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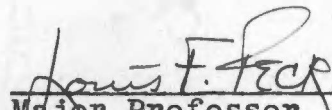
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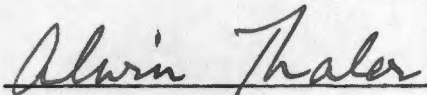
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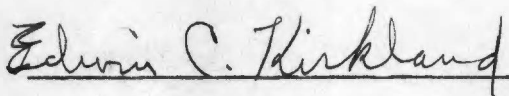
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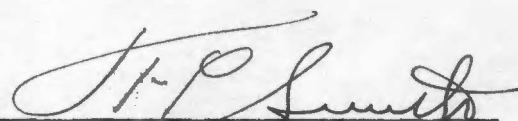

Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Committee


Dean of the Graduate School

THACKERAY'S READING

A THESIS

Submitted to
The Committee on Graduate Study
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirments
for the degree of
Master of Arts

by

Mary H. Jenks

August 1945

Acknowledgment

For development of my first interest in the study of Thackeray, my thanks are due to Dr. John B. Emperor, who shares my enthusiasm for Thackeray's work. I owe much, also, to Dr. Alwin Thaler, for his unfailing encouragement of my study. To Dr. Louis Peck, who directly supervised the writing of the thesis, I am especially grateful; his careful guidance and practical advice have been invaluable. He has given most generously of both time and effort to make this work possible.

Mary H. Jenks

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INTRODUCTION

Before one can hope to gain an understanding of any author's work, and certainly before one can make any valid criticisms or interpretations of his writings, one should learn as much as possible about his life and his literary backgrounds. In studying the works of William Makepeace Thackeray, one observes that the tremendous amount and variety of his reading had a proportionate influence on the quality and range of his work. To date no serious study has been made of Thackeray's reading, although there have been numerous publications on his style, critical ability, humor, satire, travels, and personal life. Instead, one finds only such generalized, undocumented statements as these:

...He was, however, reading Scott and novels of Corinthian life in London, and a while later, when his mother returned to England with a new husband, had evidently to control his tastes in this direction, for he writes:

'I have not read any novel this term, except one by the author of Granby.'¹

In Paris he read widely—Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Balzac, Gibbon, and Montaigne.²

Thackeray's reading when he was abroad in the thirties was not very deep. Of the great French writers he found little to say.³

The chapter in Louis Melville's book, from which the last quotation is taken, is headed "Thackeray's Reading"; but

¹G. U. Ellis, Thackeray (London: Duckworth, 1933), p. 13.

²Malcolm Elwin, Thackeray (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1932), p. 50.

³Lewis Melville, Some Aspects of Thackeray (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1911), p. 31.

although it brings out a few of the more obvious, well-known references, it is not a careful, primary study. The author comments that it is strange "that no one has thought it worth while to discourse of him [Thackeray] as a reader and critic of books";⁴ and Professor Harold S. Gulliver, whose scholarly book Thackeray's Literary Apprenticeship was published at Valdosta, Georgia, 1934, writes as late as March of this year that as far as he knows, such a study has not been made.⁵

It is the purpose of this paper to present the collection and classification of Thackeray's reading as shown in his works. Identification of all the literary allusions would necessitate familiarity with a great amount of literature; especially that of the 18th and 19th century in English, French, and German; such a study is beyond the scope of this paper. Herein presented are only references to works Thackeray certainly read, determined either by his own statement or by his obvious familiarity with their content. In the second category, such a statement as "...she...was to appear in Ophelia — Shakespeare you know"⁶ is not considered, as it could easily be made from general knowledge; however, the statement "...so if he selected humble Esther instead of Queen Vashti, she would

⁴Page 22.

⁵From a letter I received from Professor Gulliver March 31, 1945.

⁶Pendennis (Chicago: Belford, Clarke, and Co., 1882), p. 62. Unless otherwise stated, all references to Thackeray's works are to this edition.

be content with his lordship's choice,"⁷ indicates by the descriptive adjectives and by the context that Thackeray was completely familiar with the Biblical book of Esther. References have been collected from all Thackeray's published works,⁸ with the exception of his journalistic writings and reviews, most of which were not available.

Thackeray was, all his life, an omniverous reader. He was also, and primarily, a lover of man, both as a person and as a peculiar example of God's handiwork — to be thoughtfully classified and commented on. Now the Victorians did not enjoy being analyzed, nor did they enjoy having their reading tastes criticized. When Thackeray commented in satirical amusement that he was unimpressed by the "Shakespeare Improved" school, and that a breath of purer literary air was delightful after any lengthy delving in the works of Wycherley, Congreve, or Farquhar, the Victorian critic was likely to assume that Thackeray was a snob who was unable to read with discrimination.

When he put in his stories of London high-middle class clubmen and social climbers references to Egan's Tom and Jerry and Bell's Life instead of quotations from Milton, the literary critic decides that Thackeray did not appreciate Milton and concludes with the unfootnoted statement: "Indeed there is no

⁷Pendennis, p. 75.

⁸A complete collection of Thackeray's letters, including many not hitherto published, is in preparation by the Harvard University Press.

doubt but that, as a rule, he preferred second-rate books of the first class to the greatest."⁹ Such an arbitrary judgment, vague and generalized as it is, needs to be authenticated. Certainly Thackeray read Milton, and there is no reason to doubt that he appreciated him. He was also honest enough to admit that at times he found Milton tedious and uninspiring.

Thackeray hated pretentiousness in all its forms, especially the literary. As the twentieth century club member carefully prepares his review of the latest Book-of-the-Month selection, so did his Victorian prototype ostentatiously flavor his conversation with Miltonic, Shakespearean, or classical allusions. Thackeray laughed — as he would laugh today. Intellectual freedom has not yet been attained. Charles Dodgson was proud to claim Euclid and His Modern Rivals, relegating Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to the imaginary Mr. Carroll; but the late Frederick Faust, serious essayist and political writer for Harper's Magazine, did not publicize that he was the author of "Max Brand's" western novels. Rebelling against this lack of literary independence, Thackeray sometimes over-emphasized his liking for the less lofty literature, and took particular delight in exposing the actual reading of his contemporaries. Bulwer-Lytton represented the extreme in affectation for Thackeray,

⁹ Melville, Some Aspects, p. 47.

and in satirizing him, Thackeray was condemning all literary snobbery. "...As I have heard the author of 'Richelieu,' 'Siamese Twins,' &c., say, 'Poeta nascitur non fit,' which means that though he had tried ever so much to be a poet, it was all moonshine."¹⁰

Disregarding, then, the familiar, paradoxical generalization that Thackeray was a fine scholar and yet not a deep reader, this paper will make a start toward clarification of the problem with the study of some thousand specific references from his works.

¹⁰Catherine, p. 514.

CHAPTER I

THE CLASSICS

Since the classics form a natural starting point for general literary study, as well as for Thackeray's own early reading, we shall consider first his studies in this field. Perhaps some of the failure to give particular credit to his classical background as an influence on his artistry with words¹ comes from his own accounts of his early experiences with Greek during his schooldays at Charterhouse. From his letters and from Pendennis — which is closely autobiographical — it is interesting to learn that Thackeray did dislike his classic studies intensely and had much difficulty in construing

¹Hugh Walker, in Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 689-90, gives Thackeray credit for "keen observation, humor, satire, fun, pathos, the gifts of a poet as well as those of a master of prose," and says his creation of *Barry Lyndon* is "surely one of the most remarkable achievements in literature." Professor Dodds, in Thackeray, A Critical Portrait (London, 1941), pp. 173-7, speaks enthusiastically of his intensely personal, even style which, as Thackeray said of Swift's, is "elaborately simple...he never indulges in needless extravagance of rhetoric, lavish epithets, profuse imagery. He lays his opinion before you with a grave simplicity and perfect neatness." These would seem to be basic classic qualities adapted to his own day; yet Dodds does not seem to feel that the classics had any great influence on his style, as he says that "it is useless to try to trace its sources in details, for there is nothing synthetic about it." He quotes Arnold as saying "Thackeray is not, I think, a great writer, but at any rate his style is that of one," and Carlyle as stating that "Nobody in our day wrote, I should say, with such perfection of style." Of classic studies and resultant influences there is no word.

Greek plays. Eight separate references in Pendennis, supported by comments in letters to his mother and in various other writings, show his attitude at this time, although apparently the headmaster, Dr. Russell, more than the subject matter, was the cause of his bitterness.

His strongest statement comes in his essay on "Athens."

...but I was made so miserable in youth by a classical education, that all connected with it is disagreeable in my eyes; and I have the same recollection of Greek in youth that I have of castor oil.²

To his mother he wrote:

I have got four hours of delightful Dr. Russell to-day before me. Is it not felicitous? Every day he begins at me, 'Thackeray, Thackeray, you are an idle, profligate, shuffling boy (because your friends are going to take you away in May).³

In Pendennis Thackeray describes vividly one of these scenes in much more detail. The account of the berating given him by the "chief" reads like a verbatim report of embarrassment and hurt which a sensitive child never forgets. Pen had disgraced himself by being unable to construe a word of his Greek play. Fixing him with a cold stare, the chief begins the attack:

A boy who construes $\hat{O}\epsilon$ and instead of $\hat{O}\epsilon$ but, at sixteen years of age, is guilty not merely of folly, and ignorance, and dulness inconceivable, but of crime, of deadly crime, of filial ingratitude which I tremble to contemplate. A boy, sir,

² "Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 627.

³ Elwin, Thackeray, p. 30.

who does not learn his Greek play cheat [sic] the parents who spends [sic] money for his education. A boy who cheats his parent is not very far from robbing or forging upon his neighbor. A man who forges on his neighbor pays the penalty of his crime at the gallows. And it is not such a one that I pity (for he will be deservedly cut off); but his maddened and heartbroken parents, who are driven to a premature grave by his crimes, or, if they live, drag on a wretched and dishonored old age.⁴

As one reads further in Pendennis, it becomes evident that mechanical school routine and uninspired teachers caused most of the difficulty in Thackeray's classical learning, and one observes that his love for Greek literature began to flourish immediately after his decision to study by himself. Pen tells that when the Doctor wrote his mother that it was most important for his success in after life that he should know a Greek play thoroughly, he told her what a wild place Grey Friars was so that she would not make him go back.⁵

When Pen gained his point and began studying at home with his tutor, his attitude toward his Greek studies became quite different. Granted that one is justified in thinking "Thackeray" when reading "Pen," one realizes that Thackeray soon came to love and appreciate the classics as they deserved, whether he ever became adept in translation or not.

Pen never liked to halt, but made his tutor construe when he was at fault, and thus galloped through the Iliad and the Odyssey, the tragic playwrights, and

⁴Page 21.

⁵Page 27.

the charming, wicked, Aristophanes (whom he vowed to be the greatest of all). But he went so fast that, though he certainly galloped through a considerable extent of the ancient country, he clean forgot it in after life, and had only such a vague remembrance of his early classic course as a man has in the House of Commons, let us say, who still keeps up two or three quotations; or a reviewer who just for decency's sake, hints a little Greek.⁶

Other references to Pen's Greek studies keep a consistent tone,⁷ and his account of his later career at Oxbridge emphasizes that his antagonism is toward the school routine methods of classics teaching, not toward the classics themselves. At the beginning of his college career, he decided to devote himself to Greek and Roman literature, but he soon found that he learned little in classical lectures. His tutors, he says, knew metre and grammatical construction of Aeschylus and Aristophanes, but not the poetry. As a consequence, he returned to private study for both profit and pleasure.⁸

Including the examples already given, there are at least fifty obvious, significant references to the Greek classics scattered throughout Thackeray's works which seem to give ample proof of that comfortable familiarity which comes only from

⁶ Pendennis, p. 30.

⁷ Pendennis, pp. 33, 59, 61.

⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

many readings and much meditation. In some instances, he makes definite statements: "Maginn was with me all the morning, one of the pleasantest I ever passed. Maginn read Homer to me, and he made me admire it as I had never done before."⁹

And this was in 1832, when Thackeray was only twenty-one. It does sound, however, as if he enjoyed the stories most when he did not have to do the translating. Comments on *Thersites*¹⁰ could easily refer to Shakespeare's characterization,¹¹ and certainly his favorite version of the Iliad and Odyssey were the translations of Pope, whose artistry he deeply admired. He tells of spending delightful nights with his fictional favorites, among them "Hector of Troy, whose adventures and lamentable death (out of Mr. Pope) I could recite by heart."¹²

When Thackeray says so frankly that he has read a book, there is no question of doubt; and in another type of reference — in which he shows knowledge of a book without stating definitely that he has read it — the evidence is often almost as strong. Such references are particularly interesting because they portray his happy faculty for interpolating apt quotations and for

⁹ Elwin, Thackeray, p. 48.

¹⁰ Thackeray, "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 151, 155.

¹¹ The "cowardly, malignant, false Thersites" sounds logically more Shakespeare's than Homer's.

¹² Denis Duval, p. 679.

metamorphosing classical characters into his own creations by a single Greek name or an analogous situation — for example: "...He saw a little maid with round, sad eyes:- his Iphigenia whom he was stabbing."¹³ "...let us pity Lady Iphigenia's father when that venerable chief is obliged to offer up his darling child."¹⁴

Besides the kinds of references just given and the obvious one of describing or summarizing material which he has read — as in the description of the Agamemnon scenes in the charades¹⁵ — Thackeray also has a unique custom of bringing his imaginary book-acquaintances into his own circle of friends and of enduing them with contemporary habits of life and speech. This delightful system — something like Van Loon's in the present day — is not confined to classic references but to anything at all which he has read and which lends itself to such an interpretation. In one case, he remarks:

It is known that Orpheus was torn to pieces by some justly indignant Thracian ladies for belonging to an Harmonic Lodge. 'Let him go back to Eurydice,' they said, 'whom he is pretending to regret so.'¹⁶

In another instance, Thackeray is equally informal with

¹³Philip, p. 466.

¹⁴The Newcomes, p. 295.

¹⁵Vanity Fair, pp. 506-7.

¹⁶The Book of Snobs, p. 373.

Jason and Medea,¹⁷ and such references are typical, not rare. It is on such obvious familiarity with material that much of the evidence of his reading is based throughout this study. Metaphors, allegories, similes are too apt, too much a part of his thought to be anything but an integral part of his literary experience — synthesized with his own knowledge of humanity. One other example — in a slightly different vein — rounds out the types of references which Thackeray customarily used.

There are ogres and ogres. Polyphemus was a great, tall, one-eyed, notorious ogre, fetching his victims out of a hole, and gobbling them one after another. There could be no mistake about him. But so were the Sirens ogres — pretty blue-eyed things, peeping at you coaxingly from out of the water, and singing their melodious wheedles. And the bones round their caves were more numerous than the ribs, skulls, and thighbones round the cavern of hulking Polypheme.¹⁸

Concerning Thackeray's Greek reading, one observes that: he was poorly conditioned for a love of the classics by his unfortunate beginnings under the sadistic Dr. Russell; he grew to love the Greek stories, the classic tradition, in spite of himself; perhaps because of his early experience, he was quite willing to take his Greek in translation; his classical book-

¹⁷ Esmond, pp. 91, 237-8. See also The Newcomes, p. 287.

¹⁸ "Ogres," Roundabout Papers, pp. 119-20.

friends became very much alive and contemporary — to be called on whenever he needed them; and while his references show a wide range of classical reading — especially to be noted in the essay on Athens¹⁹ — the recurrence of certain characters and incidents indicates that his favorites were Homer (probably read most often in Pope's translation), Medea, Agamemnon, the Cyclops, Helen, and the Iphigenia dramas, with Euripides — as the author of four of these mentioned — his most admired author.²⁰

It appears that the term "classics" as Thackeray usually considered it, meant Greek literature, for there are in his prose writings few significant references to Latin works or authors. None of these indicates the appreciation which is shown so plainly in the Greek references. Two cursory statements in Pendennis merely show the traditional grounding of any schoolboy;²¹ he tells the story of Regulus in a talk with

¹⁹"Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, esp. pp. 626-7.

