarty tries to claim relationship with Lady Drum who rebuffs her.*² The Diary of C. Jeames De La Pluche tells of his ridiculous attempts to marry Lady Angelina and his failure. Thackeray indicates that he does not think high society of sufficient importance to justify attempts to break into it.

Thackeray commends the many little harmless social expedients which make life run smoothly. In The Snob Playfully Dealt With he says, "Society having ordained certain customs, men are bound to obey the law of society and conform to its harmless orders.with a smiling face," even though such orders may be disagreeable at times. "Mr. Brown" writes to his

* Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, Chapter I.

*2 The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter X.

nephew, "Be it yours decently to conform to the custom," even in such a small matter as the placing of buttons on a coat.

What is wanted in society is that people should be agreeable and pleasant.* Confidence, self-forgetfulness^{*2} and consideration for the whims of our companions^{*3} will make us popular. Disagreeable tricks of speech and behavior are not welcome among people of culture. Mrs. Walker "was kind, honest, and clever, but....not refined.....She dropped her h's here and there; she had.....the most showy gown in the room;" and she drank her porter out of the pewter pot. She was not received in the best society, because she was not fit to move in it;^{*4} and the society is not to be blamed for its refusal to receive her.

The most important customs of society are those having to do with dress. People of vulgar tastes sometimes misunderstand these customs and make themselves ridiculous with their unhealthy, immodest, absurd, ornate, or inappropriate wearing

* On Tailoring, Sketches and Travels in London.

*2 On the Pleasure of Being a Foggy, Sketches and Travels in London.

*3 Out of Town, II, Sketches and Travels in London.

*4 The Ravenswing, Chapter IV.

apparel. Tight shoes makes cripples.* Tight lacing by men or women does not make beautiful or healthy bodies, as a look at the Apollo or the Venus will demonstrate.*³ Even a hundred years ago some "females" were not at all "Partial to clothes,"*³ and "Miss Brough had commonly her dress half off her shoulders."*⁴ What would Thackeray think of the twentieth century woman's dress? Absurd costumes were affected by soldiers, flunkies, and Englishmen abroad. Little Ponto's extravagant military uniforms with their ornaments of gold lace*⁵ have happily faded into common khaki; but the uniforms of the flunkey so strongly condemned in Some Political Snobs still flourish. "The marvelous propensity of traveling Snobs to rush into a costume"*⁶ is still with us. But overdressing and inappropriate dressing are the most frequent violations of society's laws of clothes. Some of Thackeray's flashy dressers are Jessamy, who was conspicuous for his "jewellery;" Jackey, who rode every day

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter IV.

*² Men and Coats.

*³ Miss Tickletoy's Lectures, Lecture I.

*⁴ The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter VII.

*⁵ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXIX.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XXI.

in pumps and white silk stockings;* the Misses Ponto, who use too much crinoline; Mrs. Ponto with her profusion of jewelry;*² and Mrs. Hoggarty "with such a pair of red cheeks as nature never gave her."³ His uncle warns Bob to let his dress be appropriate to his station in life, and not to try to ape the nobility.*⁴ On the other hand, there are occasions when splendid clothes are expected*⁵ and should be worn. In his discussion of this slight but important topic of dress, Thackeray changes from a critic to a teacher and gives advice which is always sound and important.

Thackeray believes it the duty of men to love and marry, become parents, and establish homes. In Snobs and Marriage he censures severely bachelors who are too much at ease in their bachelorhood. Moreover, romantic love is the kind he recommends. Bob Brown's uncle writes him: "Every man ought to be in love a few times in his life.....You are the better for it.... the better for your misfortune if you endure it with

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XV.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXV.

*³ The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter X.

*⁴ Mr. Brown's Letter, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁵ On Tailoring, Sketches and Travels in London.

a manly heart; how much the better if you win.....
 a good wife." George Fitz-Boodle in Miss Lowe emphasizes the
 importance of love in marriage. Such external considerations
 as wealth and social positions should not be allowed to out-
 weigh true love. The love of Samuel Titmarsh and Mary Smith
 is beautiful, enduring, and pure.* Contrasted with this is
 the indecent love of George Brandon for Caroline Gann.*³

This principle of pure, romantic love forbids a man's mar-
 rying for money, but it does not forbid a wise choice of a wife.
 Sir Charles Lyndon warns Barry against marrying for wealth.*³
 Barry Lyndon*⁴ and Bob Stubbs*⁵ both make disgusting attempts
 to marry rich women. Lyndon finally succeeds, but gets no hap-
 piness; Stubbs' wife turns out to be poor. But it is only wise
 to choose a wife of one's own station in life; intelligent and
 cheerful.*⁶ Titmarsh chose wisely in marrying Mary Smith;* and
 Jeames, in marrying Mary Ann.*⁷

* The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapters IV. and XL.

*² A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapters VIII. and IX.

*³ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XIII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapters X. and XI.

*⁵ The Fatal Boots, April and October.

*⁶ On Love and Marriage, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁷ Jeames on the Gauge Question in his Diary.

The relations between parents and children as shown by Thackeray are far from ideal. Some mothers are good and faithful; some are well meaning, but foolish; and the sons are too often engaged in deceiving their parents. Barry Lyndon's mother on many occasions showed her devotion to her son. In the fifteenth chapter of his Memoirs he says: "Indeed I have found in my experience that those are the only women who never deceive a man, and whose affection remains constant through all trials." Of all the emotions portrayed by Thackeray, the pure maternal love of young Mary Titmarsh is perhaps the most touching. Her motherly love embraces not only her own dead baby, but Lady Tiptoff's as well, in a scene that is almost melodramatic.* But unwise, though well meaning, parents are numerous enough. Lady Famish,*² Mrs. Ponto,*³ and Sir John and Lady Griggs*⁴ are easily deceived by their worthless sons. Lady Lyndon loves her son, Lord Bullingdon, but is unable to control him.*⁵

* The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter XIII.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter X.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXIX.

*⁴ A Night's Pleasure, Chapter IV. in Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁵ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVI.

The deceit practiced by the son is, of course, a comment on young men as well as on their parents.

Thackeray's pictures of domestic life are extremely realistic. On his pages are many happy families and noble husbands and wives; but many wretches joined in a sort of ignoble legal union. A careful study of these groups reveal certain reasons for their happiness or unhappiness. Jeames in humble life,* and Samuel Titmarsh,*² a little farther up in the social scale, choose their wives wisely. These groups, as well as the Grays, through economy and good sense, establish fairly successful homes. The three sisters with their simplicity and economy are another happy group. Rubbery's family, because of their affection, triumph over their poverty.*⁴ Sackville Maine and his family arrive at domestic success after learning some bitter lessons of economy.*⁵ On the other hand, Swigsby, *⁶

* Jeames on the Gauge Question in The Diary of C. Jeames De La Pluche.

*² The Great Hogarty Diamond.

*³ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXXIV.

*⁴ The Artists.

*⁵ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XLII. and following.

*⁶ A Snuboy Genteel Story, Chapter VI.

Roundhead,* Berry,*² and Haggarty*³ choose miserable scolds for wives with the inevitable consequence of domestic infelicity. The Snums*⁴ and the Ganns*⁵ are wretched families because the people are fighting, quarrelsome sets. Many wicked husbands figure in the stories. Captain Raff*⁶ and Captain Shindy*⁷ neglect their wives, and Walker*⁸ and Lyndon*⁹ abuse theirs.

Thackeray's criticism of family life comes to this: though romantic love is good, yet a successful family must be founded on a wise personal choice, sound morals, and honest business principles. His opinion of the worth of such a family he tells us in his description of poor Tom Sniffle. "If temptation had not come upon this unhappy fellow in the shape of a Lord

* The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter IV.

*² Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berry, Chapter II.

*³ Dennis Haggarty's Wife.

*⁴ Miss Shum's Husband, Chapter I. .

*⁵ A Shabby Genteel Story.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXIII.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XLI.

*⁸ The Ravenswing, Chapter V. and following.

*⁹ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XIV. and following.

Brandyball he might have married his cousin; ...
he might have had seven children, and taken private pupils,
and eked out his income, and lived and died a country parson.
Could he have done better? You who want to know how great,
and good, and noble such a character may be, read Stanley's
Life of Doctor Arnold."*

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XII.

CHAPTER IV.
WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

It has been said that Thackeray did not understand women. Miss Martineau says: "He never can have known a good and sensible woman. I do not believe he has any idea whatever of such women as abound among the matronage of England---women of excellent capacity and cultivation applied to the natural business of life."* I find his sketches of spiteful, mean, shallow, and talkative women so numerous as to indicate a generally low opinion of women.

Spiteful women are portrayed in Lady Ann and Mrs. Botibol, who conceal their mutual hatred with their greetings of "My dear Lady Ann" and "My dear good Eliza".*² Ottilia would call Dorothea "by a thousand affectionate names, and then talk of her as only ladies or authors can talk of one another.

* Autobiography.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVIII.

How tenderly she would hint at Dora's little imperfections of education! --- how cleverly she would insinuate that the poor girl had no wit!"* Princess Olivia without reason turned against Countess Ida; "and from loving the Countess as she previously had done, pursued her with every manner of hatred which a woman knows how to inflict."*2 Mrs. Gann and her elder daughters in their spite against Caroline commit "some meannesses which are too mean even for man--- woman, lovely woman alone, can venture to commit them."*3

Thackeray's shallow-minded, superficial women are numerous. A few samples of these are Mrs. Ponto, with her foolish social aspirations;*4 Miss Wirt,*4 with her superficial education; Adeliza Grampus, infatuated with the wretch, Dando;*5 Belinda Brough, sprinkling conversation with bad French;*6 and Mrs. Roundhand, with her silly pretensions to high society.*7

* Ottilia, Chapter II. in Fitz-Boodle Papers.

