Vanity Fair

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

JVA EDITORA

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

Vanity Fair

First published: 1848
Public domain edition

JVA Editora

Vanity Fair

by

William Makepeace Thackeray

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

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

A man with a reflective turn of mind, walking through an exhibition of this sort, will not be oppressed, I take it, by his own or other people's hilarity. An episode of humour or kindness touches and amuses him here and there—a pretty child looking at a gingerbread stall; a pretty girl blushing whilst her lover talks to her

and chooses her fairing; poor Tom Fool, yonder behind the waggon, mumbling his bone with the honest family which lives by his tumbling; but the general impression is one more melancholy than mirthful. When you come home you sit down in a sober, contemplative, not uncharitable frame of mind, and apply yourself to your books or your business.

I have no other moral than this to tag to the present story of "Vanity Fair." Some people consider Fairs immoral altogether, and eschew such, with their servants and families: very likely they are right. But persons who think otherwise, and are of a lazy, or a benevolent, or a sarcastic mood, may perhaps like to step in for half an hour, and look at the performances. There are scenes of all sorts; some dreadful combats, some grand and lofty horse-riding, some scenes of high life, and some of very middling indeed; some love-making for the sentimental, and some light comic business; the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles.

What more has the Manager of the Performance to say?—To acknowledge the kindness with which it has been received in all the principal towns of England through which the Show has passed, and where it has been most favourably noticed by the respected conductors of the public Press, and by the Nobility and Gentry. He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire; the Amelia Doll, though it has had a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist; the Dobbin Figure, though apparently clumsy, yet dances in a very amusing and natural manner; the Little Boys' Dance has

been liked by some; and please to remark the richly dressed figure of the Wicked Nobleman, on which no expense has been spared, and which Old Nick will fetch away at the end of this singular performance.

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

LONDON, June 28, 1848

CONTENTS

I Chiswick Mall

II In Which Miss Sharp and Miss Sedley Prepare to Open the Campaign

III Rebecca Is in Presence of the Enemy

IV The Green Silk Purse

V Dobbin of Ours

VI Vauxhall

VII Crawley of Queen's Crawley

VIII Private and Confidential

IX Family Portraits

X Miss Sharp Begins to Make Friends

XI Arcadian Simplicity

XII Quite a Sentimental Chapter

XIII Sentimental and Otherwise

XIV Miss Crawley at Home

XV In Which Rebecca's Husband Appears for a Short Time

XVI The Letter on the Pincushion

XVII How Captain Dobbin Bought a Piano

XVIII Who Played on the Piano Captain Dobbin Bought

XIX Miss Crawley at Nurse

XX In Which Captain Dobbin Acts as the Messenger of Hymen
XXI A Quarrel About an Heiress
XXII A Marriage and Part of a Honeymoon
XXIII Captain Dobbin Proceeds on His Canvass
XXIV In Which Mr. Osborne Takes Down the Family Bible
XXV In Which All the Principal Personages Think Fit to Leave Brighton
XXVI Between London and Chatham
XXVII In Which Amelia Joins Her Regiment
XXVIII In Which Amelia Invades the Low Countries
XXIX Brussels
XXX "The Girl I Left Behind Me"
XXXI In Which Jos Sedley Takes Care of His Sister
XXXII In Which Jos Takes Flight, and the War Is Brought to a Close
XXXIII In Which Miss Crawley's Relations Are Very Anxious About Her
XXXIV James Crawley's Pipe Is Put Out
XXXV Widow and Mother
XXXVI How to Live Well on Nothing a Year
XXXVII The Subject Continued
XXXVIII A Family in a Very Small Way
XXXIX A Cynical Chapter

XL In Which Becky Is Recognized by the Family
XLI In Which Becky Revisits the Halls of Her Ancestors
XLII Which Treats of the Osborne Family
XLIII In Which the Reader Has to Double the Cape
XLIV A Round-about Chapter between London and Hampshire
XLV Between Hampshire and London
XLVI Struggles and Trials
XLVII Gaunt House
XLVIII In Which the Reader Is Introduced to the Very Best of Company
XLIX In Which We Enjoy Three Courses and a Dessert
L Contains a Vulgar Incident
LI In Which a Charade Is Acted Which May or May Not Puzzle the Reader
LII In Which Lord Steyne Shows Himself in a Most Amiable Light
LIII A Rescue and a Catastrophe
LIV Sunday After the Battle
LV In Which the Same Subject is Pursued
LVI Georgy is Made a Gentleman
LVII Eothen
LVIII Our Friend the Major

LIX The Old Piano
LX Returns to the Genteel World
LXI In Which Two Lights are Put Out
LXII Am Rhein
LXIII In Which We Meet an Old Acquaintance
LXIV A Vagabond Chapter
LXV Full of Business and Pleasure
LXVI Amantium Irae
LXVII Which Contains Births, Marriages, and Deaths

CHAPTER I

Chiswick Mall

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