²⁰The most significant Greek references, besides those mentioned, include: Philip, pp. 367, 475; The Kickleburys on the Rhine, p. 145; "On the French School of Painting," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 48, 53; "Epistles to the Literati," The Yellowplush Papers, p. 527; Barry Lyndon, pp. 13, 223; Catherine, p. 458; Mrs. Perkins' Christmas Ball, p. 24; Esmond, pp. 91, 109, 125, 134, 205, 313, 369; The Virginians, pp. 153, 200, 209, 244, 296, 317, 511, 528, 543, 591-3, 656; "Barnwell" Novels by Eminent Hands, p. 7; Irish Sketch Book, pp. 569-70; Character Sketches, pp. 569, 595.

²¹Pendennis, pp. 33, 61.

the ghost of Sterne and other famous men;²² in his Lectures on the English Humorists, he talks about Prior's similarity to his "admired master, Horace," and quotes apt passages which show that he had made himself familiar with Horace, at least as Prior knew him;²³ in praising Pope's early scholarship, he indicates some familiarity with the Latin studied;²⁴ he mentions having turned some of Ovid's epistles into rhyme;²⁵ but the Latin work which seems to have made most impression on him was Virgil's Aeneid. In one place Thackeray does make a character say that the "Georgics" are exquisite harmonies of line, sweet calm shapes in marble, while the "Aeneid" is but so many bas-reliefs, mural ornaments which are not much;²⁶ on another occasion he brings Aeneas into his story with complete ease and affection. He is speaking about the lack of linguistic knowledge.

Courage, mon jeune ami! Remember Trojans have a conquering way with them. When Aeneas landed at Carthage, I dare say he spoke Carthaginian with a ridiculous Trojan accent; but for all that,

²²"Dessein's," Roundabout Papers, p. 232.

²³"Prior, Gay and Pope," English Humorists, p. 463.
See also Virginians, p. 97.

²⁴"Prior, Gay and Pope," English Humorists, p. 473.

²⁵Esmond, p. 88.

²⁶The Newcomes, p. 375.

poor Dido fell desperately in love with him. Take example by the son of Anchises, my boy. Never mind the grammar or the pronunciation, but tackle the lady, and speak your mind to her as best you can.²⁷

One finds no mention of the great Latin dramatists. Why Thackeray avoided them is not at all clear; surely he would have preferred Terence to Congreve, Plautus to Wycherley. One possible explanation may lie in the attitude of the Latin writers toward women. Lady Castlewood, one of Thackeray's idealized characters, says:

The men who wrote your books,...your Horaces, and Ovids, and Virgils, as far as I know of them, all thought ill of us, as all the heroes they wrote about used us basely. We were bred to be slaves always; and even of our own times, as you are still the only lawgivers, I think our sermons seem to say that the best woman is she who bears her master's chains most gracefully.²⁸

Now it is common knowledge that Thackeray, while he may have created some insipid heroines, did idealize, almost venerate, women. If it can be assumed that he thought what Lady Castlewood said, the reference is significant in explaining why he preferred Iphigenia, Helen, and even the vengeful but long-suffering Medea to the more superficial Latin heroines.

Conclusions to be drawn concerning Thackeray's reading of Latin authors are: that he was familiar with those writers who were a part of every schoolboy's studies in those days;

²⁷ Philip, p. 350.

²⁸ Esmond, p. 92.

that Virgil and Horace were his favorites; that he cared much less for Latin than for Greek literature, displaying no interest in the Latin dramatists; and that his choice in Latin literature was Virgil's Aeneid - still really a Greek theme.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE OF THE FANCY

As can be seen from Thackeray's use of his readings in the classics, he seldom lost opportunity to exercise his imagination in adapting his literary experiences to his own writing. His simplicity and delight in the wonder-world is never childish, but child-like — with the naivete of true greatness. It is not surprising, then, to discover that of all the reading he did — from youth until his death — the one source which he draws upon most often, which clearly lies closest his heart and uppermost in his memory, is the Arabian Nights. Besides the indirect glow which they cast over much of his work — that unexpected jumping into the realm of makebelieve which occurs so often, there are at least thirty definite references.

Perhaps because of the unhappiness which cut so deeply into his own personal life, he found a proportionately greater pleasure in that magic land where the impossible could always come true. He took keen delight in those stories where unexpected romantic or financial success brought happiness to the principals. For those who found the Arabian Nights sensual instead of sensuous he had no patience. On one occasion, at least, he expressed this attitude very definitely: "...I never knew the Arabian Nights was an improper book until I happened once to read it in a "family edition."¹

¹"On Two Children in Black," Roundabout Papers, p. 13.

Thackeray identifies his favorite edition as the translation made by Professor Antoine Galland in 1704,² which Richard Burton calls delightful, although an abbreviation and adaptation.³ The "family edition" was probably by the Rev. Forster or G. Moir Bussey, both of whom, says Burton, degraded the stories into fairy tales — Thackeray does not mention the translations of Dr. Jonathan Scott — one printed in London in 1800, the other from the MS of Edward Wortley Montague in 1811. Burton says these were not good; Thackeray evidently held the same opinion.

Some of his youthful favorites gradually lost their fascination for Thackeray, but not the Arabian Nights. Writing from Syria, where he was on tour, he described the plain as another famous and brilliant scene from the Arabian Nights, regretting that the mosquitoes kept him from having dreams as delightful as those of Alnaschar, and exclaiming: "...If it be but to read the "Arabian Nights" again on getting home, it is good to have made this little voyage and seen these strange places and faces."⁴

Alnaschar and Sindbad seem to have been his special friends,⁵

²Denis Duval, p. 679.

³Richard Burton, The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night (Burton Club, Subscription Printing, 1882), translator's foreword, I, xviii.

⁴"A Day and Night in Syria," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 684.

⁵Pendennis, p. 738; Vanity Fair, p. 24, 44; Denis Duval, pp. 677-8.

although there are references also to the adventurous Caliph Haroun Alraschid,⁶ Ali Baba,⁷ Scheherazade,⁸ Dinarzade,⁹ the Sultan,¹⁰ and others.

The theme of sudden showers of wealth also naturally fascinated Thackeray, who was something of a wishful thinker himself when it came to money making schemes. For example, he once wrote his daughter, in connection with a proposed new magazine:

Why shouldn't I sell 5,000, 10,000 copies? - they will pay me 40 or 80 a week: 80 a week is 4000 a year of which I would put by 3 at the very least: See Alnaschar in the Arabian Nights.¹¹

Thackeray's apt use of similes from the Arabian Nights - the technique most strongly indicative of his reading interests - is as prevalent here as in the Greek references. Once in discussing Swift he said: "Like Abudah in the Arabian story, he is always looking out for the Fury, and knows that the night

⁶ "Smyrna," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 637; The Newcomes, pp. 134-5; 569; "Jaffa to Alexandria," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 712; "To Cairo," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 732.

⁷ "Smyrna," Cornhill to Cairo, pp. 635-6; Men's Wives, 601, 603; The Great Hoggarty Diamond, p. 310.

⁸ The Newcomes, pp. 134-5.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 134-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., "Smyrna," Cornhill to Cairo, pp. 635-6.

¹¹ Ritchie, Thackeray and his Daughter, p. 13.

will come and the inevitable hag with it."¹²

One other comment bears quoting as it illustrates the sly amusement with which Thackeray observed the people about him. He is telling of his romance with Ottilia in a satire on the customs and manners of society.

No! a woman who eats a grain of rice, like Amina in the "Arabian Nights," is absurd and unnatural; but there is a modus in rebus: there is no reason why she should be a ghoul, a monster, an ogress, a horrid gormandizeress - faugh!¹³

Most of the other references are more generalized, and show that for life-time book companions he preferred the Arabian Nights¹⁴ to less imaginative literature.

With the Arabian Nights should be classified the various legends and fairy tales which are obviously so much a part of Thackeray's experience that he is as likely to call his character Cinderella as Miss Raby — and actually does.¹⁵ The innumerable allusions — many not definite enough to have been counted in this study — and the delightful parodies, like those

¹² "Swift," English Humorists, p. 388.

¹³ "Fitz-Boodle Confessions," Fitz-Boodle Papers, p. 583.

¹⁴ The Newcomes, pp. 122-3; 126. Pendennis, p. 738. "John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, p. 632. Vanity Fair, pp. 505-6. "On a Lazy Idle Boy," Roundabout Papers, p. 10. "To Cairo," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 732. "DeJuventute," Roundabout Papers, pp. 63-4.

¹⁵ "Dr. Birch and His Young riends," Christmas Stories, p. 83.

in the Rose and the Ring,¹⁶ show that his reading in this field was wide and thorough,¹⁷ but his favorite story of all is, apparently, Cinderella. It is satisfying to find — after one has decided this from the greater number of references, that Thackeray himself is good enough to corroborate these findings and speak of Cinderella, on at least two occasions, as "the sweetest of fairy stories."¹⁸ It is interesting, too, to observe that Cinderella is so close to his pen that she finds her way into a variety of similes. Usually Thackeray compares her to some feminine character, but on one occasion he says:¹⁹ "...but the fountain in the midst is dressed out like Cinderella for the night, and sings and wears a crest of diamonds!"²⁰

It is evident, in considering the general range of Thackeray's interest in fairy tales, that he was familiar with those of German and French origin, as well as those of English,

¹⁶"The Rose and the Ring," Christmas Stories, esp. 174ff.

¹⁷The Virginians, pp. 190-1, 697; Sketches and Travels in London, p. 524.

¹⁸A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 15; "George Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 601.

¹⁹As in those already mentioned, and in A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 31.

²⁰The Newcomes, p. 126.

and knew — to some extent, at least — which were which. He speaks more than once of the dreadful Bluebeard²¹ — first written in literary form by Perrault in French in 1697 — and says in another place: "how shall we enough praise the delightful German nursery tales and Cruikshank's illustrations of them?"²²

He hopes that Cruikshank will some day "revivify by his pencil" those special favorites, "Jack the Giant Killer, Tom Thumb, Puss-in-Boots, Dick Whittington, and Cinderella"; adding that: "A man who has a true affection for these delightful companions of his youth is bound to be grateful to them if he can, and we pray Mr. Cruikshank to remember them."²³

Among the many other more casual fairy tale references — both generalized and specific — are comments on Red Riding Hood,²⁴ the Fox and the Wolf — from Aesop,²⁵ the Sleeping Beauty,²⁶

²¹Vanity Fair, 24; The Newcomes, pp. 122-3; "Caricatures and Lithography in Paris," Paris Sketch Book, p. 156. One notices how closely correlated are Thackeray's reading and scholarship. Bluebeard is not carelessly brought into the Irish Sketches or the Rhineland Travels; he is introduced in the French setting where he belongs — in appropriate satirical simile.

²²"George Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 601.

²³Ibid., 60.

²⁴The Newcomes, p. 9.

²⁵Ibid., 10-11.

²⁶"The Kickleburys on the Rhine," Christmas Stories, p. 152.

Friar Tuck and Robinhood;²⁷ such nursery rhyme characters as the Old Woman of Banbury Cross,²⁸ the Queen of Hearts,²⁹ and the Froggy who would a-wooing go;³⁰ and such general allegorical interpolations as of the young boy having the castle to storm and the princess to win,³¹ and the more typical: "So the wicked Fairy drove away disappointed in her chariot with the very dragons which had brought her away in the morning."³²

It may be argued that Thackeray's repetition of the Arabian Nights and fairy tale incidents and characters comes more from impressions they once made on him than from any continued reading. Against this view, however, are his own statements about the joys of re-reading the Arabian Nights and the delightful childhood favorite, especially Cinderella.

While classifications in a study of this sort are bound to be arbitrary and to overlap, Pierce Egan's Life in London or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, and their friend Bob Logic seems to belong more naturally in the imaginative group than in any other. The work deserves special

²⁷ Ibid., p. 146.

²⁸ The Newcomes, p. 73; see also The Virginians, p. 152 for reference to another Aesop fable.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 456.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

³¹ The Newcomes, p. 128.

³² The Newcomes, p. 407.

notice because Thackeray mentions it as one of his particular nook-friends and quotes from it at length in several places. He suggests that the book was the most highly prized and appreciated schoolboy literature of his childhood days. In one of his more reminiscent essays he is back at Charterhouse,

...and what is that I see? A boy,- a boy in a jacket. He is at a desk; he has great books before him, Latin and Greek books and dictionaries. Yet, but behind the great books, which he pretends to read, is a little one, with pictures, which he is really reading. It is - yes, I can read now - it is the 'Heart of Midlothian,' by the author of 'Waverly'- or no, it is 'Life in London, or the adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, and their friend Bob Logic,' by Pierce Egan; and it has pictures - oh, such funny pictures! As he reads, there comes behind the boy a man, a dervish, in a black gown, like a woman, and a black square cap, and he has a book in each hand, and he seizes the boy who is reading the picture-book, and lays his head upon one of his books, and smacks it with the other.³³

Such incidents among school boys were probably typical, for upon publication of Life in London, a Tom and Jerry craze swept all England.

The origin of the story is interesting. Egan, editor of Boxiana and popular sports writer,³⁴ observed the popularity of books on out-of-door sports and country life and decided that an account of life in the city might catch the public fancy. King George IV so approved the idea that he gave permission for the proposed book to be dedicated to himself, and when the first instalment appeared on July 15, 1821 (price, one

³³"DeJuventute," Roundabout Papers, p. 56.

³⁴Thackeray speaks of having the honor to possess Egan's smaller work on "Pugilism," "George the Fourth" The Four Georges, p. 359.

shilling; publishers, Messrs Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, of Paternoster Row),³⁵ it became an immediate and overwhelming success.

As Thackeray has observed, much of the book's appeal lay in its illustrations — by I. R. and George Cruikshank — but the racy language, accounts of famous London "hot spots," and the daring escapades of Tom, Jerry, and Bob held their own attraction. Edition after edition was made; a special "Flash Dictionary" (of slang and vulgar words found in the book) was sold; translations were made into French; and stories and dramas modeled on its pattern swept the market — the final accolade being given when the puritanical section of the press and church denounced the book as immoral and unfit for decent reading.³⁶

Thackeray admits on re-reading that the story does not seem as fascinating after the lapse of years. He still finds, however, that certain types of fiction — of which this is one of his best examples — afford a more realistic, all-around picture of life than any amount of factual record. In addition, he values Tom and Jerry as an excellent pattern of the style

³⁵ Pierce Egan, Tom and Jerry, Life in London, (London, 1869), Introduction, p. 13.

³⁶ This information is taken from Egan's Tom and Jerry, Life in London. Introduction, pp. 1-26; and from "Egan, Pierce," Encyclopædia Britannica, 14th ed. 1944 , VIII, 25.

of popular writing of its day.³⁷ And always — weighing the scales heavily — were the inimitable pictures.

The attraction of pictures in Thackeray's favorite books needs to be constantly kept in mind when evaluating his references. Since he was himself an illustrator of no mean talent and an art critic of ability (though of how much ability is still controversial), he was likely to feel a fascination for books which were cleverly illustrated. His enthusiasm for Cruikshank's are in Tom and Jerry is even greater.³⁸

It is not intended to suggest that Thackeray's intellectual judgment was greatly influenced by a clever picture; in fact, he wrote once:

Our story-books had no pictures in them for the most part. Frank (dear old Frank!) had none; nor the 'Parent's Assistant'; nor the 'Evenings at Home'; nor our copy of the 'Ami des Enfants'; there were a few at the end of the Spelling-Book; besides the allegory at the beginning, of Education leading up Youth to the temple of Industry, where Dr. Ditworth and Professor Walkinghame stood with crowns of laurels.... but for pictures, so to speak, what had we?