*2 Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter X.

*3 A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter III.

*4 The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXVI.

*5 The Professor.

*6 The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter VII.

*7 Ibid., Chapter IV.

Inconstancy in love and lack of wisdom in choosing lovers and husbands are marks of shallow-mindedness. "Let her have a dozen admirers, and the dear coquette will exercise her power upon them all.....Those females who cry out loudest against the flightiness of their sisters ...would do as much themselves if they had the chance." Thus does Thackeray excuse the coquetry of Morgiana in the first chapter of The Ravenswing. Captain Fagan, a rather respectable person, tells Redmond that in lieu of a better person a woman will fall in love with a chimney sweep.* Caroline Gann falls in love with a man scarcely better. Ikey Solomon, Jun., says that his experience has been that after a reasonable degree of pressing any woman will capitulate to any man.*²

Lady Fanny's fluency shows a lack of thought. "The readiest of ready pens has Lady Fanny; her Pegasus gallops over hot-pressed satin so as to distance all gentleman riders;....only it runs so fast that it often leaves all sense behind it; and there it goes on, on, scribble, scribble, scribble."*³ George Fitz-Boodle in his Confessions gives a long sample of the after

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter II.

*² Catherine, Chapter VII.

*³ The Fashionable Authoress.

dinner conversations of ladies, all amounting to nothing.

"I can recollect a dozen such."

In spite of what I have just written, I consider Miss Martineau's statement too sweeping. It is true that Thackeray has no perfect women; all have faults. Yet many have good traits; and some are admirable. Caroline shows patience;* Lady Drum is sincere, if a little brusque;*² and Lady Fanny Tiptoff is good, sensible, and amiable, with considerable discernment of character.*³ "Mr. Brown" thus sums up the whole discussion of the character of women:

"I do not mean to tell you that there are no women in the world vulgar and ill-humored, rancorous and narrow-minded, mean schemers, son-in-law hunters, slaves of fashion, hypocrites, but I do respect, admire, and almost worship good women; and I think there is a very fair number of such to be found in this world.... It has been my fortune to meet with excellent English ladies."*⁴ And yet in this defense of women, Thackeray condescends

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter I.

*² The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter III.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

*⁴ Some More Words About the Ladies, Sketches and Travels in London.

as if he would say that their character needs defending.

Woman's character determines her influence. It is through what Thackeray says of this influence that we can best judge what he thinks of her character. Mr. Brown wishes his nephew always to have a woman for a friend, because "the influence of women upon society is refining."* But George Fitz-Boodle says: "I have read in novels that it was pleasant, the refinement of women's society; but say now as a man of the world and an honest fellow, did you ever get any good out of women's talk? What a bore a clever woman is! .------ what a frightful bore a mediocre respectable woman is!----- There is no woman but one after all."*² Even this one woman manages her husband through deceit.*³ ----Lovely woman can kindle gunpowder passions with a sparkle of her eye;*⁴ she is the worker of many woes;*⁵ and finally, "Since the days of Adam, there has been hardly a mischief done in this world

* Influence of Lovely Women upon Society in Sketches and Travels in London.

*² On Love etc. in Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ Barmedide Banquets.

*⁴ Catherine, Chapter I.

*⁵ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XI.

but a woman has been at the bottom of it.*

Now these opinions of women can hardly be discredited because coming from disreputable persons, such as Barry Lyndon. Barry is a rascal and a rake. But the opinions that he expresses in the first part of his Memoirs are not usually in character. The expressions of love for his mother and of disgust with the tricky gambling make us feel that after all the opinions quoted in the last paragraph are those of Thackeray himself. I am forced to the rather reluctant conclusion that though Thackeray believes women have many admirable qualities he also believes that few of these qualities are often found in any one woman, that few measure up to Wordsworth's "Phantom of delight, A perfect woman, nobly planned."

Thackeray's children are usually wholesomely good. Nelson Chuff*² and Augustus Jones*³ are natural, healthy, eager little boys. The Curate looks after the welfare of three kind, simple, loving little maidens.*⁴ Bryan Lyndon, though spoiled, is not wicked. Lord Bullingdon is unruly, but his rebellion is justifiabl

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter I.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter XLIII.

*³ A Night's Pleasure, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁴ The Curate's Walk, Sketches and Travels in London,

and Lyndon's account of him leaves the impression of a very likable boy.

Two little heathens, ---Bob Stubbs and Thomas Billings,-- must be mentioned. The first is dishonest at the tender age of five. But The Fatal Boots is trying to show a character consistently mercenary, Thomas Billings is wicked at two. But in Catherine, Thackeray is determined not to have a single good character. On the whole, the portrayal of children presents good types.

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVIII.

CHAPTER V.

ART.

A detailed study of Thackeray's criticisms of art and artists lies outside our field of study; but because he has devoted so many essays to such criticisms, I wish to consider them very briefly. He deplores the low esteem in which artists are held by the public. "A grocer's daughter would think she made a misalliance by marrying a painter.* As a result, the English artist is paid hardly enough to afford a decent living.*2 It is not surprising then that many artists try to cater to the bourgeois and paint to suit John Bull's taste. Many young painters are told that they are not doing their duty. The desire of money is leading them astray. They paint down to the level of the public intelligence, rather than seek to elevate .

* On the French School of Painting, The Paris Sketch Book.

*2 The Artists.

the public to them.*

It is deplored that artists are usually poorly informed on all subjects other than art. Thackeray thinks that a broader education would make better painters.*² He censures them severely for resenting criticism. He points out that the critic's business is to instruct the public; that the critic is not moved by personal dislike of the painter.*²

Just at this point, I doubt Thackeray's entire sincerity. When one remembers his failure as an artist, it is easy to feel that much of what he wrote may be colored, perhaps unconsciously, by a little petty jealousy. His Strictures on Pictures, for example, is exasperating in its style. He gives a list of prominent contemporary English artists, treating them in a rather light way by proposing titles for them. It requires a very careful reading of this essay to determine where Thackeray really means what he says, or where he is poking fun at the artists and their works. He begins his criticisms with a discussion of William Mulready (whom he calls His Majesty King Mulready) and his Seven Ages. He says that "here and there are some queer looking limbs;" but on the whole damns the picture

* Titmarsh in the Picture Galleries.

*² The Artists.

with too much praise. It is rather difficult to understand Thackeray's criticism here, when we are told in the Diction-ary of National Biography that Mulready was one of the most careful and cautious of artists. Thackeray pays Sir Charles Eastlake the rather doubtful compliment of calling him Archbishop Eastlake, because "there is a certain purity and religious feeling in all that Mr. Eastlake does." Thackeray's statement is probably true; but he kills his praise of the artist's work by the fun poked at the artist.

To Sir David Wilkie's two pictures Queen Victoria Holding Her First Council, and A Bride Dressing he gives considerable praise, but spoils it by finding fault with the drawing of both pictures and by speaking of the unpoetical materials of the first. He finds fault with Ward, whose paintings were popular. He says that William Etty's women are coarse and naked. Others critics flatly contradict this. The entire essay leaves the reader with the feeling that its author is unfair, and perhaps somewhat jealous.

Thackeray likes pictures that teach good lessons.* He admires small quiet, sincere pictures, rather than great swaggering canvases.* And with pictures which depend for their pathos

* On Men and Pictures.

on externals, such as black bordered handkerchiefs, he has no patience.* No doubt Thackeray's criticisms of art are usually just, and often sound. But I do not believe that he is uniformly trustworthy as an authority. These critical essays on art are worth studying only for the light that they throw on the character and genius of Thackeray.

* Picture Gossip

CHAPTER VI.

LITERATURE.

I regard Thackeray's criticism of contemporary literature as the most important work that he did previous to the publication of Vanity Fair. Here he is a master, and we may confidently follow him. To be sure, as Brownell says: "Such a nature is too ample to be distinctly critical, and Thackeray's had its prejudices."* Nevertheless, when he approaches literary criticism, he keeps his prejudice well in hand, and after the lapse of almost a century his opinions about authors and their books are still recognized as, in the main, sound.

Thackeray has not very much to say about the purposes of literature. He praises "the good old stories and biographiesevidently written before the useful had attained its present detestable popularity."*² Further on he asks, "Are we

* Victorian Prose Masters, page 20.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XV.

to reject all things that have not a moral tacked on to them?"* This plainly indicates that he believes in literature as a fine art. On the other hand, most of his early works have "a moral tacked on to them." The morals are given in various ways; but this discussion is reserved for Part II. of this paper. Just here, it is sufficient to say that Thackeray recognizes a double purpose in literature: to please, and to instruct.

In any literary production there are two parties chiefly concerned: the author; and the public, of whom the critics are an important part. He recognizes the practical fact that authors must have money, but pushes the statement too far in implying that need of money is the only reason for their writing.*² But in his essay on Blanchard he says the calling of a man of letters is noble and pleasant.*³ He naturally wishes the public would pay authors better but does not believe a pension system would be good for them, or encourage the production of works of genius.*³ In A Box of Novels he brings the direct

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XV.

*² Epistles to the Literati, in Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush.

*³ Titmarsh on the Picture Galleries.

*⁴ A Brother of the Press.

charge against literary men of professional jealousy. Elsewhere he ironically speaks of "an affectionate and brotherly spirit among us all."* We know that in real life Thackeray was fairly free of the faults here condemned. Though a merciless critic, he was free of personal spite. His misunderstanding with Dickens did not stop his generous praise of The Christmas Carol.