We had the 'Arabian Nights' and Walter Scott, to be sure. Smirke's illustrations to the former are very fine. We did not know how good they were then; but we doubt whether we did not prefer the little old 'Miniature Library Nights' with frontispieces by Uwins; for these books the pictures don't count. Every boy of imagination does his own pictures to Scott and the 'Arabian Nights' best.³⁹

³⁷"De Juventute," Roundabout Papers, pp. 64-66.

³⁸"George Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 604. "John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, pp. 633-4.

³⁹"John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, p. 632.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from a study of references in this group of fanciful reading is that for Thackeray the imaginary was likely to be truer than the factual, and that he felt his honest spirit freer and happier when he was in a world untrammelled by the false pretenses of reality. In one place he says that Pickwick, Roderick Random, and Tom Jones give a much better idea of the state and ways of the people than could be gained from pompous and authentic histories;⁴⁰ and he remarks that Fielding through his satire accomplished what factual historians lost.⁴¹ In writing of the French fetes he says that instead of having Carlyle write a history of the French Révolution it should be handed over to Dickens or Theodore Hook —and that a Rabelais is needed to be the faithful historian of its "last glorious nine years of which we are now commemorating the last glorious three days";⁴² and in one of his nostalgic sketches he writes:

Yonder comes a footman with a bundle of novels from the library. I wonder if they are as good as our novels?...and as for Corinthian Tom in light blue pantaloons and Hessians, and Jerry Hawthorn from the country, can all the fashion, can all the splendor of real life which these eyes have subsequently beheld, can all the wit I have heard or read in later times, compare with your fashion, with your brilliancy, with your delightful grace, and sparkling vivacious rattle?

⁴⁰"French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 84-85.

⁴¹"Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 156-160.

⁴²"Fetes of July," Paris Sketch Book, p. 34.

...Can I go in and ask the young ladies at the counter for 'Manfroni, or the One-Handed Monk,' and 'Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, Esq., and their friend Bob Logic?'...The house is all his own and a grim old maidservant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room, poring over 'Manfroni, or the One-Handed Monk,' so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.⁴³

One other quotation is included here, as it serves to round out this triple-angle view of Thackeray's preferences — the true imaginative portrayal of society and history, of romance and adventure, and of pure fantasy:

And so they [Philip and his shy young sweetheart] went on in Arcadia itself, really. Not in that namby-pamby ballet and idyll world, where they tripped up to each other in rhythm, and talked hexameters; but in the real downright, no-mistake country-Arcadia — where Tityrus, fluting to Amaryllis in the shade, had his pipe very soon put out when Meliboeur (the great grazier) performed on his melodious, exquisite, irresistible cowhorn; and where Daphne's mother dressed her up with ribbons and drove her to market, and sold her, and bartered her like any other lamb in the fair.⁴⁴

⁴³ "Tunbridge Toys," Roundabout Papers, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁴ Philip, p. 195.

CHAPTER III

NOVELS AND DRAMAS

This study makes no pretensions to discovering all the novels and dramas which Thackeray read. Such a compilation would require an intensive reading of all those which he mentions having read, those which he implies he read, and those which from his parody, satire, imitation, or subject matter, he must have read. Included in this chapter, besides his general comments on novel reading, will be only those specific references which show obvious familiarity with novels and dramas.

As has been said, Thackeray's interest in the man kept just ahead of his interest in the work; he was always perplexed and troubled when he could not find a man's work consistent with his life. Apparently when he came upon a work which impressed him, he immediately began studying the author as a person — if he did not know him already. Thus, there emerges, among the writers he knew, a group whose lives and literary habits became more the object of study than did their contributions to literature. These men, among them Scott, Fielding, Johnson, Swift, and Dickens, will be discussed in a later chapter.

Thackeray's generalized statements on novel reading show both the kinds of books he read and the kind of reader he was.

The psychologist may say that omniverous reading habits suggest escape from unsatisfactory emotional life as much as they do keen intellectual interest. But a healthy curiosity about people and life is as valid an interpretation as sublimation.

More intensive research on Thackeray's reading might finally make clear that — Quiller-Couch to the contrary¹ — he could not possibly have been a snob. The distinguishing mark of the true snob is his lack of recognition of his own humanity — or divinity — in everyone about him. And Thackeray, with his tolerance and whimsical affection for fictional characters who became real and his actual acquaintances who so easily became dream characters, does not seem to belong in this classification at all. It can be observed from several of his reminiscences on the values of novel reading that he read to gain new friends whom otherwise he might have missed. He says:

There is, however, a cheap and delightful way of travelling, that a man may perform in his easy-chair, without the expense of passports or post-boys. On the wings of novel, from the next circulating library, he sends his imagination a-gadding, and gains acquaintance with people and manners whom he could not hope otherwise to know.²

Every now and then he makes somewhat similar remarks³

¹Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Charles Dickens and Other Victorians (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 119-37.

²"On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84.

³"On a Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, p. 216; "De Juventate," Roundabout Papers, pp. 63-64; "On a Lazy Idle Boy," Roundabout Papers, p. 11; "Steele," English Humorists, p. 435; "De Finibus," Roundabout Papers, passim.; "Dessein's," Roundabout Papers, p. 226.

which are more specific, concluding one such reverie:

...I say to you, I looked wistfully towards the window, musing upon these people. Were any of them to enter, I think, I should not be very much frightened. Dear old friends, what pleasant hours I have had with them! We do not see each other very often, but when we do, we are ever happy to meet. I had a capital half-hour with Jacob Faithful last night.⁴

Another quotation gives both Thackeray's reasons for novel reading and the specific types he preferred.

...I am troubled with fever and ague...There is cold fit, for which, I am thankful to say, hot brandy-and-water is prescribed, and this induces hot fit, and soon. In one or two of these fits I have read novels with the most fearful contentment of mind. Once on the Mississippi, it was my dearly beloved 'Jacob Faithful': once at Frankfort O. M., the delightful 'Vingt Ans Apres' of Monsieur Dumas! once at Tunbridge Wells, the thrilling 'Woman in White': and these books gave me amusement from morning till sunset. I remember those ague fits with a great deal of pleasure and gratitude....How do you like your novels? I like mine strong, 'hot with' and no mistake: no love-making: no observations about society: little dialogue, except where the characters are bullying each other: plenty of fighting: and a villain in the cupboard, who is to suffer tortures just before Finis. I don't like your melancholy Finis. I never read the history of a consumptive heroine twice.⁵

Coming to particular preferences, Thackeray says: "...I remember a little boy lying in that garden reading his first novel. It was called the 'Scottish Chiefs.'⁶

⁴"De Finibus," Roundabout Papers, p. 208.

⁵Ibid., pp. 204-5.

⁶"On a Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, p. 208. He goes on to say that this particular first-novel day fell on the date of the coronation of George IV, and as King George was crowned in July, 1820, Thackeray would have been nine years old.

For Jane Porter's works he seems always to have retained a warm affection, although they were not, apparently, among the works which he enjoyed re-reading. He says that he can still remember how he looked at the ending of Thaddeus of Warsaw and could not read it for crying, even though he has not read the book for forty-two years — and he recalls in detail certain incidents in the story which especially impressed him.⁷

Even though he may have been shamefaced over his susceptibility to sentimentalism — in this case anyway, where he was forced to admit it —⁸ he did recognize the weakness of such emotional writing; and in the majority of references, he puts the love of Scottish Chiefs and Thaddeus of Warsaw into the hearts of his simple-minded characters.⁹ Comments are likely to be of this order: "For the sentimental, too, as well as for the terrible, Miss Caroline and the cook had a strong predilection; and had wept their poor eyes out over 'Thaddeus of Warsaw' and the 'Scottish Chiefs.'¹⁰

⁷"Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, p. 210. This whole essay makes an excellent starting point for anyone interested in Thackeray's reading habits — expressed in his own reminiscences.

⁸"De Juventute," Roundabout Papers, p. 62.

⁹"Mr. Deuceace at Paris," Yellowplush Papers, p. 466; Vanity Fair, p. 579; Philip, p. 304; The Newcomes, p. 128, 133; "De Juventute," Roundabout Papers, pp. 62-3.

¹⁰A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 31.

One notes here that Scott, to be discussed later, was apparently the next novelist to whom he gave his wholehearted boyish loyalty after the Scottish Chiefs, for in that same essay he says that "the glorious Scott cycle of romances came to me some four or five years afterward"; then, after dreaming of his special favorites among the characters, he adds that he really loved Cooper's heroes just as well.¹¹

He seems to have had the usual boy's enthusiasm for horror stories. On one occasion (he was seventeen at the time), he regretted the fact that he had not had time to read any novel that term except one by the author of Granby,¹² but not as good as Granby; then he added that he had read a curious book on the Inquisition, with plates delineating faithfully the various methods of torture.¹³ He speaks of enjoying Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho,¹⁴ and exclaims over the delight he had in copying pictures from it. Again he recollects the terrorized fascination exerted by another youthful favorite. Manfroni; or the One-handed Monk, giving considerable detail about one

¹¹"A Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, pp. 210-11.

¹²Apparently Herbert Lacy, a three volume work published in 1828, by T. H. Lister, author of Granby.

¹³Quoted by Malcom Elwin, in Thackeray, p. 31.

¹⁴A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 61; "De Juventute," Roundabout Papers, p. 62.

part of the story as the boy's heart pounds "as the trap door slowly opens and the scowling Alonzo, bending over the sleeping Imouida, draws his pistol...."¹⁵

Years later, in 1842, when Thackeray was touring Ireland and writing the Irish Sketch Book, he visited a convent and exclaimed:

Bon Dieu! and is it possible that I shall see a nun's cell? Do I not recollect the nun's call in 'The Monk,' or in 'The Romance of the Forest?' or, if not there, at any rate, in a thousand noble early days of half-holiday - perhaps - romances a two-pence a volume.¹⁶

There are references to other lurid or mysterious tales, but the persons mentioned are real desperadoes, even though romanticized, and therefore not characters to be considered here.

Thackeray's varied comments on novels and dramas are difficult to classify. Those dealing with French works and authors will be treated separately. Of novels in English, Thackeray mentions several by name or type in his discussion of Romanticism versus classicism when discussing the French School of Painting.

Nevertheless, Jacques Louis David is dead. He died about a year after his bodily demise in 1825. The romanticism killed him. Walter Scott, from his Castle of Abbotsford, sent out a troop of gallant young Scotch adventures, merry outlaws, valiant knights, and savage Highlanders, who, with trunk hosen and

¹⁵ A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 30. Other references are found in The Newcomes, p. 128; and "Tunbridge Toys," Roundabout Papers, pp. 52-3.

¹⁶ "Cork- The Ursuline Convent," Irish Sketch Book, p. 345.

buff jerkins, fierce two-handed swords, and harnesses on their backs, did challenge, combat, and overcome the heroes and demigods of Greece and Rome. Notre Dame a la rescourse! Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert has borne Hector of Troy clear out of his saddle. Andromache may weep: but her spouse is beyond the aid of physic. See! Robinhood twangs his bow, and the heathen gods fly, howling. Montioie Saint Denis! down goes Ajax under the mace of Dunois; and yonder are Leonidas and Romulus begging their lives of Bob Roy Macgregor. Classicism is dead. Sir John Froissart has taken Dr. Lempuere by the nose and reigns sovereign.¹⁷

This particular passage is important in showing how completely at call Thackeray held everything he had once read, and how easily and appropriately he could use that reading.

He tells once of discussing heroes and heroines with Jane Austen. Obviously they both knew her favorites well — Athos, Guy Livingston, Colonel Esmond, Valancourt; and Thackeray — commenting on the transitory fame of all novels — sees all these, with "Doricourt" and "Thaddeus of Warsaw," going into limbo. Then he remembers and quotes from Evelina, whose hero, Lord Orville, was the favorite of another friend, and Dr. Johnson's as well. Of the heroic heroes, Thackeray says his own is Monseigneur Athos, Count de la Fere. "I have read about him from sunrise to sunset with the utmost contentment of mind."¹⁸

Casually mentioned in various works are several Irish

¹⁷"On the French School of Painting," Paris Sketch Book, p. 53.

¹⁸"A Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, pp. 214-15.

and Hibernian tales, of which he says the former are modern, the latter ancient, and the old ones better.¹⁹ Also Irish are the Four Masters and Olaus Magnus.²⁰ Miss Edgeworth's works are noticed and evidently critically read, for Thackeray comments:

A celebrated philosopher — I think Miss Edgeworth — has broached the consolatory doctrine, that in intellect and dispositions all human beings are entirely equal, and that circumstance and education are the causes of the distinctions and divisions which afterwards unhappily take place among them.... places Jack Howard and Jack Thurtell on an exact level.²¹

Women writers, with the exception of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, seemed never to impress him seriously. He speaks as flippantly of Mrs. Trollope as of Miss Edgeworth, querying "What would Mrs. Trollope say?" of some of his statements in the Little Travels,²² and classes her with Bulwer in "enlightening the public about Paris customs' men."²³

Seldom does Thackeray mention anything he has read without some descriptive or qualifying words which show his opinion.

¹⁹ Irish Sketch Book, p. 441. He gives the plots and quotes from several of the stories he liked best in the collection.

²⁰ Book of Snobs, p. 302. The context seems to imply the fictional quality of the works mentioned.

²¹ Catherine, p. 513.

²² "Waterloo," Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, p. 811.

²³ "Invasion," Paris Sketch Book, p. 15.

In some cases — as with his "dearly beloved 'Jacob Faithful'"²⁴ just an adjective suffices; in others, a subtle bit of satire gives the picture, thus: "The amusing novel of 'Ernest Maltravers' for instance, opens with a seduction; but then it is performed by people of the strictest virtue on both sides."²⁵

The same novel is mentioned twice more in Catherine,²⁶ which indicates that once Thackeray called to mind a book or an author, that one was likely to appear several times during the course of the story. Whether this reiteration resulted from Thackeray's pre-occupation with Maltravers or from a conscious, artistic linking of appropriate reading material to certain characters is not apparent; however, knowing Thackeray's intimacy with all his characters and his unfailing sense for authentic backgrounds, it may be taken for granted that in choosing his references he was first the literary artist — then, perhaps the digressive, philosophic essayist.

Thackeray knew his Defoe, too, and liked it. He says he had passed delightful nights in the company of Robinson Crusoe;²⁷ and perhaps he knew Moll Flanders even better, for to a discussion on clothes in Catherine, he adds a complimentary footnote with minute but exactly appropriate detail, to wit: "In the

²⁴"De Finibus," Roundabout Papers, p. 204.

²⁵Catherine, p. 455.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 456.

²⁷Denis Duval, pp. 677, 679.

ingenious contemporary history of Moll Flanders, a periwig is mentioned as costing that sum."²⁸

Thackeray mentions familiarly many other novels without much indication of their content. The maid is discovered with Mrs. Rundell in her lap, its leaves bespattered with her tears.²⁹ Mr. Crawley told Becky she might better read Thrupp's Legacy, or the Blind Washerwoman, than play backgammon with Sir Pitt.³⁰ G.P.R. James' works were parodied in Barbazure, as was Disraeli's Coningsby in Codlingsby, and as were the unfortunate Bulwer's.

A complete record of all the material which Thackeray read for such parodies and for critical reviews would require lengthy and thorough research through files of the various newspapers and magazines to which he contributed or which at some time he edited. Such primary information is not available for the present study. The fact that he kept up with the contemporary output of novels, reviewing them often vitriolically as he did Montgomery's Woman in 1833,³¹ is obvious both from his work as editor and contributing reviewer and from his own

²⁸Page 487.

²⁹Little Dinner at Timmins, p. 722.

³⁰Vanity Fair, p. 85.