It is not surprising that Thackeray thought none too well of the literary tastes of a public that failed for so long to recognize his worth. "Literary persons are held in such esteem by the nation, that about two of them have been absolutely invited to court during the present reign,They are such favorites with the public that one or two could be pointed out, of whom the nation insists upon having a fresh picture every year."* This is not remarkable, since the public "leave off reading soon after they begin to shave."*² Those who do read, will have only scoundrels in their novels;*³ and such ignorance as that of Jim Grant, in more serious works.*⁴

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVI.

*² Mr. Brown the Elder, Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ Catherine, Chapter I.

*⁴ Grant in Paris.

For literary critics, Thackeray does not show a high regard. Sometimes they are bribed by people of wealth and fashion.* Sometimes they are savage in their criticism; and sometimes presumptive in criticising works of which they know nothing.*² On the whole, they are, as a rule, incompetent. However, an author should not think that a critic is a personal enemy because he fails to praise the author's work.*³

Thackeray's criticism of literary style might form the basis for a very good course in freshman composition. He warns repeatedly against the vicious habit of interlarding our speech with French words. The use of French by Lady Bulwer, Lady Londonderry,*⁴ and James Grant*⁵ is ridiculed. He gives examples of fine writing*⁶ and stilted diction*⁷ in such connection as to show their absurdity. One does not have to read much of Thack-

* The Fashionable Authoress.

*² A Box of Novels.

*³ A Brother of the Press.

*⁴ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVI.

*⁵ Grant in Paris.

*⁶ The Next French Revolution, Chapter V.

*⁶ Catherine, Chapter X.

*⁷ The Professor, Chapter I.

eray's works to know that he admires the style of that "Book of which Simplicity is the great characteristic."*

Thackeray does not devote much space to the drama and poetry of his day. The actors in Mr. Boyster's comedies of English life are not realistic. Lady Gadabout makes a morning call in a low satin dress with jewels in her hair, "while Mrs. Tallyho transacts all the business of life in a riding habit." The men address each other as thee and thou and use the names of classical divinities familiarly.*2 Bulwer Lytton's Sea-Captain is no better. The speeches are stilted. The characters are good in outline, but not properly filled in; and too many sensational and improbable incidents are crowded into the action.*3

An admirer of the simple in literature would be likely to condemn Byron's kind of poetry. Thackeray says that Byron never wrote from his heart, but always with an eye to the public.*4 The poetry by ladies of fashion is mentioned in The Death Shriek of Miss Clutterbuck,*5 and in Lady Flummery's Heavenly Chords, "being

* The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter II.

*2 A Night's Pleasure II, in Sketches and Travels in London.

*3 Epistles to the Literati, Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush

*4 A Journey from Cornhill to Cairo, Chapter V.

*5 The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVIII.

simply a collection of heavenly chords robbed from lyrics of Watts, Wesley, Brady etc."*

Literature in prose -- tracts, tales, novels, and romances-- is more important in Thackeray's criticism than drama and verse. He utterly condemns the religious tracts, "those detestable mixtures of truth, lies, false sentiment, false reasoning, bad grammar....."*2

Some comparisons are made between the worth of novels and of books on history. Novels often give a more vivid picture of past times than do histories. "Fielding's History of Jonathan Wild The Great does seem to us to give a more curious picture of the manners of those times than any recognized history of them."*3 Many histories written in the eighteenth century are long since forgotten while Fielding's novel is still alive. Histories are notoriously inaccurate, and filled with unimportant details and names.*4 We cannot believe what they tell us concerning the characters of the persons with whom they deal. Dr. Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield contains truer and

* The Fashionable Authoress.

*2 Madame Sand in The Paris Sketch Book.

*3 Caricatures and Lithography in Paris, Paris Sketch Book.

*4 On Some French Fashionable Novels, The Paris Sketch Book.

more instructive pictures of human life than most histories.*

Concerning Thackeray's criticisms of Newgate literature, novels of high life, and romances, so much has been written that I fear I can only restate the most important opinions. Thackeray felt that such novels as Lord Lytton's Eugene Aram,*² and Ernest Maltravers,*³ and Ainsworth's Rockwood were debasing the public taste and corrupting public morals. He thought that even some of Dickens' characters in Oliver Twist had the same tendencies. These evils he tries to correct. He speaks disparagingly of the way in which Ainsworth and Cruikshanks have represented the highwayman's life "as so poetic and brilliant, so prodigal of delightful adventures, so adorned with champagne, gold-lace, and brocade."*⁴

In his fight against the glorification of criminals, Thackeray wrote several stories in which he undertook to show crime and criminals in all their disgusting aspects. The most famous of these is Catherine. All of the characters, he says, are "utterly worthless." "Let our rogues in novels act like

* The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter I.

*² Catherine, Chapter III.

*³ Ibid., Chapter I.

*⁴ The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XV.

rogues..... Among the rogues we will have nothing that shall be mistaken for virtue."* In Chapter XIII. he states his purpose of disgusting the public "with blood and foul Newgate garbage." This story, the author claims, is "a scene of unmixed rascality performed by persons who never deviate with good feeling." The only difficulty is that in it, as in some other stories, he succeeds in creating a certain interest in his villain. In fact, I doubt if any person could write a long story without arousing in himself and in his readers some sympathy with the principal characters. In A Shabby Genteel Story there is something likable about George Brandon in spite of his villainy. Perhaps we like him because the girls like him. Barry Lyndon, the hero and villain of his own Memoirs, is positively charming as a boy, and still somewhat heroic until after his marriage, when his abuse of his step-son and wife render him disgusting. This inability on Thackeray's part to paint a perfect villain indicates the goodness and human warmth of his own heart. On the other hand, no reader will ever find in Thackeray a single sentence that excuses or palliates crime or wickedness; or that leaves even a lingering desire for such a life. His

* Catherine, Chapter I.

works are perfectly safe reading for boys and girls.

Several novels purporting to show the life of the aristocracy appeared during the 1830's and early '40's . They were not true to life,* being written by people not well acquainted with the society that they described. These authors are satirized in Fashionable Fax and Polite Annygoats. Mr. Yellowplush, from his position of vantage as a waiting man at "my Lady's" table learns much of society. "It is from this source that our great novel writers have drawn their experience, retailing the truths which they learned." Mr. Yellowplush may "present the reader with the only authentic picture of fashionable life which has been given to the world in our time." It must be admitted, ironically, that you meet "delightful good company" in Mrs. Gore's Mrs. Armytage which "seldom introduces you to anybody under a marquis;" and that Samuel Warren's Ten Thousand a Year has "an air of easy high fashion."*2

The pretense and sham of such novels is only exceeded by that of many romances of the same period. I have already said that Thackeray recognized the worth of sincere novels. It is

* British Novelists, page 229.

*2 The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVI.

of what he considers the extravagances of such books as The Scottish Chiefs* that he complains. Major Gahagan is a burlesque on exaggerated stories of adventure. Here, among other incidents, is told the story of shooting off a row of one hundred and thirty-four elephants' trunks with one shot from a brass gun.*² In the fourteenth chapter of The Irish Sketch Book, the author gives two pages of narrative, in the style of the polite novels of the day, suggesting that anybody can finish the remaining two volumes.

Thackeray is fond of burlesquing dramatic scenes of the popular novels; and scattered through many different volumes are paragraphs of this ridicule. A stock love scene is described. "The count... and the maiden ... were mute... What years of buried joys and fears..... arose from their graves in the far past!The tearsrolled down the cheek of each."*³ Another popular love scene is mentioned when Redmond "did not behold her by moonlight playing on the guitar; or rescue her from the hands of ruffians as Alfonso does Lindamira

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter V.

* Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IX.

*² Major Gahagan, Chapter VII.

*³ Catherine, Chapter X.

in the novel."* And because Redmond "had not read novels and romantic plays for nothing," he threatens, in the most approved language, to kill his rival.*2 The enraged villain, as well as the lover, is expected to behave according to rule. But Thackeray will "not say after the fashion of the story-books that Mr. Brock listened with a flashing eye and a distended nostril; that his chest heaved tumultuously, and that his hand fell down mechanically to his side, where it played with the brass handle of his sword."*3

In all his literary criticism Thackeray is protesting against pretense and sham, vulgarity and wickedness. He is pleading for sincerity and a high moral purpose. He does not think that a moral must be tacked on to a story, but its influence should be for good. Jealousy of authors, insincerity of critics, and thoughtlessness of the public do not encourage the production of the best literature. Though Bunyan, in The Life and Death of Mr. Badman, had wished to check the appetite on the part of the public for fiction deifying heroic criminals,*4

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter I.

*2 Ibid., Chapter II.

*3 Catherine, Chapter II.

*4 Motives in English Fiction, page 60.

yet conditions in the early nineteenth century demanded that some one again show that Newgate novels have a positively bad influence on the morals of the young and of the criminally inclined. Absurd stories of adventure, and improbable romances fire the imaginations of thoughtless young readers, tempting them to silly and wicked experiments in love. Nowhere does Thackeray show a sounder judgment or a more enlightened Christian spirit than in his literary criticism.

B. ABROAD.

CHAPTER VII.

AMERICA AND SCOTLAND.

Because Thackeray has many of the prejudices and insularities of the typical Englishman, his opinions of contemporary life abroad, while always interesting, have not the solid worth of his criticisms of English life. The Irish Sketch Book and The Paris Sketch Book contain the bulk of his early writings about life outside of England. In addition, there are scraps of criticisms of foreign life scattered in other books and articles. Especially interesting are those bits dealing with America and Scotland.

The government of the United States seemed weak to Thackeray. He turns aside from a discussion of Napoleon in The Paris Sketch Book to say of America that it has a "Government which dares not punish homicide or arson performed before its very eyes, and which the pirates of Texas.....can brave at their will.

There is no government, but a prosperous anarchy." He accuses Americans, along with Englishmen, of obsequiousness.* The cool reception which he accords the public speech of Washington Jackson indicates a rather low opinion of American public men.*² To offset this, is the whole-hearted praise of George Washington, "the American Alfred, sir, who gave and took from us many a good beating, and drove the English-Danes out of his country."*³ The infrequency of the references to the United States shows that Thackeray during his early period was not thinking much about us.

Neither is Scotland of any great importance in the works under consideration. Miss Tickletoby in her Lectures displays extreme prejudice against Scotland and the Scotch. She says that the Romans did not conquer Scotland, because it was worthless;*⁴ and that King Richard must have been pressed for coin when he could bring such an article as Scotland to pawn.*⁵

* Catherine, Chapter II.

*² A Dinner in the City in Sketches and Travels in London.

*³ Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture II.

*⁴ Ibid., Lecture I.

*⁵ Ibid., Lecture VII.

She villifies William Wallace and Robert Bruce as murderers, and belittles the Scotch victory at Bannockburn.* These comments on Scotland are too bitter to be humorous.

* Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture IX.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRANCE.

"Thackeray loved Paris all the days of his life, and those who hold the mistaken belief that he hated France and the French have no more reason to do so than those who assert that he hated the Irish."* Against the quotation from Mr. Melville, I balance a conversation with an eminent Frenchman, Dr. Louis Cazamian, a Professor of English Literature in the University of Paris and formerly Visiting Professor at The Rice Institute. In discussing Thackeray, he gave the impression that he considered The Paris Sketch Book bitter criticism. In Thackeray's references to France and the French, I find no hatred expressed; nothing worse than contempt.

Not a single good or noble French national trait does he point out. He says that the French have frantic streaks; that they are light-minded, given to braggadocio, and loose in morals;

* William Makepeace Thackeray, A Biography, Chapter VII.

and that their learned professions are rotten. "Ten thousand frantic streaks" may be accounted for by "the bright clear French air" which quite intoxicates an Englishman at first, and perhaps keeps the natives in a permanent state of intoxication.*

"The light-minded people" of Paris show their frivolity by attending masked balls during a siege.*² The fickle Frenchmen swap allegiances "without difficulty."*³ In the names that Thackeray assigns to French regiments, he taunts them with effeminacy and dandyism.*⁴ "That little gray coat of Napoleon's" has "a spice of claptrap and dandyism, no doubt; but we must remember the country which he had to govern".*⁵ National frivolity is shown in the tawdry second funeral of Napoleon.

Thackeray does not deny that the French may be brave, but they render their courage "ludicrous by intolerable braggadocio."*⁶

* Madame Sand in The Paris Sketch Book.

*² The Next French Revolution, Chapter III.

*³ Ibid., Chapter VI.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter III.

*⁵ Men and Coats.

*⁶ The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter II.

Prince de Joinville brags too much about what he would have done, had he been attacked by the English.* Miss Tickletoby, with just a little maliciousness, is glad that Edward III. beat "those absurd, vapping, vainglorious Frenchmen."*²

Throughout The Paris Sketch Book runs an implied, and often expressed, charge of looseness in morals. An Englishman, Thackeray thinks, can never understand a Frenchman, because of the difference in the two national outlooks on the moral world. "We are married.....and would just as soon make love to the Pope of Rome as to any one but our own wife. If you do not make love to Flicflac, from the day after her marriage to the day she reaches sixty, she thinks you a fool. We won't play at ecarte with Trefle on Sunday nights; and are seen walking, about one o'clock, away from the church. "Grend Dieu," cries Trefle, "is that man mad? He won't play at cards on a Sunday; he goes to church on Sunday."*³

French religion is summarily disposed of. "There is no religion in Paris. In France, true religion has

* The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter II.

*² Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture X.

*³ On Some French Fashionable Morals in The Paris Sketch Book.

disappeared altogether."* There is no religious hypocrisy, because that is impossible without the existence of religion.

In the contemporary French government, political institutions, and outlook on national questions, Thackeray finds little to commend and much to ridicule. The government of Louis Philippe and the King himself are treated lightly in The Next French Revolution. The King's endeavors to secure satisfactory allowances for his amiable family and to get "from the nation as much as his faithful people could possibly afford" are stressed. Louis' overthrow is predicted for the year 1884. Curiously enough, Thackeray missed the date merely by misplacing the 8 and the 4. The instability of the French government*² was of course a favorite theme of more than one English writer of the nineteenth century.

This instability perhaps led to a certain contempt for French public and political institutions. Thackeray never refers to the cross of the Legion of Honor with respect. Louis Philippe, he says, distributed them "so freely that red ribbon

* Caricatures and Lithography in Paris, The Paris Sketch Book.

*² The Second Funeral of Napoleon, Chapter III.

rose two hundred per cent in the market."* In another passage, a drink of wine and a cross are mentioned in the same breath, and the wine is chosen as the more valuable.*² "The Bar with its roguish practitioners...and foresworn judges;... .. The Bourse, with its cheats and dupes; and the Medical Profession, and the quacks who ruled it,"*³ all are made to seem worthy of the satire heaped on them in the stage person of Robert Macaire.

It is not surprising to find in the writings of a typical Englishman of a period close to the Napoleonic Wars the thought that the French "hate us," and a denunciation of French imperialism. "Then there is the favorite claptrap of the "natural frontier." The Frenchman yearns to be bounded by the Rhine and the Alps; and next follows the cry, "Let France take her place among nations, and direct, as she ought to do, the affairs of Europe." These are the two chief articles contained in the new imperial programme."*⁴

Art and artists fare much better in France, The Paris Sketch

* The Next French Revolution, Chapter III.

*² Ibid., Chapter II.

*³ Caricatures and Lithography, The Paris Sketch Book.

*⁴ Napoleon and His System, The Paris Sketch Book.

Book tells us, than in England. In France, the love of beautiful pictures is universal. In England, "the many ... have not yet certainly arrived at properly appreciating fine art.. The deformed Zuleikas.....and caricatures of flowers" with a few family portraits represent the art of the house. "The family goes to the Exhibition once a year and to the National Gallery once in ten years." Across the Channel, are found in the humble homes cheap engravings of really great pictures. On a fête-day, the Louvre is thronged with thousands of the poorer classes.* And here strangely enough Thackeray says that the lower classes in France, as a result of this love of art, are more moral than the same classes in England.

A detailed study of criticisms of French art lies outside our field of study. It is sufficient to notice here that Thackeray speaks approvingly of the great opportunity enjoyed by art students, and the good prices obtained for pictures in France. Thackeray's criticism of French painting seems not to be prejudiced by his nationality, and he finds very many pictures in the galleries to admire.*2

* Caricatures and Lithography in Paris, The Paris Sketch Book.

*2 On the French School of Painting, The Paris Sketch Book.

French literature does not fare so well at the hands of our English critic. The contemporary French drama is largely a portrayal of crime.* "As the great Hugo has one monster to each play, the great Dumas has, ordinarily, half a dozen, . . . who live and move in a vast, delightful complication of crime."* Thackeray does not feel that plays like these are good, but that one should be "heartily ashamed" of frequenting them. Many other plays defile and ridicule religion. Dumas's Caligula, which attempts to be religious, is evil in making a hero out of a villain. "The drama of Victor Hugo, Dumas, and the enlightened classes, is profoundly immoral and absurd." Nothing can be said of the worth of the drama of the common people as good art, but it is "good and right-hearted."

French romances are no better. "De Balzac is not fit for the salon." His stories as well as those of his contemporaries are so full of rogues, murderers, and adulterers as to give a wrong opinion even of French society. Thackeray finds one romance, Jerome Paturot, which is decent enough, but funny with its absurd stories of high life.

Thackeray's criticism of things French is just what one might expect of a mid-Victorian Englishman. He means to be

* French Dramas and Melodramas, The Paris Sketch Book.

fair, but in only one or two particulars does he succeed. He admits that their art is good; and that they have some courage. But otherwise they are a wretched people. Their national traits are weak or wicked; they have no religion; their King is a money-grabber; their artistic literature is immoral; and their moral literature has no artistic worth. Thackeray could probably love Paris, without respecting the Parisians.

CHAPTER IX.

IRELAND.

The Irish Sketch Book gives most of Thackeray's views on Ireland and the Irish. "All that one can hope to do," he says, "is to give a sort of notion of the movement and manners of the people; pretending by no means to offer a description of places, but simply an account of what one sees in them." We must constantly remember that these accounts are written by an Englishman; and though many of them are very fair, they are never free from a certain patronizing and superior manner which an Irishman finds it hard to forgive in a foreigner.

Thackeray recognizes that the people here as everywhere else have some good and some bad traits of character. Their bad traits are indolence, pretense, obsequiousness, and lawlessness. Of the first trait, many examples are cited. The carmen at Kingston were too indolent to bid for patronage; * the

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter I.

jeweller at Waterford* and the shopkeeper at Limerick*² preferred gossiping with a friend to waiting on their customers. The people seemed to have nothing better to do than stare, swagger, and be idle in the streets;*² at least forty persons found time to witness the departure of the coach from Cork;*³ and the road from Cork to Bantry seemed lined with idle people.