³¹Mentioned by Elwin in Thackeray, p. 31.

remarks in Pendennis when he exclaims that he was so sure of himself that he never hesitated to criticize the greatest variety of books and authors, although in those young days he had no real knowledge.³²

When it came to claiming credit for having read a novel, however, Thackeray was invariably modest. He deftly introduces Frankenstein where he belongs: "He looked, for all the world, like Mr. Tippy Cooke in the tragady of Frankinstang. At last he mannidged to speak."³³ In similar fashion: "Her ladyship wrote verses comparing herself to Sabra in the 'Seven Champions' and besought her George to rescue her from the dragon, meaning Mrs. Barry."³⁴

Other novels and dramas which he mentions as casually include: Lewis's Abellino, the Terrific Bravo of Venice;³⁵ Vulpius's Rinaldo Rinaldino, probably the three volume English translation made by Hinckley in 1798;³⁶ Marryat's Joseph Rusbrough;³⁷ Morier's Hajji Baba;³⁸ Joseph Kenney's farce Raising

³² Pages 359-60.

³³ "Mr. Deuceace at Paris," Yellowplush Papers, p. 455.

³⁴ Barry Lyndon, p. 262. See also a more elaborate reference in The Virginians, p. 543.

³⁵ "The Newcomes," p. 128.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 128.

³⁷ Ritchie, Thackeray and His Daughter, p. 96. See also quotation in Elwin's Thackeray, p. 110.

³⁸ "Constantinople," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 645. See also Elwin's Thackeray, p. 140.

the Wind,³⁹ and an otherwise unidentified "noble romance,"
Ten Thousand a Year.⁴⁰

Without mentioning specific titles, Thackeray sometimes shows familiarity with works of certain authors. For instance, in one of his lectures he digresses about those sentimentalists who defend Mary, Queen of Scots, Helen of Troy, Dorothea, Caroline, and Bluebeard's wife, and adds:

How devotedly Miss Strickland has stood by Mary's innocence!...and Eve never took the apple — ^{it} was a cowardly fabrication of the serpent's.⁴¹

Again he writes:

Beatrice Merger, whose name might figure at the head of one of Mr. Colburn's politest romances — so smooth and aristocratic does it sound — is no heroine, except of her own simple history.⁴²

Thackeray studied another group of writings as he prepared reviews and lectures on artists and illustrators. Being a conscientious scholar as well as an outspoken art critic, he seems to have read the stories carefully and to have judged the illustrator partly on his ability to catch the spirit of the writing. He read novels and fairy tales with Cruikshank illustrations, works illustrated by French artists, and re-read

³⁹Lovel, the Widower, p. 775; "The Kickleburys on the Rhine," Christmas Stories, p. 146; The Newcomes, p. 566.

⁴⁰The Book of Snobs, p. 360.

⁴¹"George the First," The Four Georges, p. 288.

⁴²"Beatrice Merger," Paris Sketch Book, p. 137.

the Tom and Jerry books from his love of Cruikshank's pictures. Two other books he criticizes in his Critical Review of Cruikshank are Peter Schlemild,⁴³ and Clark's Three Courses and a Dessert,⁴⁴ which he recommends as being most amusing.

Although the complete amount of fiction which Thackeray read cannot be gauged by the number of his references, the variety and the types of comment he made show how eagerly he read what came his way and how well he remembered whatever was appropriate for interpolation in his own writings.

Naturally, one finds no references to the works of contemporary novelists in Thackeray's greatest novels, since they had eighteenth century settings. An accurate record of his reading of contemporaries would necessitate research through all his newspaper and magazine contributions, as well as through the complete collection of his letters, which is not yet available. However, he makes many such references in the Sketch Books, Roundabout Papers, and informal essays, mentioning Bulwer-Lytton most frequently. He pays special attention to Charlotte Brontë, as usual commenting on personal attributes as much as on literary skill.

...Of the multitude that have read her books, who has not known and deplored the tragedy of her family, her own most sad and untimely fate? Which of her readers has not become her friend? Who that has known her books has not admired the artist's

⁴³"Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, 616-7.

⁴⁴Ibid., 608.

noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence, the passionate honor, so to speak, of the woman?⁴⁵

Thackeray concludes his essay on Miss Brontë with a tribute to Jane Eyre.

How well I remember the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read 'Jane Eyre,' sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascinations of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through!⁴⁶

Apparently Thackeray read French novelists as easily and almost as much as he did English. Pendennis says:

...He was consulting a novel which had recently appeared, for the cultivation of the light literature of his own nation as well as of foreign nations became every student....Besides the works of English 'light literature' which this diligent student devoured, he brought down boxes of the light literature of the neighboring country of France....Pen told his mother it was as necessary to read Paul de Kock as to study Swift or Molière.⁴⁷

After Molière and Dumas, Thackeray's favorite among the French writers was probably Victor Hugo. As usual, he read the man as much as his work:

Victor Hugo, in his famous travels on the Rhine, visiting Cologne, gives a learned account of what he didn't see there. I have a remarkable catalog of similar objects at Constantinople.⁴⁸

⁴⁵"The Last Sketch," Roundabout Papers, p. 270.

⁴⁶Ibid.,, p. 271.

⁴⁷Pendennis, p. 177.

⁴⁸"Constantinople," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 648.

In deploring French sentimentalism, Thackeray quotes a verse sent to the king by Hugo, and comments: "Now in countries where fools most abound, did one ever read of more monstrous palpable folly?"⁴⁹ He speaks more kindly of Hugo's fiction, however, in comparing his dramatic offerings with those of Dumas, commenting that "as the great Hugo has one monster to each play, the great Dumas has, ordinarily, half a dozen, to whom murder is nothing."⁵⁰

Of Paul de Kock, whom he mentioned in Pendennis, he said again, "He was lying on a crimson velvet sofa reading a French novel of Paul de Kock. It was a very little book. He was a very little man."⁵¹

He compares critically the works of de Bernard with those of Balzac, Soulie, and Dumas, showing familiarity with each.

He [de Bernard] is more remarkable than any other French author, to our notion, for writing like a gentleman; there is ease, grace, and ton, in his style, which, if we judge aright, cannot be discovered in Balzac, or Soulie, or Dumas. We have then - 'Gerfant,' a novel.⁵²

In this same discussion Thackeray quotes and paraphrases from "La Femme de Quarante Ans," and "Un Acte de Vertu," also

⁴⁹"Fêtes of July," Paris Sketch Book, p. 37.

⁵⁰"French Drama and Melodrama," Paris Sketch Book, p. 249.

⁵¹The Book of Snobs, p. 392.

⁵²"French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 94.

bringing in a comment on Boccaccio.⁵³ In another place he ranks Balzac with the sentimentalists,⁵⁴ and again, calling to mind Balzac's La Peau de Chagrin, he described it as possessing many of the faults and beauties of the new romantic school, with plenty of light and shade, good coloring and costumes, but no character.⁵⁵ Obviously, then, he knew French writers of his day beyond the specific ones mentioned; but it is also obvious that the Balzac tale just mentioned made a more definite impression than some others, for he remembered it well, writing later: "You remember Balzac's tale of the Peau de Chagrin, and how every time the possessor used it for the accomplishment of some wish the fairy Peau shrank a little and the owner's life correspondingly shortened."⁵⁶

Thackeray was never especially impressed by social intrigues, even though he admired de Bernard's talent. With others of the same genre he had less patience.

If we examine an author who rejoices in the aristocratic name of the comte Horace de Viel-Castel, we find, though with infinitely less wit, exactly the same intrigues going on... also in the 'Fau-bourg St. Germain' another novel by the same writer.⁵⁷

⁵³"French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 88, 95ff.

⁵⁴"The Case of Peytel," Paris Sketch Book, p. 212.

⁵⁵Quoted by Elwin, Thackeray, p. 50.

⁵⁶"On Two Children in Black," Roundabout Papers, p. 15.

⁵⁷"French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 95.

Another type of French fiction which Thackeray seemed to know well was the rogue story. In criticizing the Auberge des Adrets, which he does not further identify, he says that it is a sort of synthesis of French roguery in the character of M. Robert Macaire. It is one type of character, he says, which the French satirists have depicted in which greatness — like that of Jonathan Wild — stands for roguery in general.⁵⁸

Thackeray's other references to French literature are so closely connected with those to the novelists that they will be given here. Of the innumerable plays — both French and English — which he saw acted and which he commented on, no account has been taken in this paper. There again is a study in itself. In commenting on plays performed on the English stage, Thackeray often makes no clear distinction as to whether he knew them so well from having read them; but in writing on the "French Drama and Melodrama," it appears that he had studied the plays as written. He brings into the discussion — without regard for time-lines or nationalities — Rachel, Racine, Horace, Le Cid, Dumas, Hugo, Le Sage, and others.⁵⁹ He expresses his fondness for Montaigne,⁶⁰ but satirizes George Sand mercilessly.⁶¹

⁵⁸"Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, p.153ff.

⁵⁹Paris Sketch Book, pp. 248ff.

⁶⁰"On Two Children in Black," pp. 12, 15.

⁶¹"Madam Sand and the new Apocalypse," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 189ff.

In both English and French works, Thackeray had an eye for colorful, pseudo-historical tales, and although the strictly historical reading will be treated in another chapter, some of these references indicate that Thackeray was often dreaming:

He says in Catherine:

...Is not history, from the Trojan war upwards and downwards, full of instances of such strange inexplicable passions? Was not Helen, by the most modern calculation, ninety years of age when she went off with his Royal Highness Prince Paris of Troy? Was not Madame La Vallière ill-made, blear-eyed, tallow-complexioned, scraggy, and with hair like two? Was not Wilkes the ugliest, charmingest, most successful man in the world?...Love is fate, and not will.⁶²

And again, giving the gist of a French story which seems to have fascinated him: "...Strange stories of the deaths of kings have always been very recreating and profitable to us: what a fine one is that of the death of Louis XV, as Mme. Campan tells it."⁶³ While inference from parallel passages are often too tenuous to be valid, the phrase "Strange stories of the deaths of kings" sounds as if Thackeray were thinking of that bitter speech of Shakespeare's Richard the Second:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings!

Thackeray knew Cervantes, too, and admired him, if one can take Colonel Newcome's word for it. The Colonel said that

⁶²Page 458.

⁶³"Meditations," Paris Sketch Book, p. 276.

Don Quixote, with Sir Roger, and Charles Grandison were the greatest gentlemen in the world;⁶⁴ and some one else queries: "...Did Don Quixote lose any opportunity of declaring to the world that Dulcinéa del Toboso was peerless among women?"⁶⁵

Considering these references to Thackeray's reading in novels and dramas, one can draw conclusions most confidently from quotations in which he gives his views of novelists, novels, both types and specific titles, and the novelist's purpose.

In comparing the ancient and modern, the old controversy still troubling him, he says he really believes Susannahs are more numerous and the Elders less wicked in his own day. He mentions Charissa, Tom Jones, Roderick Random, and Peregrine Pickle; and seems to think people are better "now." Yet in the same breath he adds:

Also, it may be said that the novelist's art is injured by the restraints put upon him, as many an honest, harmless statue at St. Peter's and the Vatican is spoiled by the tin draperies in which ecclesiastical old women have swaddled the fair limbs of the marble.⁶⁶

His habit of combining the imaginary with the real is shown in a meditation over a local murder.⁶⁷

⁶⁴The Newcomes, p. 42.

⁶⁵Philip, p. 466.

⁶⁶The Virginians, pp. 342-3.

⁶⁷Note, too, the adjectives which indicate an opinion of each author mentioned.

The brave Dumas, the intrepid Ainsworth, the terrible Eugene Sue, the cold-shudder-inspiring 'Woman in White,' the astounding author of the 'Mysteries of the Court of London,' never invented anything more tremendous than this.⁶⁸

Thackeray probably read novels more critically than he is given credit for having done. Commenting on style and method, he decides where his own duties lie as an honest novelist.

...The real business of life, I fancy, can form but little portion of the novelist's budget. When he is speaking of the profession of arms,... the novelist may perhaps venture to deal with actual affairs of life; but otherwise, they scarcely can enter into our stories. The main part of Ficinulus's life, for instance, is spent in selling sugar, spices, and cheese; of Causidicus's in poring over musty volumes of black-letter law; of Sartorius's in sitting, cross-legged, on a board after measuring gentlemen for coats and breeches. What can a story-teller say about the professional existence of these men? Would a real rustical history of hobnails and eighteenpence a-day be endurable? In the days whereof we are writing, the poets of the time chose to represent a shepherd in pink breeches and a chintz waistcoat, dancing before his flocks, and playing a flageolet tied up with a blue satin ribbon. I say, in reply to some objections which have been urged by potent and friendly critics, that of the actual affairs of life the novelist cannot be expected to treat - with the almost single exception of war before named. All authors can do, is to depict men out of their business - in their passions, loves, laughs, amusements, hatreds, and what not - and describe these as well as they can, taking the business-part for granted, and leaving it as it were for subaudition.

Thus, in talking of the present or the past world, I know I am only dangle about the theatre lobbies, coffee-houses, ridottos, pleasure-haunts, fair-booths, and feasting and fiddling rooms of life; that, mean-

68.

"On Two Roundabout Papers," Roundabout Papers, p. 123.

while, the great serious past or present world is plodding in its chambers, toiling at its humdrum looms, or jogging on its accustomed labors, and we are only seeing our characters away from their work. Corydon has to cart the litter, and thresh the barley, as well as make love to Phillis;⁶⁹ it is only when they are disengaged and away from their work, that we can bring them and the equally disengaged reader together.⁷⁰

In a general comment on novelists, Thackeray indicates his favorites; he also shows how important he considered the man's life in proportion to his work.

...Was not poor Cervantes also a captive among the Moors? Did not Fielding, and Goldsmith, and Smollett, too, die at the chain as well as poor Hood? Think of Fielding going on board his wretched ship in the Thames, with scarce a hand to bid him farewell; of brave Tobias Smollett, and his life, how hard, and how poorly rewarded; of Goldsmith, and the physician whispering, 'Have you something on your mind?' and the wild dying eyes answering 'Yes.' Notice how Boswell speaks of Goldsmith, and the splendid contempt with which he regards him. Read Hawkins on Fielding, and the scone with which Dandy Walpole and Bishop Hurd speak of him.⁷¹

Thackeray says further that men of letters have no more right than others to deny their own responsibility in misfortune. There was no reason why Goldsmith, Steels, and Fielding had to be so thriftless, nor why Sterne should have made love to his neighbors' wives. In contrast, Thackeray cites Swift, who owed no penny to his neighbors although for a long time he was as

⁶⁹Note the almost complete lack of any pastoral element throughout Thackeray's references.

⁷⁰The Virginians, pp. 483-4.

⁷¹"On a Joke I once Heard," Roundabout Papers, p. 75.

poor a wag as ever laughed, Addison, who could maintain his dignity while wearing his most threadbare coat; and Cervantes, who endured pain, but not shame, in serving as a galley slave.

Thackeray's references to novels and dramas show that: he liked best those of historical romance and adventure; he preferred English to French novels; he felt that women writers were usually excessively sentimental; he believed novels should not be built on everyday experiences, except in war stories; and he often grew to have more interest in the novelist than in the novel.

CHAPTER IV

SPECIFIC LITERARY FIGURES

It is difficult to estimate the Shakespearean reading which Thackeray did. Evidence of close familiarity with the plays pervades his work, but the majority of references are to stage presentations.¹ While one might assume that he had read the ones which he, or his fictional characters, saw, there is often no statement to that effect; therefore, all such references have been omitted. Those thirty-odd herein presented indicate which plays Thackeray knew and, presumably, liked best; they also show his appreciation of Shakespeare's genius.