One silent testimonial to this national indolence and carelessness was the large number of unfinished buildings, especially churches only partly finished. Examples of incompleated buildings are the chapel at Waterford;*⁴ three handsome Catholic churches in Cork,*³ and a stone castle near Bandon.*⁵

The people generally are given to braggadocio and pretence, and are fond of shams.*⁶ It is not surprising that Thackeray brings this charge here, because it is the great sin with which he taxes the whole world. But the Irish, he thinks, are just a little the worst offenders, and he constantly satirizes their

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter IV.

*² Ibid., Chapter XIV.

*³ Ibid., Chapter VII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter IV.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter VIII.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIV.

shams, in articles, in stories, and in the characters of some of his most boastful heroes, such as Major Gahagan.* Barry Lyndon admits his royal descent, while laughing to utter scorn the boasting of many of "my countrymen who are all for descending from Kings of Ireland and talk of a domain no bigger than would feed a pig as if it were a principality."*²

This pretense sometimes took the form of twopenny magnificence which "exists all over Ireland." This cheap magnificence was displayed in the gorgeous costume of the Lord Mayor of Dublin;*³ in the invention of fine names for country houses;*⁴ in the pompous signs over the humble shops,*⁵ ambitiously called emporiums or repositories,*⁶ which are often "empty makeshift looking places with their best goods outside."*⁷

Closely connected with this pretense is obsequiousness, for which we know Thackeray is constantly looking. No wonder then

* The Tremendous Adventures of Major Gahagan.

*² Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter I.

*³ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVII.

*⁴ The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter VI.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter I.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XXV.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XIV.

that he accuses the Irish of servile imitation of the English;* a childish love of rank;*2 and an undue respect for lords, not only real, but sham.*3

The Irish as a whole are not shown as being lawless. Certain districts are mentioned, such as the one "called the Welsh mountains", where human life is cheap.*4 The sawyers did not hesitate to throw vitriol in the face of those sawmill owners who had introduced machinery, thus throwing men out of employment.*5 Warning letters to landlords, and their subsequent murders are recorded.*6 Barry Lyndon describes the foot-pads in Dublin;*6 and The Irish Sketch Book tells of certain parts of Cork so lawless "that not the policeman, but only the priest" can penetrate them.*7 Yet not much is made of the lawlessness of the country.

In spite of their faults, many of the people Thackeray finds

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XVII.

*2 The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XIV.

*3 Ibid., Chapter XXIII.

*4 Ibid., Chapter III.

*5 Ibid., Chapter VIII.

*6 The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XIV.

*7 The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter VII.

to be intelligent, good-humored, and hospitable. He admits with real generosity that in general brightness and intelligence many of the boys in the streets, young clerks, and an Irish crowd out to see the races excel people of the same rank in England.* The good humor of the passengers in the crowded stage-coach is cited as typically Irish.*²

Nor in hospitality does Thackeray find them lacking. He finds this virtue almost universal in Ireland. "If an Irish gentleman does not give you a more hearty welcome than an Englishman, at least he has a more hearty way of welcoming you."*³ "I have met more gentlemen here than in any place I ever saw; gentlemenentering into the feelings of others and anxious to set them at their ease, or to gratify them..... In Dublin a lawyer left his chambers, and a literary man his books to walk the streets with me. ... Would a London man leave his business to trudge to the Tower or the Park with a stranger?"*²

The conditions under which most of the people live are shown in The Irish Sketch Book as unfortunately bad. Dirt, dilapidation, and poverty are mentioned so frequently as to

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapters VI. and XIII.

*² Ibid., Chapter X.

*³ Ibid., Chapter II.

impress the reader with their universality. Thackeray's hotel room in Dublin had probably not been well cleaned for six months; at Waterford the dirt and actual uncleanness at the inn dining room is nauseating;* and the building itself is dirty. The Catholic College of Maynooth, Dublin, is described as inexpressibly dirty.*² The accounts of the filth found in the poorer parts of Cork*³ and Dublin*⁴ read more like accounts of conditions in the Dark Ages than of those of only a hundred years ago.

The dilapidation and poverty that Thackeray describes are even more striking than the dirt. "As for the shabbiness..... the English eye grows quite accustomed to it in a month."*⁵ In Cork the author rides in "a cracked old coach with the paint rubbed off;"*³ and finds everywhere the travelling conveyances "arranged so that you may get as much practice in being wet as possible."*⁶ Broken window panes are usual.*⁷ Many of the

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter II.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXXII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter VII.

*⁴ The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XIV.

*⁵ The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XVII.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter IX.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XII.

villas are rickety and the land grown up in weeds and grass and left idle.* Even comparatively new houses are left to decay.*² At Carlow the visitor finds "a large tumble-down looking divinity college;" at "a miserable village called the Royal Oak,a dilapidated hotel;" at Listowel, a town which "has, on a more intimate acquaintance, by no means the prosperous appearance which a first glance gives it."*³

Thackeray sees beggars and rags everywhere. In two months he is used to the rags.*⁴ The beggars are dirty, loathsome, and diseased.*⁵ They gather round the stage-coaches at every stop. They follow their victims with lies and flattery.* Around the convent at Carlow is a parcel of beggars with their whining prayers.* Even at such a lonely place as the Giant's Causeway, "two beggars stepped over the bog after us, howling for money."*⁶

In the south and west of Ireland the poverty described is

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter III.

*² Ibid., Chapter VII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XII.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter XXIII.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XXIX.

appalling. "It is not the exception, it is the condition of the people..... There are thousands of them at this minute stretched in the sunshine at their cabin doors with no work, scarcely any food, no hope seemingly. Strong country-men are lying in bed for the hunger-- because a man lying on his back does not need so much food as a person a-foot."* The Irish Sketch Book might well be called the Book of Beggars and Poverty.

The union-house at Naas,*² the poor-house at Newry,*³ and the North Dublin Union-House*⁴ are cited as models of their kind. Thackeray wonders why people will starve when they might have decent comfort in these institutions. He speaks of the "prisoners" in the last institution as being particularly well cared for. In this one word, he has likely revealed the cause of the failure of the poor-houses everywhere.

Thackeray's opinion of the religious conditions in Ireland are so colored by his Anglican opinions about religion generally, that any discussion here would be without profit.

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter VII.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXV.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXVII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XXXII.

He shows many good priests and bewails the intolerance of Irish Protestants; but points out so much that he considers superstitious and heathenish in the Irish belief that the reader is forced to think that he is guilty of some intolerance.

In his discussion of political conditions in Ireland, and the relations between the two "sister kingdoms" Thackeray is plainly unfair. England is altogether in the right; and indolent, lazy Ireland, entirely in the wrong. He complains because, after centuries of English oppression, "I find upon almost every.....subject a peevish and puerile suspiciousness."* The absentee landlord is not "the keeper" of his tenants. "I have heard people talk as if when Pat's thatch was blown off, the landlord ought to go and fetch the straw and ladder, and mend it himself."*² Exactly; except that in America, we expect him to use something more substantial than straw.

Thackeray fails to acknowledge that bad and oppressive laws can remove all incentive to work and so sap the energy and hope of a people as to make them indolent and careless. Dust and cobwebs which he charges to Irish indolence*³ might be traced

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter VIII.

*² Ibid., Chapter VIII

*³ Ibid., Chapter VII.

to English oppression and misrule. Stagnant business conditions at Westport,* which he charges to the extravagances of the Irish, may have been caused by tyrannical trade laws.

The important idea that Thackeray advances about Ireland is that the indolence of the people has brought about a woful state of dirt and dilapidation, poverty and starvation. For this condition, the Irish Catholic Church is somewhat to blame, but the English government not at all. No other conclusion could be reasonably expected from an anti-Catholic of the extreme type, and a typical Englishman of the last century. He has no suggestions to make for the improvement of conditions. He belittles the work of the clerical or political "demagogue (or reformer) and has no hope for the country except in the growth of his favorite middle class.*2 What a contempt he has for the average Irishman!

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XX.

*2 Ibid., Chapter XXXII.

PART II.

THACKERAY'S LITERARY ART.

A. THACKERAY'S RELATIONS
WITH HIS PUBLIC.

CHAPTER X.

HIS METHODS OF SECURING SYMPATHETIC ATTENTION.

Thackeray's criticisms seem so good-natured and he himself so wide in his sympathies that one is first inclined to think everybody can read his works without a feeling of resentment. A professor at The Rice Institute, Dr. Cazamian, was the first to call to my attention that certain books, such as The Book of Snobs, The Irish Sketch Book, The Paris Sketch Book, and The Second Funeral of Napoleon had in their day been very offensive to a considerable number of very good people. I said to him that west of the Mississippi we have so little snobbery that The Snobs shoots harmlessly over our heads; and of course it is hard for us to get the point of view of the Irishman or the Frenchman.

I have already mentioned certain injustices of The Irish Sketch Book. Mr. Melville, who has perhaps no Irish blood in his veins, takes an opposite view, and in support of his opin-

ion cites Lever's acceptance of the dedication. "Charles Lever, it may be mentioned, was much blamed by some of his countrymen for accepting the dedication of a book that, according to them, was full of blunders and exaggerations.... Lever, however, ignored these attacks, and, confident that the author had no intention to misrepresent the Irish, reviewed the book favorably in the Dublin University Review, of which he was the editor. Lever was undoubtedly right in his belief, for Thackeray never desired to do more than poke fun at the eccentricities of the inhabitants of the neighboring island."* Perhaps so, but nobody, not even an Irishman, enjoys having fun poked at his eccentricities. "If he amused himself by exaggerating their pronunciation, he did no harm;"² unless it is harm to hurt the feelings of our neighbors.