Through most of Pendennis there is much talk of Hamlet; and although this may be partly because Pen fancied himself in love with Emily Fotheringay, the Shakespearean actress, discussions of Ophelia's and Hamlet's madness² show that Thackeray had studied the drama critically. He brings up also the question of the reality of Ophelia's love for Hamlet, and

¹Thackeray's accounts of play-going, with his comments on players of different times and his personal reactions, would make a most interesting study. See also n. 37, p. 55.

²Pendennis, p. 58.

has the simple-minded Emily ask her father: "What was he talking about, the madness of Hamlet, and the theory of the great German critic on the subject?"³ In an essay he paraphrases Hamlet:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Gambogio,
Than are dreamed of in your philosophy.⁴

He said of one woman's actions that "twas as monstrous as King Hamlet's widow taking off her weeds for Claudius,"⁵ and that action in the drama evidently had caused him some pondering, for seven years later⁶ he held a more tolerant view.

No invective can be more rude, gross, and unphilosophical than, for instance, Hamlet's to his mother about her second marriage. The truth very likely is, that that tender, parasitic creature wanted a something to cling to, and, Hamlet senior out of the way, twined herself round Claudius. Nay, we have known females so bent on attaching themselves, that they can twine round two gentlemen at once. Why, forsooth, shall there not be marriage-tables after funeral baked meats? If you said grace for your feast yesterday, is that any reason why you should not be hungry today?⁷

Thackeray's interest in Othello was equally pronounced.⁸

³Pendennis, p. 58.

⁴"The Painter's Bargain," Paris Sketch Book, p. 60.

⁵Esmond, p. 192.

⁶Esmond was written 1851-2, The Virginians 1857-9.

⁷The Virginians, p. 591.

⁸The Newcomes, p. 123; The Book of Snobs, 351; The Virginians, pp. 529, 539, 513, 768.

Beatrice says:

Why, after I belonged to you, and after one of my tantrums, you would have put the pillow over my head some night, and smothered me, as the black man does the woman in the play that you're so fond of. What's the creature's name? Desdemona. You would, you little black dyed Othello!⁹

Tense, personal scenes were likely to make the greatest impression on Thackeray; consequently, King Lear was also a favorite play, and that unhappy monarch the object of his sympathy. In a lecture on George the Third, he quotes from King Lear and compares George's loss of his beloved daughter and his miserable end to similar afflictions of Lear.¹⁰

Other references to specific plays or characters include Falstaff,¹¹ Cardinal Wolsey,¹² Falconbridge,¹³ a comment on Temple Garden, "in which Shakespeare makes York and Lancaster to pluck the innocent white and red roses which became the badges of their bloody wars,"¹⁴ and that particular parallel passage which is almost a quotation: "Strange stories of the deaths of kings..."¹⁵ and a query about Emily: "Was Titania the first to

⁹Esmond, p. 335.

¹⁰"George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 342. See also The Virginians, p. 142.

¹¹"Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 601.

¹²Pendennis, p. 729.

¹³The Book of Snobs, p. 351.

¹⁴Pendennis, pp. 499-500.

¹⁵"Meditations at Versailles," Paris Sketch Book, p. 276.

fall in love with an ass?"¹⁶

Most of the other references to Shakespeare are generalized comments on his genius or reflections of prevalent ideas about his artistry as compared, for instance, to John Horne or Molière.¹⁷ One statement made by Thackeray as himself, not as some fictional character, can be accepted as his opinion about the man and his works.

You go about Warwickshire, and fancy that from merely being born and wandering in those sweet sunny plains and fresh woodlands Shakespeare must have drunk in a portion of that frank, artless sense of beauty, which lies about his works like a bloom or dew; but a Coventry ribbon-maker, or a slang Leamington squire, are [sic] looking on those very same landscapes too, and what do they profit?¹⁸

Lewis Melville in his chapter on "Thackeray as a Reader"¹⁹ makes a bold, arbitrary statement about Thackeray's reading preferences and literary opinions especially concerning Milton;

¹⁶Pendennis, p. 59.

¹⁷"Swift," English Humorists, p. 374; The Virginians, pp. 490-1, 513; Esmond, pp. 133, 335; Pendennis, p. 30; "Foring Parts," The Yellowplush Papers, p. 439; "On the French School of Painting," Paris Sketch Book, p. 53; "Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, pp. 631-2; Newcomes, p. 210.

¹⁸"Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 629.

¹⁹In Some Aspects.

however, he does not offer any evidence to back up his opinion except one statement for which no source is given.

It cannot be contended that Thackeray was a great critic. Indeed there is no doubt that, as a rule, he preferred second-rate books of the first-class to the greatest. For instance, while as a matter of course he admitted that Milton was a great poet, he added that he was such a bore that no one could read him.²⁰

Wherever Melville found that statement, it still is dangerous to draw conclusions from one sentence out of context. Thackeray, like everyone else; liked different kinds of reading at different times. Although he may seem to merit Melville's dictum by a satirical comparison he made between Milton and Béranger,²¹ he was more likely exaggerating his kinship with the humble folk in an outburst against pseudo-scholars. Other references show that he was familiar with his Milton and introduced him when appropriate.²² And this quotation, showing a real appreciation for Milton's genius, should carry as much weight as the one Melville chose upon which to base his criticism. Thackeray is comparing writers to sculpture, in this case to St. Michael. "He is as natural as blank verse - that bronze angel - set, rhythmic, grandiose. You'll see, some day

²⁰Some Aspects, p. 47.

²¹"On the French School of Painting," Paris Sketch Book, p. 57.

²²"Epistles to the Literati," Yellowplush Papers, pp. 523, 527; The Newcomes, p. 287; "Swift," English Humorists, p. 391; Esmond, p. 335.

or other, he's a great sonnet, sir, I'm sure of that. Milton wrote in bronze."²³

One may conclude that Thackeray mentions Milton less often than some other writers because Miltonic material fitted in less often with stories and essays which Thackeray wrote. That constitutes no proof that he did not read and appreciate Milton as one of England's great poets.

Discussing Addison and Steele, Thackeray shows a deep interest and affection. One cannot make a definite allocation of references in the case of Addison, for he and Steele are a vital part of Esmond and live all through the book. Such complete and exact knowledge as Thackeray shows is obviously the result of long, intensive study. Just what his sources are he does not indicate. He has Steele introduce Addison,²⁴ paying him tribute and setting the stage for his high place among his fellow characters.²⁵ Steele is also described first as a person, second as a writer.²⁶ His characterization is one of the best examples of Thackeray's struggle to reconcile a man with his work. He calls him "Poor Dick" most of the time; yet he

²³ The Newcomes, p. 375.

²⁴ Esmond, pp. 62ff.

²⁵ See chapter "The Famous Mr. Joseph Addison," Esmond, pp. 232ff.

²⁶ Esmond, pp. 59ff.

recognizes him as a true wit and scholar;²⁷ and he makes a gallant attempt to show that his gentleness and charity covered multitudes of his own and others' sins.²⁸

For assurance that Thackeray read Addison and Steele and much about them, one needs only to consult the lectures on the English Humorists.²⁹ While they do not give all his sources of information, they show results of extensive study. Of the works of the two men, Thackeray is most impressed by the Spectator, usually thinking of Addison as the author. While he makes numerous references to certain favorite characters, especially Sir Roger de Coverley,³⁰ his high opinion of the papers as a whole is well expressed in one.

...Our dear old Spectator looks smiling upon the streets, with their innumerable signs, and describes them with his charming humor....Our Spectator and Tatler are full of delightful glimpses of the town-life of those days....we can take boat at Temple Stairs, and accompany Sir Roger de Coverley and Mr. Spectator to Spring Garden....Would you not like to step back into the part and be introduced to Mr. Addison? Not the Right Honorable Joseph Addison, Esq., George I's Secretary of State, but to the delightful painter of contemporary manners; the man who, when in good humor himself, was the pleasantest companion in all

²⁷Esmond, pp. 59ff, passim; "Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, p. 415.

²⁸See p. 46 in Esmond, and general references throughout the book.

²⁹See especially those on "Congreve and Addison," "Steele," and "Prior, Gay, and Pope."

³⁰The Newcomes, p. 42; "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 312.

England. I should like to go into Lockit's with him, and drink a bowl along with Sir R. Steele (who has just been knighted by King George, and who does not happen to have any money to pay his share of the reckoning)....Delightful Spectator! kind friend of leisure hours! happy companion! true Christian gentleman! How much greater, better, you are than the King Mr. Secretary kneels to.³¹

As one would expect, Thackeray knew Addison's other works well, also. He refers to Rosamond,³² to The Campaign, which he seemed to think good poetry,³³ and he also refers to Cato. It is significant that when he shows acquaintance with this drama, he also shows that he has studied relevant criticisms and opinions.³⁴ Whether his comment in the introduction to Barry Lyndon is to be accepted as his judgment on the controversial tragedy or whether it is meant to be a re-

³¹"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, pp. 294-5. See also "Dublin at Last," Irish Sketch Book, pp. 580-1; Pendennis, p. 500; "Barnwell," Novels by Eminent Hands, pp. 13-15. Elwin says Fitzgerald once planned a volume of all the Spectator papers relating to Sir Roger de Coverley, with illustrations by Thackeray; see p. 61 in Thackeray.

³²Esmond, p. 91.

³³Esmond, pp. 216, 225; Catherine, p. 556.

³⁴Barry Lyndon, p. 15; "Prior, Gay and Pope," English Humorists, p. 481, Esmond, p. 317, "Swift" English Humorists, p. 374.

flection of the opinion of his time is not certain. It seems to be his own conclusion. "What spectacle is more august than that of a great king in exile? Who is more worthy of respect than a brave man in misfortune? Mr. Addison has painted such a figure in his noble Cato."³⁵

It is strange that with all Thackeray's idealization of Addison's personal life and character, he did not mention his famous "Divine Ode," familiar today as the hymn beginning "The spacious firmament on high."

References to Swift are often closely connected with those about other early eighteenth century literary figures, and of Swift Thackeray had plenty to say. Besides one complete lecture on him³⁶ and innumerable suggestions not quite definite enough to be counted for this study, there are more than twenty specific references to the man and his work.

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to let Thackeray tell what he thought of the literary men he studied most thoroughly, since he introduces his lectures on Swift by these comments:

Would we have liked to live with him? That is a question which, in dealing with these people's works, and thinking of their lives and peculiarities, every reader of biographies must put to himself. Would you have liked to be a friend of the

³⁵ Barry Lyndon, p. 15.

³⁶ "Swift," English Humorists, pp. 371-400.

great Dean? I should like to have been Shakespeare's bootblack — just to have lived in his house, just to have worshipped him — to have run on his errands, and seen that sweet serene face. I should like, as a young man, to have lived on Fielding's staircase in the Temple,...Who would not give something to pass a night at the club with Johnson, and Goldsmith, and James Boswell, Esq., of Auchinleck? The charm of Addison's companionship and conversation has passed to us by fond tradition — but Swift?³⁷

There follows a sketch of Swift the man and writer as Thackeray saw him. The same opinions are confirmed and elaborated in other references also,³⁸ many to letters and journals.

Lewis Melville says it is obvious that Thackeray's chief admiration for Swift's writing was for his Journal to Stella;³⁹ this is not substantiated by evidence in Thackeray's works. He usually mentions "Stella" in criticizing Swift's treatment of her and "Vanessa."⁴⁰

Thackeray also studied carefully Swift's historical sketches and opinions. Of these Thackeray spoke rather disparagingly,⁴¹ being particularly concerned over Swift's atti-

³⁷"Swift," English Humorists, p. 374.

³⁸Esmond; esp. pp. 346ff; "On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 99; Pendennis, p. 177; "Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, p. 420; "Prior, Gay and Pope," English Humorists, pp. 460, 466, 477ff; "Country Meetings," Irish Sketch Book, p. 513.

³⁹Some Aspects, p. 40.

⁴⁰"Swift," English Humorists, pp. 394-401.

⁴¹"Strange to Say, On Club Paper," Roundabout Papers, p. 268; "Steele," English Humorists, p. 430; "George the First," The Four Georges, p. 291; "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 314.

tude toward Marlborough.

Despite Thackeray's pungent comments on Swift's cruel satire, unsatisfactory personal life, and - to Thackeray - prejudiced views of history, he found one book which he obviously read often and loved wholeheartedly. This was Gulliver's Travels. Among several significant references,⁴² these two show the deep impression made by the Gulliver characters. "Do you remember how Gulliver lost his awe of the tremendous Brobdingnag ladies?"⁴³

Mr. Swift hath finely described that passion for intrigue, that love of secrecy, slander, and lying, which belongs to weak people, hangers-on of weak courts...until one day Gulliver rouses himself.⁴⁴

The ideas grew more instead of less strong with the years, it seems, for in Philip, written during 1860-2, besides several casual references, one shows how real the adventures of Gulliver had become to him.

Every man and woman amongst us has made his voyage to Lilliput, and his tour in the kingdom of Brobdingnag....Sir John at home is in Lilliput: in Belgrave Square he is in Brobdingnag, where almost everybody we meet is ever so much taller than ourselves.⁴⁵

As Thackeray-judged by these references - seems to have

⁴²"John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, p. 634; "A Little Dinner at Timmin's," p. 719; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 466; see also "Swift," English Humorists.

⁴³"To Cairo," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 738.

⁴⁴Esmond, p. 179.

⁴⁵Page 595.

studied Swift with more discrimination than is usually believed, so did he read and study Fielding. He is popularly supposed to have had complete, uncritical admiration for Fielding; but his affection did not blind him to whatever he considered weaknesses.⁴⁶ Elwin says that Thackeray, who reviewed Fielding's works in The Times in 1840, admired him above all other writers and once had said that his English would have been much improved if he had read Fielding before he was ten.⁴⁷ What Thackeray implies here and elsewhere is a particular admiration of Fielding's frank, direct style — one which he himself never achieved.

Most of the references to Fielding's work are highly laudatory, but exclusive of the fine tributes in the Fielding lecture, there are few specific comments throughout the rest of the works. As might be expected, Fielding's realistic treatments particularly appealed to Thackeray.

...I would have History familiar rather than heroic: and think that Mr. Hogarth and Mr. Fielding will give our children a much better idea of the manners of the present age in England than the Court Gazette and the newspapers which we get thence.⁴⁸

Of the Fielding novels, Thackeray refers most often to Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones,⁴⁹ but he comments also on Jonathan

⁴⁶See essay on "Fielding," in the English Humorists for general impression.

⁴⁷Elwin, Thackeray, p. 90.

⁴⁸Barry Lyndon, p. 14; "On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84.

⁴⁹Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," in English Humorists, passim; "On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84; "Cruikshank," Critical Review, p. 601; The Newcomes, pp. 42-3.

Wild⁵⁰ and on a political article.⁵¹ He is delighted to quote Dr. Johnson and Gibbon in defense of Fielding;⁵² however, he seldom uses the names of Fielding characters to describe real or fictional people as he customarily does with his reading favorites. Whether this fact is significant is problematical. It might mean that he admired Fielding's style and method more than the characters which he created and that he studied him for improvement in himself; it might mean only that the Fielding characters were so different in Thackeray's eyes from those he created that there was no place for exact metaphor or allegory.

Thackeray speaks in a few places of Richardson.⁵³ Obviously well-acquainted with his work, he did not seem impressed with it, although he is never intolerant of sincerity, even when it takes the form of sentimentalism.

...He [Warrington] even thought novels were stupid; and, as for the ladies crying their eyes out over Mr. Richardson, he could not imagine how they could be moved by any such nonsense.⁵⁴

One other quotation reflects Thackeray's knowledge and general impression of both authors.

⁵⁰"Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, pp. 626-7.

⁵¹"George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 314.

⁵²The Newcomes, p. 44; "Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, p. 154; Vanity Fair, p. 84.

⁵³"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, pp. 221-3, The Virginians, pp. 221-3, 269-271, 679.

⁵⁴The Virginians, p. 511.

...The Lamberts were not squeamish; and laughed over pages of Mr. Fielding, and cried over volumes of Mr. Richardson, containing jokes and incidents which would make Mrs. Grundy's hair stand on end, yet their merry prattle left no bitterness behind it.⁵⁵

Thackeray devotes part of a lecture to Smollett,⁵⁶ and makes a few brief references to him elsewhere. He admired "Tobias Smollett, the manly, kindly, honest, and irascible";⁵⁷ he speaks of Humphrey Clinker as admirable and most amusing;⁵⁸ but he cares very little for Smollett's treatment of history. Becky and Rose read a history by the "learned Dr. Smollett," to the approval of Mr. Crawley, who considered it less dangerous than Hume; they took care not to tell him, however, that theirs was the history of Mr. Humphrey Clinker.⁵⁹

Thackeray compares Smollett's "dignified history" to Fielding's satire, saying the satire presents a truer picture of the times of George the Second;⁶⁰ he emphasizes that idea when he says: "...I take up a volume of Dr. Smollett, or a volume of the Spectator, and say the fiction carries a greater amount of truth in solution than the volume which purports to

⁵⁵The Virginians, p. 197.

⁵⁶"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, pp.506-11.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 508.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 506.

⁵⁹Vanity Fair, p. 83.

⁶⁰"Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, pp.156-60.

be all true."⁶¹

Thackeray is less kind to Sterne than to Fielding and Smollett. He doubts Sterne's sincerity, adding "...He fatigues me with his perpetual disquiet and his uneasy appeals to my visible or sentimental faculties."⁶²

On Sterne's Sentimental Journey Thackeray is particularly severe. He satirizes it in detail in the lecture on Sterne,⁶³ and reiterates his distaste in other places.⁶⁴ The essay "Dessein's"⁶⁵ is particularly valuable, since in the course of Thackeray's imaginary conversation with Sterne, several other authors are criticized, among them Robinson, Irving, Gouldsmith [sic], and Miss Hobson. Whether Thackeray was quoting opinions gleaned from his own reading, or merely quoting prevalent comments is difficult to say. What he said of Sterne, however, was probably as strong an indictment as he ever made of an author.

...There is not a page in Sterne's writing but has something that were better away, a latent corruption—a hint, as of an impure presence.

Some of that dreary double entendre may be attributed to freer times and manners than ours, but not all. The foul Satyr's eyes leer out of the leaves constantly: the last words the famous author wrote were bad

⁶¹"Steele," English Humorists, p. 430.

⁶²"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 530.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 530-4.

⁶⁴The Virginians, p. 610; "Desseins," Roundabout Papers, pp. 225-233.

⁶⁵Ibid.

and wicked - the last lines the poor stricken wretch penned were for pity and pardon.⁶⁶

In contrast to his feeling about Sterne, Thackeray shows considerable sympathy for the weaknesses of Dr. Johnson. He does not give sources for much of his biographical material, but he read and studied enough to describe him minutely in the novels, his appearance, temperament, and habits. Barry Lyndon was introduced by Goldsmith to Dr. Johnson,⁶⁷ gaining an impression which Thackeray emphasizes later in the story.

...it was through Mr. Reynolds that I was introduced to a score of these gentlemen [men of letters], and their great chief, Mr. Johnson. I always thought their great chief a great bear. He drank tea twice or thrice at my house, misbehaving himself most grossly; treating my opinions with no more respect than those of a schoolboy, and telling me to mind my horses and tailors, and not trouble myself about letters. His Scotch bear-leader, Mr. Boswell, was a butt of the first quality. I never saw such a figure as the fellow cut in what he called a Corsican habit, at one of Mrs. Cornely's balls, at Carlisle House, Soho.⁶⁸

Presenting quite another kind of picture, but still one showing how well Thackeray knew the man personally is this quotation:

Treading heavily on the gravel, and rolling majestically along in a snuff-colored suit, and a wig that sadly wants the barber's powder and irons, one sees the Great Doctor step up to him [Oliver Goldsmith] (his Scotch lackey following at the lexicographer's heels, a little the worse for port-wine that they had been taking at the Mitre), and Dr. Johnson asks Mr.

⁶⁶"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, pp. 533-4.

⁶⁷Barry Lyndon, p. 18.

⁶⁸Page 223.

Goldsmith to come home and take a dish of tea with Miss Williams. Kind faith of fancy. Sir Roger and Mr. Spectator are as real to us now as the two doctors and the boozy and faithful Scotchman.⁶⁹

Of some twenty references to Johnson's works, the most are to his Lives of the English Poets, which Thackeray draws on heavily in his lectures on the English Humorists,⁷⁰ Others include a eulogy of nearly two pages in one of the Four Georges lectures,⁷¹ tributes to his work in general,⁷² and one reference to Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.⁷³

Boswell is usually mentioned with Johnson, and Thackeray had, of course, read his works.⁷⁴

Coming into Thackeray's own time, there is Sir Walter Scott, whom Thackeray could admire both as man and artist.

⁶⁹Pendennis, p. 50. See other personal references in Virginians, pp. 221-3, 269-71; The Newcomes, p. 42.

⁷⁰"Congreve and Addison," pp. 405-6, 413, 416; "Swift," pp. 374, 397; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," pp. 461, 489; "Sterne and Goldsmith," pp. 539, 543; "Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," pp. 515ff.

⁷¹"George the Third," The Four Georges, pp. 327-9.

⁷²The Newcomes, pp. 135, 210.

⁷³Sketches and Travels in London, p. 412.

⁷⁴Quotes his Tour of the Hebrides, "Swift," English Humorists, p. 374; Life of Johnson in "Swift," English Humorists, p. 385; "Sterne and Goldsmith," Ibid., pp. 524, 539, 543; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," Ibid., p. 465.

Since Scott's novels had that semi-historical, romantic flavor which Thackeray loved, it is small wonder that one finds some thirty definite references, more consistently laudatory than any other group except those to the Arabian Nights.

Thackeray says the "glorious Scott cycle of romances" came to him when he was about thirteen,⁷⁵ and from that time he was an enthusiastic reader. Scott's life was apparently a source of inspiration. He speaks of admiring him for his loyalty to the king (Thackeray adds that he admired Robert Southey more),⁷⁶ and in a letter to his daughter in 1856, said: "I have been reading Walter Scott's Life all day and how at 60 odd he sat down to pay off a debt of £1300 with his pen."⁷⁷

Thackeray's meditations on Scott's works often lead to generalized comments on the delights of novel reading⁷⁸ and from there to his favorite novel Ivanhoe.

Do I forget one night after prayers (when we under boys were sent to bed) lingering at my cupboard to read one little half page more of my dear Walter Scott — and down came the monitor's dictionary upon my head! Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York, I have loved thee faithfully for forty years! Thou wert twenty years old (say) and I but twelve, when I knew thee. At sixty odd, love, most of the ladies of thy Orient race have lost the bloom of youth, and bulged beyond the line of beauty, but to me thou art

⁷⁵"On a Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, p. 210-11.

⁷⁶"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 362.

⁷⁷Ritchie, Thackeray and His Daughter, p. 102.

⁷⁸"On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84; The New-comer, pp. 129, 581.

ever young and fair, and I will do battle with any felon Templar who assails thy fair name.⁷⁹

Thackeray's exact knowledge of Ivanhoe can be recognized through his Rebecca and Rowena, and his love for these two heroines - Rebecca always his favorite - is indicated by several additional references in both sketches and novels.⁸⁰

Next to Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward is mentioned most often,⁸¹ while there is but one reference to The Heart of Midlothian.⁸² Turning from fiction, one finds Thackeray drawing from Scott's biographies for material for his English Humorists lectures,⁸³ and from his travel sketches for background in The Newcomes.⁸⁴

One reference is puzzling. It seems obviously satirical after reading all Thackeray's praises of Scott; yet it might as easily be a reflection of those intellectual qualms which disturbed him.

⁷⁹"On a Peal of Bells," Roundabout Papers, p. 216.

⁸⁰Pendennis, p. 30; Rebecca and Rowena, p. 270; Vanity Fair, 505; The Newcomes, pp. 122, 133; Lovel the Widower, p. 794; "Rhodes," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 664.

⁸¹The Newcomes, pp. 246, 276; "Epistles to the Literati," Yellowplush Papers, p. 521.

⁸²"De Juventute," Roundabout Papers.

⁸³"Swift," p. 372; "Congreve and Addison," pp. 414, 420; "Sterne and Goldsmith," pp. 529, 534-5; "Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," pp. 509ff; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," p. 461.

⁸⁴The Newcomes, p. 217.

Do, Philip, read us some Walter Scott! He is, as you say, the most fresh, the most manly, the most kindly of poetic writers — not of the first class, certainly. In fact, he has written most dreadful bosh, as you call it so drolly; and so has Wordsworth.⁸⁵

Perhaps in his maturer judgment, Philip was written during 1860-62 — Scott was about to be superseded in Thackeray's judgment by some of those writers "of the first class."

Among the work of his own contemporaries, Thackeray seemed most impressed by that of Dickens, which he admired, and of Bulwer-Lytton, which he disliked intensely. He makes innumerable comments about Dickens as a friend and fellow clubman, but since some of Thackeray's writings preceded much of Dickens' work, one will find fewer references to Dickens' novels than might be expected.

Thackeray deplored the habit — of Scott, James, Dickens and others — of ending novels while all the characters were still young. "Look at Mr. Dickens's; they disappear from the scene when they are mere chits."⁸⁶ More specifically he speaks in high praise of David Copperfield⁸⁷ and Oliver Twist,⁸⁸ but

⁸⁵ Philip, p. 194.

⁸⁶ Rebecca and Rowena, p. 270.

⁸⁷ "Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 534.

⁸⁸ "Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 628; The Newcomes, p. 407.

gives a mildly adverse opinion of the Boz sketches.⁸⁹ His greatest appreciation is for the Pickwick Papers.⁹⁰ As biographers, in the main, agree, Thackeray read and appreciated Dickens with no petty jealousy to cloud his judgments.

Ellis quotes Thackeray as saying: "...I may quarrel... with Mr. Dickens' art a thousand and one times. I delight and wonder at his genius."⁹¹ Ellis then adds as his interpretation:

This tribute Dickens gratefully acknowledged and posterity has reluctantly confirmed. And Thackeray continued to 'delight and wonder' at his rival's genius. Unfortunately, he was also influenced by it. Reading of the death of Paul Dombey, he exclaimed: 'There is no writing against this; one hasn't an atom of chance. It is stupendous.'⁹²

When all Thackeray's letters are published, probably more complete information on Thackeray's reading and appreciation of Dickens will be available; perhaps future critics will not need to make such paradoxical statements as those of Ellis, who says that it is doubtful if Thackeray really believed what he said of Dickens "stupendous" writing; that Thackeray got

⁸⁹ "The new Boz is dull but somehow gives one a very pleasant impression of the man." 1840 in a letter to his daughter, Ritchie, Thackeray and His Daughter, p. 12.

⁹⁰ "On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84; Cruikshank, " Critical Reviews, pp. 601, 604.

⁹¹ G. U. Ellis, Thackeray (London: Duckworth, 1933), p. 88.

⁹² Ellis, Thackeray, p. 88.

inside the skins of his characters, while Dickens never did more than get into the clothes of his; yet that Thackeray does not, that he could not, go very deep.⁹³

Of the Bulwer-Lytton-Thackeray literary feud there is little left to be said; it was intense and bitter, but concerns us here only as far as it contributed to Thackeray's reading and study of Bulwer. It is obvious that Thackeray watched for everything put out by Bulwer and read it eagerly. Evidence of Thackeray's judgment about him are those parodies or satirical answers which indicate how well he knew Bulwer — like his Barry Lyndon which exposed Eugene Aram for what superficial sentimentality it was, and his Catherine, which mercilessly makes varied comments about characters or styles of the Bulwer novels, particularly to the Sea Captain, Richelieu, the Lady of Lyons,⁹⁴ and always Eugene Aram and Ernest Maltravers.⁹⁵ His honest criticism of Bulwer written in mature life does not sound either personal or prejudiced. It is about the same opinion which most people today would have if they had to read all

⁹³Ellis, Thackeray, p. 88.

⁹⁴"Epistles to the Literati" Yellowplush Papers, pp. 522, 524, 532.

⁹⁵"Catherine," p. 468. There is much satiric reference like Thackeray's remark that Mrs. Bulwer had already enlightened the public about Paris customs men, but those do not necessarily reflect his reading of Bulwer.

of Bulwer, as Thackeray probably did. "...There are sentiments in his writings which always anger me, big words which make me furious, and a premeditated fine writing against which I can't help rebelling."⁹⁶

If one were to judge from these references what books and writers Thackeray loved best, he could be sure of these facts. Thackeray read thoughtfully the outstanding English literary figures from Shakespeare on; he was familiar, as well, with significant writers of other countries, Goethe, Molière, Dumas, Hugo, Cervantes ; he studied authors' lives as thoroughly as he did their works.; he remembered what he read, often in minute detail; he meditated enough on his reading to make considered criticisms, although they may have been influenced by his emotions on some occasions; and he did show more knowledge and appreciation of the "first class" writers than he has sometimes been credited with.

⁹⁶Quoted by Elwin, Thackeray, p. 60, and by Ellis, Thackeray, p. 32.

CHAPTER V

POETS

In commenting on poets, Thackeray referred most often to Pope, Gay, Prior, Moore, and Goldsmith of the eighteenth century, and to Goethe and Byron of the nineteenth. Of earlier ones little is said, although he speaks once of reading Chaucer¹ and of studying Waller² for inspiration for love lyrics.

As shown in the chapter on the classics, Thackeray knew Pope's Iliad almost by heart and loved it dearly. He read Pope's other works, as his lecture on Pope shows, and indicated clearly which he liked best. In eulogizing Pope as a literary genius, he says: "...If the author of the 'Dunciad' be not a humorist, if the poet of the 'Rape of the Lock' be not a wit, who deserves to be called so?"³

There is nothing more said of these or other poems — except a quotation from one by "the great Mr. Pope" honoring Henrietta Howard.⁴ What Thackeray evidently studied most were Pope's letters and such comment about him as threw light on his personal life. He quotes from one of Pope's letters a tribute

¹Pendennis, p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 32.

³"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 472.

⁴"George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 307.

to Addison's Cato,⁵ and gives several letters in their entirety, with the introductory statement:

But, save that unlucky part of the 'Pope Correspondence,'⁶ I do not know, in the range of our literature, volumes more delightful. You live in them in the finest company in the world. A little stately, perhaps; a little aprete and conscious that they are speaking to whole generations who are listening; but in the tone of their voices — pitched, as no doubt they are, beyond the mere conversation key — in the expression of their thoughts, their various views and natures, there is something generous, and cheering, and ennobling.⁷

Thackeray does not say where he got all the information about Pope which he gives in the lecture.. Even if he did, such references would be of value here mainly to show how consistently Thackeray studied men as well as their works. One volume, however, on which he drew frequently for knowledge of Pope and many other writers was Spence's Anecdotes. He usually gives credit when he uses information from this source,⁸ and, in a

⁵ "Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, p. 422.

⁶ Referring to a love letter which Pope wrote to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, then copied and sent to another friend, and to a letter of Gay's which he also copied, then sent out as his own. See "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 474.

⁷ "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, pp. 474-6.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 472, 482, 485, 489. Thackeray follows this practice of acknowledging his debt to Spence throughout the English Humorists.

footnote, gives a brief biographical sketch of Spence, together with the information that "...his 'Anecdotes' were placed, while still in MS., at the service of Johnson and also of Malone. They were published by Mr. Singer in 1820."⁹

That Thackeray was well acquainted with the other works of Pope, which he could not admire so completely, is indicated by a final comment toward the end of the lecture.