In The Paris Sketch Book the criticism is more serious, and therefore more cutting. A Frenchman must find some of its statements very hard to forgive.

In the great bulk of his criticism Thackeray meant to hurt nobody's feelings. He is usually careful to "disarm criticism while indulging in it." His first method of doing this is to show a good-humored sympathy with the persons and types criti-

* William Makepeace Thackeray, A Biography, page 146.

cized. While making fun of those persons setting out on their continental travels, he admits a similar longing for a trip abroad.* He agrees with his "dear brother reader"*² in the reader's opinion of a Frenchman; "and cannot help having a lurking regard for that pompous old Bigwig,"*³ Goldmore, at whom he has been jesting through several chapters.

By including himself in his criticisms Thackeray accomplishes two purposes. He further strengthens the idea of his own kindliness toward his victims, and establishes what Miss Russel calls "purity of purpose," by which she means, "freedom from the affectation censured in others."*⁴ Since Thackeray is himself a genuine Snob, the only way in which he can hope to ward off criticism from himself is to plead guilty before he is accused. In the Prefatory Remarks to The Book of Snobs he playfully tells what an overweening opinion some people have of the importance of their work. Then lest this should sound too harsh he admits in the next paragraph that "I have long gone about with a conviction in my heart that I had a work to do--a Work

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXI.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXXV.

*⁴ Satire in the Victorian Novel, Part I., Chapter I.

with a great W."

This work of his own, which he says is "to write books and sell the same,---a chapter for a guinea, a line for a penny,"* he criticizes freely. He jests about his "delicate wit" and "deep-gushing pathos" and has no quarrel with the public for its neglect, as does Sir Lytton.*² The editor accuses our Fat Contributor, in a note to Chapter V., of having been "in the present instance, a little tedious."

Michael Angelo Titmarsh bases his claims to being an art-critic on the fact that, "He paints so badly, that, hang it! he must be a good judge."*³ His criticisms of artists in Titmarsh in the Picture Galleries are softened by an inclusion of his own work in the same censure that he is about to bestow upon the pictures. He must write light literature, because the public will pay for no other kind, just as they must paint such pictures as will sell.

While hating snobbery and obsequiousness, he admits being a snob, and having a foolish fondness for lords. "It is impossible for any Briton, perhaps, not to be a snob in some degree."*⁴

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXIV.

*² Emmeline Banquets.

*³ Picture Gossip.

*⁴ The Book of Snobs, Chapter V.

"I myself have been taken for one."* After a stinging rebuke to lords for accepting privileges, he continues by saying that "under happier circumstances, Smith and I, ... were we dukes ourselves, would stand by our order."*² "Suppose it had been decreed by nature that you and I should be marquises? We would not refuse, I suppose,"*³ Even as it is, "I should be ready to jump out of my skin if two Dukes would walk down Pall Mall with me."*⁴ By so many confessions of petty weaknesses Thackeray has conciliated every class of persons whom he criticises with the possible exception of the Irish and the French.

He recognizes the limitations of satire and so relieves our fears that he may use it unworthily. Mr. Punch is exhorted to "hit no foul blow."*⁵ Thackeray will not "launch a thunder bolt at the heads of these little Pall Mall butter-flies."*⁶ Neither are scoundrels fit subjects for satire.*⁷ The purpose of

* The Book of Snobs, Prefatory Remarks.

*² Ibid., Chapter Last.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XXVIII.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XII.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter Last.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XL.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XLIV.

The Book of Snobs is to reform and help,* though he recognizes the impossibility of changing the nature of men.*² Finally, some things are too sacred for satiric treatment. "Of these Clerics there are some whose claim to Snobbishness is undoubted and yet it cannot be discussed here; for the same reason that Punch would not set up his show in a Cathedral, out of respect for the solemn service celebrated within. There are some places where he acknowledges himself not privileged to make a noise, and puts away his show, and silences his drum, and takes off his hat, and holds his peace."*³

In conclusion, it is safe to say that a few persons, and a few classes of people have been stung by Thackeray's criticism, but the great body of English and American readers have had no greater complaint than that their little foibles have been good-naturedly pointed out and censured.

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XLIV.

*² Ibid., Chapter Last.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XI.

B. .METHODS OF CRITICISM.

CHAPTER XI.

SATIRE.

Satire is an element in most of Thackeray's writings. When we consider that Thackeray's main purpose is to expose shams, this is necessarily true, since satire is essentially a kind of writing which undertakes to unmask shams.* In ancient Greece, satire might never be directed against the community, but no man or god was immune.*2 Thackeray's satire is more often directed against some public sham.

It is sometimes difficult to say whether or not a given passage in Thackeray is satire. In describing the disgusting Mrs. Crump and her daughter he says: "Both burst out laughing, as ladies will laugh, and as, let us trust, they may laugh forever and ever. Why need there be a reason for laughing? Let us laugh when we are laughy, as we sleep when we are sleepy."*3

* Satire in the Victorian Novel, Part I., Chapter I.

*2 Satire, Gilbert Cannan.

*3 The Ravenswing, Chapter I.

I have not been able to decide whether the author means that the laughter of the women was out of place, or simply that laughter is good. One statement about Miss Tickletoby's school is difficult to interpret. She is Thackeray's own mouthpiece, and therefore the following passage might be taken as a defense of corporal punishment. "With regard to her educational system, it is highly coercive. She has none of the new fangled notions regarding the inutility of corporal punishments."* When we remember Thackeray's disapproval of the boys' conduct at the public school in "putting their posteriors on a block for Dr. Hawtrey to lash at"*² we wonder just what he does think of Miss Tickletoby's system. One is tempted to apply to Thackeray his own remark about the villain in The Shabby Genteel Story: "Brandon was so very sarcastic that not a single soul at table understood him."

Thackeray has many different kinds of satire. Sometimes it is half playful, but none the less cutting. The boredom of fashionable evening parties where "My dear Bob, you boys must pay with your persons"*³ for previous hospitality; and the

* Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture I.

*² The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XXXI.

*³ The Influence of Lovely Woman, Sketches and Travels in London.

mediocrity of theatrical performances at Brighton afford much amusement to the reader at the expense of these two institutions. Landseer's Noah's Ark is reduced to absurdity when the Ark is likened to a Calais steamer, the parrots to birds in a cage at the Zoological Gardens, and Noah and his companions to a group of emigrants in the hold of a ship.* The pulpits in the Brussels churches are so grotesquely ornate that "the priestmust be lost in the midst of all these queer gimcracks; in order to be consistent, they ought to dress him up, too, in some odd fantastic suit."*2

Somewhat like this playful satire, is a kind which I have called indirect satire. This kind sometimes approaches irony, as in the praise of James Grant's works. Fitz-Boodle says that the portraits of Moore and of Bulwer have made "us more intimate with the accomplished authors. I venture to say that though, perhaps, he does not know it himself, as a writer of fiction Grant surpasses any of them; and that he can say of his works what they cannot say of theirs, that in every single page there is something amusing."*3 When it is remembered that

* Titmarsh in the Picture Galleries.

*2 Little Travels and Roadside Sketches.

*3 Grant in Paris by Fitz-Boodle.

Grant's works are intended to be serious and instructive, we realize the sting in the seeming compliment. Useless learning is satirized in the compliment paid to Lady Rose, who has a "prodigious interest in Borneo and displayed a knowledge of the history of the Punjaub and Kaffirland that does credit to her memory."* An apparent compliment to the Druids exposes cowardice. They remained at home and encouraged the soldiers, "praying to their gods, and longing no doubt for a share of the glory and danger; but they had learned, they said, to sacrifice themselves for the public good."*²

Another form of this indirect satire is a sort of apology to the reader in a footnote, explaining that the hint given in the text, "dear sir, is of course not intended to apply personally to you."*³ A different way of speaking confidentially to the reader is in the last sentence of The Snob Royal. Here, in a sort of Parthian shot, he indirectly accuses his readers of the obsequiousness of flunkeys. "If you want to moralize upon the mutability of human affairs, go and see the figure of Gorgius in his real, identical robes, at the wax-work. -- Admittance

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXX.

*² Miss Tickletoby's Lectures, Lecture 1.

*³ On Tailoring, Sketches and Travels in London.

one shilling. Children and flunkeys sixpence. Go, and pay sixpence."*

Types of persons are satirized in the suggestive names applied to many of the characters in the essays and stories. Colonel Snobley*² and Sir Snobby Snobky*³ are sufficiently identified. Crawler and Page and Toady are suitable names for the obsequious persons, always ready to flatter the insignificant President of St. Boniface College.*⁴

Among the nobility, Lady Wagglewiggle*⁵ is a light member of the London smart set; and Lady Fanny Toffy*⁶ with high social aspirations, is a daughter of Earl Brandyball, fond of wine. The Duchess of Fitzbattleaxe belligerently snubs the rich Lady Croesus.*⁷ The dull Lord Longears fittingly has an eldest son,*⁸ Fitz-Heehaw, sure of a place in Parliament in spite of his inca-

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter II.

*² Ibid., Prefatory Remarks.

*³ Ibid., Chapter IV.

*⁴ Ibid., Chapter XIV.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter VIII.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XII.

*⁷ Ibid., Chapter XXXVI.

*⁸ Ibid., Chapter Last.

capacity. There are many other lords and ladies in these pages, such as Lady Blanche Bluenose,* conscious of her aristocratic blood; and Lady Smigsmag,*² with her smug condescension to her poor relations.