...And Pope was more savage to Grub Street than Grub Street was to Pope....It was Pope, and Swift to aid him, who established among us the Grub Street tradition. He revels in base descriptions of poor men's want; he gloats over poor Dennis's garret, and flannel-nightcap, and red stockings; he gives instructions how to find Curll's authors, the historian at the tallow-chandler's under the blind arch in Petty France, the two translators in bed together, the poet in the cock-loft in Budge Row, whose landlady keeps the ladder. It was Pope, I fear, who contributed, more than any man who ever lived, to depreciate the literary calling.¹⁰

Of Matthew Prior and John Gay, discussed in the same lecture with Pope, Thackeray also thought well. He mentions Prior's lyrics as among the easiest, richest, and most charmingly humorous of English lyrical poems, Dr. Johnson to the

⁹"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 489,n.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 491. Note that all references to Pope's work, except for the Iliad and the Odyssey, are found in the English Humorists, while those Greek translations are referred to almost entirely in the sketches and fiction.

contrary;¹¹ and he particularly took notice of

...that remarkable and famous burlesque, 'The Town and Country Mouse.'¹² Aren't you all acquainted with it? Have you not all got it by heart? What! have you never heard of it? see what fame is made of! The wonderful part of the satire was, that, as a natural consequence of 'The Town and Country Mouse,' Matthew Prior was made Secretary of Embassy at the Hague!¹³

Prior's Life of Goldsmith is quoted in the English Humorists lectures;¹⁴ his lyrics are mentioned in Pendennis,¹⁵ and lines about Prior's "Kitty, beautiful and young" are quoted in The Virginians,¹⁶ in tribute to the Duchess of Queensbury.

'Oh, but he's a rare poet, Mat Prior!' continues the Colonel; 'though, mind you, girls, you'll skip over all the poems I have marked with a cross. A rare poet! and to think you should see one of his heroines.'¹⁷

There is little more said of Prior, even in the lecture on him, and what is said is biographical. The scarcity of

¹¹"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 462.

¹²Written, Thackeray explains, with Montagu as an attack on the noble old English lion, John Dryden, a parody on The Hind and the Panther.

¹³"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 461.

¹⁴"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 537.

¹⁵Page 32.

¹⁶Page 266.

¹⁷Page 266.

references and the satirical tone of those on The Town and Country Mouse somewhat offset Thackeray's praise of the lyrics; one wishes that Lewis Melville had presented some authentication for his statement that "...Besides Goldsmith, his favorite poets seem to have been Prior and Gay."¹⁸

Thackeray does speak of Gay at greater length than he does of Prior;¹⁹ but here again, it is of Gay, the man, more than of Gay, the poet — and he loved Gay. Melville, to substantiate his remark that Thackeray was very fond of Gay's poetry, quotes what Thackeray said of the Shepherd's Week and Trivia;²⁰ but a quotation out of context is often misleading. The passage, in its entirety, is far from convincing evidence that Gay was next to Goldsmith in Thackeray's favor. It is given here because it illustrates perfectly Thackeray's habit of mentioning both the strong points and the weaknesses of the men he discussed — a habit which provided for careless or prejudiced commentators ample "proofs" of his opinions.

Our object in these lectures is rather to describe the men than their works; or to deal with the latter only in as far as they seem to illustrate the character of their writers. Mr. Gay's 'Fables,' which were written to benefit that amiable Prince, the Duke of Cumberland, the warrior

¹⁸Melville, Some Aspects, p. 42.

¹⁹About five pages are devoted to Prior, about seven to Gay.

²⁰Melville, Some Aspects, p. 42.

of Dettingen and Culloden, I have not, I own, been able to peruse since a period of very early youth. ...But [Here begins that part of the quotation which Melville used.] the six pastorals called the 'Shepherd's Week,' and the burlesque poem of 'Trivia,' any man fond of lazy literature will find delightful at the present day, and must read from beginning to end with pleasure. They are to poetry what charming little Dresden china figures are to sculpture: graceful, minikin, fantastic; with a certain beauty always accompanying them. [Here Melville ends the quotation.] ...Gay's gay plan seems to me far pleasanter than that of Phillips — his rival and Pope's — a serious and dreary idyllic cockney; not that Gay's 'Bumkinets' and 'Hobnelias' are a whit more natural than the would-be serious characters of the other posture-master; but the equality of this true humorist was to laugh and make laugh, though always with a secret kindness.²¹

Thackeray admires Gay's Beggar's Opera,²² but speaks of its continuation as wearisome;²³ he comments on Gay's characterization of Prior,²⁴ and quotes from two of Gay's letters.²⁵

Thackeray gives some half-dozen comments on Goldsmith, besides the lecture on him in the English Humorists. Perhaps Lewis Melville is correct in saying that Thackeray could not highly praise "The Deserted Village," The Vicar of Wakefield,

²¹"Prior, Gay, and Pope, English Humorists, pp. 469-70.

²²"Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 155, 156, 389; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 470.

²³"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, pp. 470-1.

²⁴Ibid., p. 460.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 471-2. See also quotations in "George the Second," The Four Georges, pp. 309-10.

or the two famous plays,²⁶ but Thackeray says more of Beau Tibbs²⁷ than of the works mentioned by Melville. Thackeray emphasized Auburn in the references to bring out the quality of their author — whom he obviously admired.

From the evidence here presented, it seems that Thackeray's favorite reading in Goldsmith was The Citizen of the World;²⁸ he speaks with more indulgence than literary admiration of The Deserted Village.

In these verses, I need not say with what melody, with what touching truth, with what exquisite beauty of comparison — as indeed in hundreds more pages of the writings of this honest soul — the whole character of the man is told — his humble confession of faults and weakness; his pleasant little vanity, and desire that his village should admire him; his simple scheme of good in which everybody was to be happy — no beggar was to be refused his dinner — nobody in fact was to work much, and he to be the harmless chief of the Utopia, and the monarch of the Irish Yvetot.²⁹

²⁶Melville, Some Aspects, p. 42.

²⁷A character in The Citizen of the World; or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to his Friends in the East. This was a series of one hundred twenty-three essays in letter-form originally contributed to Newbury's Public Ledger (1760-1761) under the title Chinese Letters. They picture the middle and lower classes in England at that time.

²⁸"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, passim; see especially p. 539; "Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, p. 154; Pendennis, p. 500; "On a Joke I Once Heard," Roundabout Papers, p. 69.

²⁹"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 545.

He refers to the Vicar of Wakefield, twice,³⁰ but makes plain that though he thought it "sweet," he had not made it a subject for frequent re-reading.

...With that sweet story of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' he [Goldsmith] has found entry into every castle and every hamlet in Europe. Not one of us, however busy or hard, but once or twice in our lives has passed an evening with him, and undergone the charm of his delightful music.³¹

When Thackeray speaks of works instead of authors, he refers more often to Thomas Moore's poetry than to Goldsmith's. He makes several comments on Lalla Rookh, which he seemed to know almost by heart;³² several kindly comments on Moore's poetry in general;³³ and references to Moore's study of Prior.³⁴

Eighteenth century poets whom Thackeray mentions having read include Edward Young,³⁵ Cowper,³⁶ Phillips,³⁷ and Mme.

³⁰"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 535ff; "Crinoline," Novels by Eminent Hands, p. 63.

³¹"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, pp. 535-6.

³²Pendennis, p. 30; "Bruges," Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, p. 808; A Shabby Genteel Story, pp. 25, 67;

³³"Cork - The Ursuline Convent," Irish Sketch Book, p. 345; "The Giant's Causeway - Coleraine - Portrush," Irish Sketch Book, p. 557.

³⁴In "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists; see especially pp. 463ff.

³⁵Mentions his "Night Thoughts" in "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 305.

³⁶"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 471; "Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, pp. 614-5.

³⁷"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 469.

Auerbach.³⁸

While Thackeray mentions Goethe only six times, the references show that Goethe's works impressed him deeply, especially in his youth. He speaks of trying to reproduce in his early writings "the Wertherian despondency, the mocking bitterness of Mephistopheles of Faust.³⁹ Later he pays Faust more mature tribute,⁴⁰ while he has come to regard The Sorrows of Werther as rather sentimental.⁴¹ Besides these, he mentions Goethe on Goldsmith,⁴² and an English translation of Goethe's Truth and Poetry;⁴³ and he quotes one line of poetry "as Shelley has it, after Goethe."⁴⁴

Among the nineteenth century poets, Thackeray speaks of Southey, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron. Of Southey's works, as might be expected, he likes best the letters.⁴⁵ He

³⁸"George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 331.

³⁹Pendennis, p. 416.

⁴⁰"De Finibus," Roundabout Papers, p. 202; The Newcomes, p. 639; "Caricatures and Lithography," Paris Sketch Book, p. 163; Thackeray's Letters to an American Family (New York: Century Co., 1904), pp. 126-7.

⁴¹"The Story of Mary Ancel," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 124, 126, 128, 135, 136.

⁴²"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 536.

⁴³Ibid., p. 536.

⁴⁴"The Painter's Bargain," Paris Sketch Book, p. 63.

⁴⁵"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 363; see also the reference to Southey and the Family Library in "Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, pp. 623-4.

satirizes Wordsworth; one of the superficial characters in

Philip says:

...Scott has written most dreadful bosh, as you call it so drolly; and so has Wordsworth, though he is one of the greatest of men, and has reached to the very greatest height and sublimity of poetry; but now you put it...I must confess that he is often an old bore, and I certainly should have gone to sleep during the "Excursion" only you read it so nicely.⁴⁶

Thackeray says nothing of the Lyrical Ballads, although he makes a statement about poets so strongly parallel to Wordsworth's definition that one must think he had studied at least the preface.

...I suppose a poet has greater sensibility than another man....That is what makes him a poet. I suppose that he sees and feels more keenly: it is that which makes him speak of what he feels and sees.⁴⁷

As to Shelley, the only reference to his works, besides the one "after Goethe," is to his Revolt of Islam. In a letter to his mother in 1829, he wrote that he had at first been tremendously impressed but upon a second reading had decided the book was not worth bringing home.⁴⁸

Of nineteenth century poets, Thackeray seems most familiar with Byron. Besides being the most fascinating literary figure of his time; Byron combined satire, heroic adventure, and Orientalism in his poetry, and all these appealed

⁴⁶Page 194.

⁴⁷Pendennis, p. 419.

⁴⁸Quoted by Melville, Some Aspects, p. 29.

strongly to Thackeray. There are at least twelve specific references to Byron's works, besides less definite influences of his style and subject matter. He mentions Don Juan,⁴⁹ Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,⁵⁰ and the Corsair;⁵¹ and he indicates that a copy of Byron was on most English drawing-room tables.⁵² He also read his letters, and judged the manners of the times by them.⁵³ That he studied Byron with some care is indicated by his comment on being disillusioned with the looks of Athenian women - calling them oily and greasy.

...Lord Byron wrote more cant of this sort than any poet I know of. Think of 'the peasant girls with dark blue eyes' of the Rhine - the brown-faced, flat-nosed thick-lipped, dirty wenches? Think of 'filling high a cup of Samian wine'; Small beer is nectar compared to it, and Byron himself always drank gin. That man never wrote from his heart....The Great Public admires Greece and Byron; the public knows best. Murray's 'Guide-book' calls the latter 'our native bard.' Our native bard! Mon Dieu! He Shakespeare's, Milton's, Keat's, [sic] Scott's native bard! Well, woe be to the man who denies the public gods! ⁵⁴

The references given, with a few more isolated ones more difficult to classify (Dodsley's Collection,⁵⁵ Argtoun,⁵⁶

⁴⁹A Shabby Genteel Story, p. 25; Pendennis, p. 30; "A Caution," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 20, 28;

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 28; he also mentions Cain, a Mystery.

⁵¹Catherine, p. 496; "To Cairo," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 733; Pendennis, p. 30.

⁵²Men's Wives, p. 661.

⁵³"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 352.

⁵⁴"Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, pp. 631-2.

⁵⁵The Virginians, p. 311.

⁵⁶"On Alexandrines," Roundabout Papers, p. 252.

Ronsard,⁵⁷ Morris,⁵⁸ Hood,⁵⁹ Herrick,⁶⁰ Keats,⁶¹ and Tennyson),⁶² comprise the bulk of Thackeray's direct references to poets and poetry. When one considers Thackeray's own poetry, his ballads, imitations of Béranger, the "Old Friends with New Faces," and other parodies and paraphrases, it is easy to see that a whole field of research lies ahead of any conclusive statements. This study shows that Thackeray's comments on the poet have to be carefully distinguished from those on the poetry. Thackeray obviously appreciated the brilliant satire of Pope and Byron; he was somewhat in awe of Goethe's great Faust; he loved Prior, Goldsmith, and Gay — but after all, he compared Virgil and Milton to the great harmonies of marble sculpture, and Gay to Dresden china.

For the rest, he seems to have read them as they came to hand, not trying so much to meditate on the poetry as to estimate its expression of the poet's own life or to present true pictures. One observes, too, that pastoral, uncouth (like

⁵⁷"On Alexandrines," Roundabout Papers, p. 252.

⁵⁸"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 349.

⁵⁹"On a Joke I Once Heard," Roundabout Papers, p. 69.

⁶⁰Pendennis, p. 76.

⁶¹"Telmessus," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 672.

⁶²Philip, p. 255; "Athens," Cornhill To Cairo, p. 633.

Wordsworth's "Idiot Boy"), and metaphysical subjects did not interest him. Even in his imaginary world, Thackeray preferred concrete to abstract pictures.

CHAPTER VI

BACKGROUND READING

It is impossible to estimate the amount of reading Thackeray did for what might loosely be termed background information. Hundreds of specific references are found, but even more are implied — these having no place in this study. Under "background" are listed here both historical and geographical readings. Under "historical" is placed information about (1) national developments — English, Continental, American, (2) persons — great leaders, important figures in the arts and science, notorious characters, and (3) manners and customs — especially of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; under "geographical" is given information describing special scenes — such as city streets and buildings, old castles, battlefields, taverns and playhouses — and Thackeray's travel routes.

Much historical research is evident in Thackeray's Esmond, The Second Funeral of Napoleon, The Four Georges, and, to a lesser degree, in his other novels. Among the sources which he names are: the Biographie des Hommes du Jour;¹ Alison's History of Europe;² Gibbon's Decline and Fall, with special dis-

¹"Invasion," Paris Sketch Book, p. 13.

²The Newcomes, p. 203.

cussion of "the famous XVth and XVIth chapters";³ Gleig's Story of the Battle of Waterloo; ⁴ Lockhart's Life of Napoleon; ⁵ Memoirs of Madame de Crequi — for an anecdote of Louis XIV; ⁶ and Macaulay — discussed with Tom Paine in connection with French historical writers.⁷ His opinion of the French as historians was not high. He thought they were emotional and prejudiced, as he shows by his comment on the Biographie des Hommes du Jour: "...Noble people! They made Tom Paine a deputy; and as for Tom Macaulay, they would make a dynasty of him."⁸

Thackeray mentions Horace Walpole's works a few times without much critical comment.⁹ He speaks of a History of India by Orme as Colonel Newcome's favorite book, admitting later that Mr. Mills, too, wrote a very learned history.¹⁰ Dick Steele discusses M. Rycant's History of the Turks.

³The Newcomes, p. 429.

⁴Vanity Fair, p. 261.

⁵"Cruikshank" Critical Reviews, pp. 623-4.

⁶"Meditations at Versailles" Paris Sketch Book, p. 269.

⁷"On the French School of Painting," Paris Sketch Book, p. 44.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 303; "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 479; "Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, p. 515.

¹⁰The Newcomes, pp. 787-8, 804.