Lord Lollipop is so unimportant in the world that his most strenuous occupation is promenading in the Park; and Prince Pattypan can do nothing more strenuous than take an airing in his go-cart.*³ Sir George Flimsy*⁴ is sufficiently described when he is named. Many men are so insignificant that they are hardly worth names. Of these may be mentioned Lord Thimblering, Ensign Snooks,*⁵ and Honorable James Jillyflower.*⁶ Of all the despicable persons that Thackeray flashes on his pages, the worst are weak men, lacking in character and purpose.

Mr. Slang "rattles on" making many exquisite jokes;"*⁷

* The Diary of Jeames de la Pluche.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter Last.

*³ Ibid., Chapter IV.

*⁴ The Diary of Jeames de la Pluche.

*⁵ Little Travels and Roadside Sketches.

*⁶ Wanderings of Our Fat Contributor.

*⁷ The Ravenswing, Chapter VII.

Mr. Spout* is the New Member for Jawborough; and Mr. Jawkins*² forces his opinions on all his acquaintances.

Silenus, an old reprobate, makes a drunkard of Mr. Tippetton.*³

The defiant young rascal, handsome and brave, but altogether unruly, who sets at naught the unjustifiable authority of his step-father, is fittingly named Lord Bullingdon.*⁴

Miss Lydia Croesus, Mrs. Goldcalf,*⁵ and Mr. Goldmore are very rich people. Lady Susan Scraper*⁶ has difficulty "scraping" together enough to keep up appearances. Mr. Squeezer*⁷ is trying to collect all the rent possible for his rooms at Brighton.

The choicest names are reserved to describe the schools and teachers. The English system of corporal punishment is vividly and humorously suggested by Switchester College*⁸ and Bally-

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXI.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXXVIII.

*³ Mr. Brown the Elder, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁴ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVII.

*⁵ A Word About Balls, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Chapter VI.

*⁷ Meditations over Brighton.

*⁸ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XIII.

whacket of Backwhacket Academy. Stupid masters are Dr. Block and Dr. Buzwig; and Dr. Tickler is surely competent to wield the rod!

This use of suggestive names is a very pleasing and effective sort of satire. This satire is too short and humorous to be dull. It is often so striking as to be easily remembered, and so sensible as to be influential in many of the little details of life. How many needless switchings might children have escaped, had every teacher read of Switchester College!

There are, in addition to Thackeray's long burlesques, such as the Diary of C. Jeames de la Pluche, which are too well known for comment here, many short pieces of burlesque and parody. This parody is one of Thackeray's principal methods of satirizing the sham of some contemporary literature. The absurd and fulsome notices of worthless romances are ridiculed in the review of Lady Flummery's Henri, in which the lady is exalted to a place beside Shakespeare.*

In a paragraph from a story of an old castle, written "by a young man", is given a specimen of "the terrible and mysterious style-- much neglected with us of late." This specimen is a good parody on the popular stories of adventure. "The maid-

* The Fashionable Authoress.

en was left in her vast chamber alone. She sat thinking over the strange and mysterious words which Alfred had uttered to her in the shrubbery..... The darkness of the apartment filled with tremor the sensitive and romantic soul of the young girl.....It seemed to her, as if, in the night silence, groans passed through the chamberThe tapers flickered and seemed to burn blue. ...But what was the maiden's terror when from the wall at her bedside she saw thrust forward a naked hand and arm....."*

Redmond Barry satirizes the style of the popular novel by telling in what a vulgar and unromantic way his passion for Nora began.*³ But he soon learns the approved way of making love, "because I had not read novels and romantic plays for nothing." So he tells Captain Fagan in glowing language: "I swear I'll fight the man who pretends to the hand of Nora Brady. I'll follow him, if it's into the church.... I'll have his blood.... and this riband shall be found, dyed in it."*²

Thackeray laughs heartily at the "neat verses, hot with sugar" that Mr. Snob writes for Wiggle, who wants them for a young ladies' album. The only trouble with this parody of

* Jerome Paturot.

*² Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter I.

love poetry is that it is just a little too well done. Without any literary merit, perhaps, the stanzas still have considerable feeling and are much better than much printed to-day in the poets' corners. Here is the first one:

"To Mary.

"I seem, in the midst of the crowd,
 The lightest of all;
 My laughter rings cheery and loud,
 In banquet and ball,
 My lip hath its smiles and its sneers,
 For all men to see;
 But my soul, and my truth, and my tears,
 Are for thee, are for thee!"*

Thackeray's bitterest form of satire is irony. It is true, though an apparent contradiction, that though his writing is singularly free from bitterness, it is, nevertheless, shot through with irony. Perhaps the explanation of the paradox is that the irony is carefully fitted to the subject satirized, and there is no hitting of foul blows.

His love for "my Peerage,"*² which he calls the British Bible*³ shows his attitude towards the institution of aristocracy. His indignation against ruffianism, whether in peasant or noble, finds expression in the ironical title applied to

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XL.

*² Ibid., Chapter XII.

*³ Ibid., Chapter VI.

Lord W--: "Honest gentleman! high-bred aristocrat! genuine lover of humor and art."*

Irony is the one quality of On the Snob Civilian, the purpose of which is to attack certain abuses in the army. The education of the young gentleman commanders "is brilliant, and their time passed in laborious military studies... The civilian who lives out of the army, can't understand it. It is not like the other professions which require intelligenceThere must be mysteries....beyond the comprehension of the civilian, and this paper is written as a warning to all such not to meddle with affairs that are quite out of their sphere."

Mr. Brown's ironical admiration of the gamblers, and his account in the same vein, of the advantages of a young man's spending his nights tippling in the Club*² are comments on dissipations.

Literary criticism is often given in irony. Speaking of a passage from Ten Thousand a Year he says: "This is the gist of the passage--- the elegant words I forget-- but the noble, noble sentiment I shall always cherish and remember. What can be more sublime than the notion of a great man's relatives in

* Going to See a Man Hanged, Sketches and Travels in London.

*2 Mr. Brown the Elder, Sketches and Travels in London.

tears about his dinner?"*

Thackeray occasionally uses irony in his censure of the public school system of England and the attitude of the public towards education. Young Lord Gules, a product of the system, who "accepted the honest Major's invitation... in a letter written in a school-boy handwriting, with a number of faults of spelling, may yet be a very fine classical scholar for what I know: having had his education at Eton."*² The public is not interested in the methods of the schools, because, "The wisdom of our ancestors (which I admire more and more every day) seemed to have determined that the education of youth was so paltry and unimportant a matter, that almost any man, armed with a birch and a regulation cassock and degree, might undertake the charge."*³ It is a great proof of the nobility of Thackeray the man, and of the skill of Thackeray, the artist, that he has used this dangerous weapon of irony so effectively; and while accomplishing his purpose has not unnecessarily or savagely wounded any person.

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXXIV.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXIX.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XIII.

Thackeray's use of many different kinds of satire is one proof of his versatility. His uncertain satire has the charm of the half-unknown; his playful satire keeps down ill feeling; his indirect satire apologizes while it censures; his suggestive names, and parody are forms of humor;* and his irony hits hard when the occasion demands such hitting.

* Almost every handbook of English literature, and biography of Thackeray give a discussion of his humor and pathos. After careful study, I have found it impossible to add to what has already been written on these subjects. Please see pages 482 and 485 of A Study of English Prose Writers.

CHAPTER XII.
CHARACTERIZATION.

Thackeray has many different methods of characterization. The name applied to a person may be a sufficient introduction. A personal description may reveal more than the exterior. An exposition by the author or a confession by the hero sometimes shows the heart. The habits of an individual, occasional acts, or short conversations give revelations of character.

A keen observer can often read a man's character by looking at him. The Marchioness, perched in her carriage on board the Ostend packet and surrounded by her servants is an offensively exclusively lady.* The appearance of Lord Cinqbars is positive assurance of his worthlessness. "A sallow, bleary-eyed, rickety, undersized creature, tottering upon a pair of high-heeled lacquered boots, and supporting himself upon an immense gold-knobbed cane, entered the room with his hat on one side

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXI.

and a jaunty air. It was a white hat with a broad brim, and under it fell a great deal of greasy lank hair, that shrouded the cheek-bones of the wearer. The little man had no beard to his chin, appeared about twenty years of age, and might weigh, stick and all, some seven stone."*

Sometimes instead of giving character by description, Thackeray uses an expository method. We are told that Captain Bull is an "old brute..... with every one of the vices of the most boisterous youth."*² Brandon at twenty-seven was "an idler, spendthrift, and a glutton."*³ In Catherine, "all our heroes with the exception of Mr. Bullock" are utterly worthless.*⁴ Similarly, the author is so afraid that the reader may form a favorable opinion of Mr. Barry that he is careful to point out in a footnote, the gentleman's boastfulness and lack of truth.*⁵

Some of Thackeray's characters are shameless villains and in their confessions open their hearts for all the world to see. Barry Lyndon is the best known of this class. He boasts of

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter VIII.

*² The Book of Snobs, Chapter II.

*³ A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter II.

*⁴ Catherine, Chapter I.

*⁵ Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter VII.

cheating at cards;* tells half apologetically of opening Lady Lyndon's letters;*² and gives matter-of-fact accounts of his abuse of his wife when he was in liquor,*³ and of beating his step-son when his passion was up.*³ Bob Stubbs in The Fatal Boots is another confessing villain who lays open his wickedness to the public gaze. He himself tells of his sharp tricks in exacting interest from his schoolmates; and of his greed and baseness in trying to marry a rich girl.

The habitual behavior of a person shows his character. The Reverend Otto Rose, Principal of the Preparatory Academy, betrays his obsequiousness in his habitual behavior to his pupil, the young Marquis of Bagwig.*⁴ Old Sir George Tufts with his regular swearing, and filthy stories shows himself a fool.*⁵ Captain Raff gambles, gets drunk, and neglects his wife, so branding himself a sot.*⁶ Young Lord Gules' smoking, betting,

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter VIII.

*² Ibid., Chapter XVI.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XVIII.

*⁴ The Book of Snobs, Chapter V.

*⁵ Ibid., Chapter IX.

*⁶ Ibid., Chapter XXIII.

and poor spelling proclaimed him an ignorant little rake.*

A single act may reveal what a man is, as well as a life time of behavior. When Polly gives her fortune of two thousand pounds to her worthless brother, Pump, she shows herself a soft hearted but foolish woman.*² Mrs. Chuff's gift to her son-in-law comes from a generous and wise woman.*³ When old Silenus gets poor Tiptleton drunk,*⁴ he shows his own debauchery. Dr. Dobbs is a true Christian when he and his wife take care of the outcast, Catherine,*⁵

A single speech may show a man's character. In Miss Welbeck's one sentence, "I consider that man a villain,"*⁶ about good but poor Mr. Gray, she reveals herself rather than him. Jawkins' pretense is emphasized in his eternal chatter about a conversation with Sir Robert Peel.*⁷ In one sentence of a letter written by Brandon to Lord Cinqbars, he confesses himself

* The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXIX.

*² Ibid., Chapter XXXVI.

*³ Ibid., Chapter XLIV.

*⁴ Mr. Brown the Elder, Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁵ Catherine, Chapter IV.

*⁶ The Book of Snobs, Chapter XXXIV.

*⁷ A Shauby Genteel Story, Chapter II.

a seducer.*

In a long narrative, the author uses all these methods of delineating character. Quotations and citations are hardly necessary here. One has but to think of Catherine to remember the use of exposition, description, conversation, and deeds in showing the villainy of the criminals. The Fatal Boots and The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon are the best examples of extended confessions; but in them we find description, exposition, and conversation all used with the one purpose of revealing character.

The study of characterization in Thackeray is a difficult matter. He usually shows us complex human beings, hard to understand; not caricatures in the style of Dickens. Had he made Catherine entirely bad according to his plan, he would have given us a caricature. But he succeeded here in spite of himself, and gave the world the story of a bad woman, not a monster. After Barry Lyndon has sunk to a very low moral level he is almost redeemed by the love of his little son, Bryan,*² proving that he too is always a human being. Lord

* A Shabby Genteel Story, Chapter II.

*² Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XIX.

Bullington* is a curious mixture of courage and lawlessness. Old Mrs. Hoggarty*² shows the natural eccentricities of a rich old woman in her conduct towards her poor nephew. Mrs. Smith*³ and Mrs. Shum*⁴ are very life-like, meddling mothers-in-law,--not wicked, but unwise. Thus might almost every one of Thackeray's figures be shown as real flesh and blood persons, whose character is made up of a mixture of those elements found in the great world of men and women.

This gift of creating real persons constitutes Thackeray's claims to being a realist. His realism has to do more with the world of the spirit, than with the external world. As he himself says in The Irish Sketch Book he pretends "by no means to offer a description of places," but "to give a sort of notion of the movement and manners of the people," and thus

* Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Chapter XVIII.

*² The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Chapter XIII.

*³ On Love, Marriage, Men, and Women, in Sketches and Travels in London.

*⁴ Miss Shum's Husband, in The Memoirs of Mr. C. J. Yellowplush.

show their real natures. Dr. Cazamian's exposition of Eliot's realism explains incidentally this quality of Thackeray. "Le réalisme de G. Eliot rappelle celui de Thackeray, plutôt que celui de Dickens ou des Brontë; il est psychologique et moral plus que pittoresque."*

* Le Roman et Les Idées En Angleterre, page 107.

CHAPTER XIII.

DESCRIPTION AND NARRATION.

It is generally understood that an author has some moral or reformatory purpose when he indulges in satire or gives a characterization. On the other hand, a scene may be worth describing because it is beautiful, or a story worth telling because it is entertaining. But Thackeray's descriptions and narrations are more often those of a critic. The moral is usually quite evident, and sometimes told at the end. An apparent exception to this statement is found in many of the descriptions in A Journey From Cornhill to Cairo. Here are descriptions of nature and of places visited, told without any thought of an immediate moral. But the whole sketch may have a lesson to teach,-- the oneness of the human family. Its last sentence seems to indicate as much. "Cavil not, you brother or sister, if your neighbor's voice is not like yours; only hope that his words are honest (as far as they may be), and his heart humble and thankful."

The descriptions of persons, as I have already pointed out, is usually for the purpose of characterization. To be sure, many of these descriptions, such as that of Lord Cinqbars quoted in my Chapter II., are humorous and worth reading aside from any other considerations.

Other humorous descriptions, such as the visit of Mr. Brown's aunt to his rooms* where she became entangled with the dog and undesirable visitors, are used "to point a moral" rather than "adorn the tale." Mr. Brown is here trying to point out to his nephew the desirability of choosing one's friends wisely.

Some descriptions are intended to make one feel the horror of the situation. Such are those in Going to See a Man Hanged.^{*3} The more revolting the scene is, the more is the chance of disgusting the public with a law that allows such executions. The series of descriptions in The Case of Peytel^{*3} are also directed against capital punishment. The horrible spectacle of the flogging at Hounslow^{*4} ought to re-

* On Friendship, Sketches and Travels in London.

*2. In Sketches and Travels in London.

*3 In The Paris Sketch Book.

*4 On The Snop Civilian.

sult in the abolition of corporal punishment in the army.

Even descriptions of the beautiful have sometimes a more utilitarian motive than merely giving pleasure to the reader. The cool clear London streets of early morning* emphasize the wretchedness of the miserable Courvoisier who is about to pay for his crime with his life. The description has, in this indirect way, a didactic purpose.

The proposition that the purpose of Thackeray's early stories generally is to offer some criticism of life, censure some failing, or teach some lesson is so evident as hardly to need supporting. Catherine and The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon are protests against Newgate literature; The Great Hoggarty Diamond, against speculation; and The Second Funeral of Napoleon, against shams. Many stories, such as The Amours of Mr. Deuceace, show the wickedness of gambling.

Thackeray often inserts a very short story within a longer story, or essay. The story of young Carter, the Lion-King, is told as an introduction to the much longer one of James Freeny. Carter, who when a small boy was giving a performance with his head in a lion's mouth, coolly commented on the quality of ginger-bread that he had just eaten. "Thus it is with Freeny,"

* Going to See a Man Hanged, Sketches and Travels in London.

and his story shows his indifference to danger.* Usually the inserted story has no close connection with the long story. The account of the widow and her disreputable son, whom Thackeray met on the Blackwater bridge, is given as an illustration of the misery in Ireland; but the story has little to do with the remainder of Chapter IV. of The Irish Sketch Book. The story of Mr. Crofton, covering half a page of Chapter XXXI., is told, not because of any connection, but merely to give an entertaining and edifying story of a good landlord.

Of description and narration Thackeray is a master. His descriptions are short, pleasing, and full of purpose. It seems very unfair that his early stories, such as The Great Hoggarty Diamond, were not quickly recognized as masterpieces by his contemporaries. Many explanations of this have been offered. My own opinion is that his public did not rate them at their true worth because they are deeper studies in life than those of the popular favorite, Dickens; and because they are lacking in the melodramatic, so dear to the popular taste.

* The Irish Sketch Book, Chapter XV.

CONCLUSION.

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In these last pages, I wish to record some general impressions. I feel that Thackeray was intensely interested in people and in the life about him. He was interested in public problems, as he felt that they had a bearing on the real life of the people. He recognized religion and education as means of raising the general level of intelligence, and supported them.

Social conditions, he shows us, are far from being ideal. This is largely the fault of the people themselves, who could improve their lot by reforming their habits. He did not understand women, and never made up his mind definitely concerning their rights and duties. His child-characters are comparatively few. He does not think of minors as children, but as little men and women, part of the social environment in which they live; but unduly influenced by heredity.

He was a lover of art but not a competent or impartial critic. His criticisms of literature are sound and have stood the test of time. Here he is more at home, and sel-

dom shows any personal bias.

Of foreign countries, Thackeray had little love or appreciation. He sneered at the government of the United States. He undervalued the Scotch. In France, he never saw beneath the surface of what he thought the light character of the people. For the Irish, he had a thorough contempt, and could consider the politics of that country only from an English standpoint.

Thackeray managed to keep his public in a good humor with him, though it was long an unappreciative public.

In his criticism he used satire, characterization, humor, pathos, description, narration, and preaching or moralizing.

In this paper the subject of Thackeray as an art critic is touched on in a general way. I do not know that I have added anything to what has already been said on this subject. After spending many hours studying the history of nineteenth century art, I saw the impossibility of adequately discussing Thackeray's treatment of the subject in a paper of this scope. I used the material that I had and stopped.

Thackeray's use of suggestive appellations has often been dealt with, but I have not found quite as full a treatment as that which I give in Chapter XI.

I hope that in my chapter on Thackeray's methods of char-

acterization, I may have added something to what has been written. I feel that the quotation from Dr. Cazamain is worth careful study. I expect many critics to differ from my opinions of the didactic purposes of Thackeray's description and narration.

I have omitted all discussion of Thackeray's humor, pathos, and habit of moralizing and preaching, because I could find nothing to say about these traits that had not already been well said.

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