Thackeray pays tribute to Dr. Vehse's picture of the life of the Dukes in Zell¹² (beginning of the Hanoverian line of Georges); parodies Bulwer-Lytton's telling of a story from Herodotus;¹³ mentions a work called the Battle of Anghrim — which, he says, "is evidently by a Protestant author, a great enemy of popery and wooden shoes";¹⁴ and, in a more specific reference to the fourth folio volume of Holingshed's "pleasing history,"¹⁵ describes a reception accorded Queen Elizabeth.

Of particular interest to Thackeray was information concerning personalities of the times of which he wrote, reading which naturally overlaps with that on manners and customs, especially of court life. For Louis Napoleon and his writings Thackeray cared little, criticizing both strongly.¹⁶ Other references to French writers on the national and political scenes are few,¹⁷ but there are many to writers on England and her rulers. Most of them concern the lectures on The Four Georges in which, for some reason, Thackeray mentions sources

¹²"George the First," The Four Georges, p. 276.

¹³"Mr. Yellowplush Ajew," Yellowplush Papers, p. 504.

¹⁴"More Rain in Galway," Irish Sketch Book, p. 435.

¹⁵"On Alexandrines," Roundabout Papers, p. 250.

¹⁶"Napoleon and His System," Paris Sketch Book, pp. 111-13.

¹⁷See references to Saint Simon, "Meditations," Paris Sketch Book, p. 270; Rochefoucauld "On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 96.

more exactly than is his wont.

He turns to Lord Mahon and to Doran for the life and times of George the First,¹⁸ and for information about George the Second¹⁹, draws most heavily on Lord Hervey. "Parson" Porteus's extravagant elegy on that king is also quoted and criticized.²⁰ Direct credit for material on George the Third seems to be drawn from the "Burney Diary and Letters," the Court Chronicler and the Court News;²¹ while for George the Fourth, Scott,²² Eldon,²³ Malmesbury,²⁴ and Pückler Muskau²⁵ are the most quoted authorities.

To learn of national manners and customs Thackeray read widely, particularly among letters and memoirs. Letters, for him, were of highest importance, serving the double purpose of revealing the writer's personality and providing first-hand information. He often quoted, sometimes reproduced them in full, and used them to reconstruct some of his most vivid word pictures. Throughout The Four Georges, references are

¹⁸"George the First," The Four Georges, pp. 292-3; 286-7.

¹⁹"George the Second," The Four Georges, pp. 300, 303, 311, 314.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 317-18.

²¹"George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 338, passim.

²²George the Fourth," The Four Georges, pp. 347, 353-4.

²³Ibid., p. 352.

²⁴Ibid., p. 361.

²⁵Ibid., p. 356.

made to the correspondence of George Selwyn, of which Thackeray says:

In the published letters to George Selwyn we get a mass of correspondence by no means so brilliant and witty as Walpole's or so bitter and bright as Hervey's, but as interesting, and even more descriptive of the time, because the letters are the work of many hands.²⁶

Thackeray draws information from Selwyn's letters,²⁷ about gambling at the court of George the Fourth, and quotes much of the correspondence to present what he thought a truer picture of the times than could be gained in any other way.²⁸ A courtier's letter quoted by Vehse tells how the court life of George the Second at Hanover was "as uniform as that of a monastery,"²⁹ and another letter, unidentified, is quoted to describe a gay fête at the same court.³⁰ More of the court life is taken from letters to Henrietta Howard, one written by Mary Bellenden — called by her contemporaries "the most perfect creature ever known,"³¹ others by Peterborough, written

²⁶ "George the Third," The Four Georges, pp. 320-1.

²⁷ "George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 358. See also letter from Seymour, author of the "Court Gamester," for same practices in time of George the Second. "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 311.

²⁸ The Four Georges, passim.

²⁹ "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 316.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 307-8.

when that "indomitable youth" was seventy. This reference is a typical Thackeray digression which shows how extensively he read about a subject and how easily he called to mind related information. He had been thinking of Lady Suffolk's letters on the court of George the Second;³² that thought reminded him of Peterborough's letters; and in thinking of those he commented that they were written "in the manner of the Clélie romances, and Millamont and Doricourt in the comedy."³³ Other letter writers mentioned in connection with English life in those times include Pope,³⁴ Gay,³⁵ the Duchess of Queensbury,³⁶ Carlisle,³⁷ Matthews,³⁸ Lord Nelson,³⁹ Southey,⁴⁰ and Collingwood.⁴¹ There are, in addition, many other letters quoted which Thackeray does not remember or of whom he does not know

³²He says even the misogynist Croker, who edited her letters, loved her, "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 306.

³³Ibid., 307.

³⁴"George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 308.

³⁵Ibid., p. 307.

³⁶Ibid., p. 307.

³⁷"George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 326.

³⁸"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, p. 352.

³⁹Ibid., p. 364.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 363-4.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 364.

the authors.⁴² In such cases he is usually just calling to mind certain amusing remarks or incidents. "...One of the good old lady writers in whose letters I have been dipping cries out, 'Sure, cards have kept us women from a great deal of scandal.'"⁴³

References to memoirs, journals, and other sources follow each other so closely that they fill one with amazement at the breadth of Thackeray's studies. On the same page with the excerpt quoted above from the unnamed writer are quotations from "old Sarah Marlborough," Sir Roger de Coverley from The Spectator, "wise old Johnson," Walpole, and a "chronicle" - otherwise unidentified - for the month of January, 1731.

Among the general background references are Cibber and his daughter Mrs. Chark,⁴⁴ De Locqueville and De Beaumont for Ireland,⁴⁵ the Margravine of Beyreuth - for European court history,⁴⁶ and a few of the women writers. Of these latter, he seems best acquainted or perhaps just thinks more highly of - Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. He speaks of her having brought

⁴²See especially pages 312-14 in "George the Second," The Four Georges.

⁴³Ibid., p. 312.

⁴⁴Catherine, p. 547.

⁴⁵The Book of Snobs, p. 303.

⁴⁶"George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 300.

home the custom of inoculation from Turkey,⁴⁷ quotes her letters from Hanover in 1716,⁴⁸ and rates her above Byron in describing the East. "...The last good description of a Turkish bath, I think, was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's — which voluptuous picture must have been painted at least a hundred and thirty years ago."⁴⁹

He says Mrs. Graham's "Letters from Paris" are excellent;⁵⁰ but he is less kind to others.

...And when such authors as Lady Morgan and Mrs. Trollope, having frequented a certain number of the parties in the French capital, begin to prattle about French manners and men, — with all respect for the talents of those ladies, we do believe their information not to be worth a sixpence; they speak to us, not of men, but of tea-parties.⁵¹

Of less personal but as fully authentic nature in Thackeray's historical reading are such works as the Court Chronicle;⁵² the Dramatic Biography;⁵³ Guss's Peerage — which

⁴⁷Esmond, p. 74.

⁴⁸"George the First," The Four Georges, pp. 283-4.

⁴⁹"Constantinople," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 645.

⁵⁰The Newcomes, p. 217.

⁵¹"On French Novels," Paris Sketch Book, p. 84.

⁵²Which is probably the one meant in "George the Second," The Four Georges, p. 312.

⁵³Catherine, p. 547.

he often introduces satirically, as here;⁵⁴ and, most important, the newspapers and magazines.

Being a journalist and editor himself, Thackeray had keen interest in newspapers and contemporary magazines; he was also just as interested in those of the preceding centuries. Although there are hundreds of references to newspapers and magazines in his works, there is reason to list here only enough to indicate the amount and variety of his reading in this field and the ways in which he made use of it.

Among the English newspapers of the early 18th century which he comments on are the London Gazette, Daily Post, Courant, and Observer;⁵⁵ later papers which he often discusses include the Times,⁵⁶ Morning Herald,⁵⁷ Morning Post,⁵⁸ Observer,⁵⁹ Telegraph,⁶⁰ Morning Chronicle,⁶¹ Illustrated News,⁶² Globe,⁶³ and Daily News.⁶⁴ Criticizing French papers, he comments on their style in general and quotes others specifically to show what

⁵⁴The Great Hoggarty Diamond, p. 304; The Book of Snobs, p. 380.

⁵⁵Catherine, p. 482.

⁵⁶The Book of Snobs, p. 353; Kickleburys on the Rhine, p. 109.

⁵⁷The Book of Snobs, p. 264; The Newcomes, p. 149.

⁵⁸The Newcomes, pp. 149, 388.

⁵⁹"Strange to Say, on Club Paper," Roundabout Papers, p. 263.

⁶⁰"On Alexandrines," Roundabout Papers, p. 254.

⁶¹"Barnwell," Novels by Eminent Hands, p. 13.

⁶²"On John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, pp. 636-8.

⁶³Philip, p. 367.

⁶⁴Wolves and the Lamb, p. 614.

type of content they carry.⁶⁵ He comments on the American New York Herald Times;⁶⁶ and in Ireland he reads and reports on the Morning Register, Saunders's Newsletter, Times, and Chronicle;⁶⁷ and later quotes from rival papers of different religion factions, Repeal Journal, No-repeal Journal, Northern Whig, and Banner of Ulster.⁶⁸ Such a list gives an idea of the many newspapers Thackeray read. It should be remembered that the footnotes indicate only representative references. There are many more.

Similar range is shown among the magazine and review references. Punch is probably mentioned most often, as one might expect, since Thackeray was a long-time contributor.⁶⁹ Others obviously well-known include the Gentleman's Magazine,⁷⁰ and London Magazine.⁷¹ One chapter in The Book of Snobs entitled simply "On Literary Snobs" treats entirely of such well-known magazines

⁶⁵"Fêtes," Paris Sketch Book, p. 40; "From Richmond to Brussels," Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, p. 794.

⁶⁶"On Half a Loaf," Roundabout Papers, pp. 172-9.

⁶⁷"A Summer Day in Dublin," Irish Sketch Book, p. 290.

⁶⁸"Newry, Armagh, Belfast," Irish Sketch Book, p. 538.

⁶⁹The Book of Snobs, pp. 275, 300; "On John Leech's Pictures," Critical Reviews, pp. 636-8; "Jaffa to Alexandria," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 713.

⁷⁰"George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 331; "Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, p. 519; The Virginians, p. 500.

⁷¹The Virginians, p. 500.

and contributors. The amount of careful, critical reading revealed in those three pages is worth notice.

He speaks of Punch; ⁷² then he comments that

An intelligent foreigner's testimony about our manners is always worth having, and I think, in this respect, the work of an eminent American, Mr. N. P. Willis, is eminently valuable and impartial. In his 'History of Ernest Clay,' a crack magazine writer, the reader will get an exact account of the life of a popular man of letters in England. ⁷³

There is next a satirical allusion to Mrs. Barnaby and to Mrs. Armytage, "who seldom introduces you to anybody under a marquis."

Says Thackeray:

...I don't know anything more delicious than the picture of genteel life in 'Ten Thousand a Year,' except perhaps the 'Young Duke,' and 'Coningsby.' There's a modest grace about them, and an air of easy high fashion, which only belongs to blood, my dear Sir — to true blood.

And what linguists many of our writers are! Lady Bulwer, Lady Londonderry, Sir Edward himself — they write the French language with a luxurious elegance and ease which sets them far above their continental rivals, of whom not one (except Paul de Kock) knows a word of English.

And what Briton can read without enjoyment the works of James, so admirable for terseness; and the playful humor and dazzling off-hand lightness of Ainsworth?... ⁷⁴

Continuing satirically, Thackeray explains that the admirable Quarterly is loved by everybody, even though it goes out of its way to abuse a great man or lays mercilessly on to such "pretenders" as Keats and Tennyson. He observes that Blackwood's

⁷²Page 300.

⁷³Page 300.

⁷⁴Page 300.

Magazine is conspicuous for modest elegance, amiable satire, and courtesy; that while it "gently" exposes the foibles of Londoners, it is never coarse in its fun. Concerning other periodicals he comments on the fiery enthusiasm of the Athenæum, "the bitter wit of the too difficult Literary Gazette," the timidity of the Examiner, and the boisterous praise of the Spectator.⁷⁵ Other references to magazines are of course given,⁷⁶ but there is little to add to the keen satirical passages just quoted.

Now that the amount and range of Thackeray's newspaper and magazine reading have been indicated, it is necessary to give some idea of the ways in which he made use of it. These seem to be, roughly, three in number.

First, he read — as in the other background studies — for specific detail on historical people and events. This type of reading he made use of in both his historical essays and in fiction. For example he writes:

...I have been reading a power of old newspapers and reviews concerning Napoleon, and very curious the abuse is of that character. Old Southey is one of the chief mudflingers, and it is good to read the Quarterly Review that settles he was 'no gentleman.'⁷⁷

...A third was reading the Royalist (a periodical famous for its scandal and its attachment to Church and King) Sunday at the table.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Page 301.

⁷⁶"Antour de Mon Chapeau," Roundabout Papers, p. 242; "Steele," English Humorists, pp. 435-6; The Book of Snobs, pp. 275, 279, 284, 353, 371, 373, 380; "George the Third," The Four Georges, p. 338; "George the Fourth," The Four Georges, pp. 366-7.

⁷⁷Ritchie, Thackeray and His Daughter, p. 8.

⁷⁸Vanity Fair, p. 546.

In the second place, Thackeray read the newspapers and magazines for general atmosphere and local color --authenticity in manners and customs; and again such information was as useful in his fiction as in factual writing. In one instance, describing Miss Theo, he says:

...If we lived a hundred years ago and wrote in the 'Gentleman's' or the 'London Magazine,' we should tell Mr. Sylvanus Urban that her neck was the lily, and her shape the nymph's; we should write an acrostic about her, and celebrate our Lambertella in an elegant poem, still to be read between a neat new engraved plan of the city of Prague and the King of Prussia's camp, and a map of Maryland and the Delaware counties.⁷⁹

And among other somewhat similar references,⁸⁰ he uses an obvious familiarity with certain newspapers in this characteristic fashion:

...What Turysden read in the Globe was a mere curt paragraph; but in the next morning's Times was one of those obituary notices to which noblemen of eminence must submit from the mysterious necrographer engaged by that paper.⁸¹

Thackeray was very careful to link the right magazine and papers with the appropriate people and homes. This consistent habit in itself shows his thoroughness in such studies. Among such references,⁸² which add the crowning touch to authenticity in local color, these are typical:

⁷⁹The Virginians, p. 500.

⁸⁰The Newcomes, p. 388; Men's Wives, p. 602; Vanity Fair, passim; see especially p. 530.

⁸¹Philip, p. 367.

⁸²"Barnwell," Novels by Eminent Hands, p. 13; The Newcomes, p. 388.

...the Sunday Times was her paper, for she voted the Dispatch, that journal which is taken in [sic] by most ladies of her profession, to be vulgar and Radical, and loved the theatrical gossip in which the other-mentioned journal abounds.⁸³

"...Mr. Macmurdo was lying in bed, reading in Bell's Life an account of that very fight between the Tutbury Pet and the Barking Butcher."⁸⁴

Bell's Life, the most famous sporting magazine of its time, was started by Pierce Egan,⁸⁵ of Tom and Jerry fame. It is said that editors of the sports magazine Weekly Despatch [sic] grew jealous of Egan and refused his contributions. In retaliation he started a Sunday paper of his own, 1824, and put it out until 1827, when he sold it at auction to a Mr. Bell. Its reputation already established, it continued for many years to be the most popular and authoritative sports journal in England.

The third way in which Thackeray used newspaper reading was as subject for essays or little stories. Saying "Here, dear ladies, is an advertisement which I cut out of The Times a few days since, expressly for you": he gives the advertisement in full - a "situation wanted" by an amusingly ambitious

⁸³Men's Wives, p. 602.

⁸⁴Vanity Fair, p. 535; Other references to Bell's Life occur in The Kickleburys on the Rhine, p. 149; The Book of Snobs, p. 282; The Newcomes, pp. 124, 217.

⁸⁵Egan, Tom and Jerry, Introduction, p. 17.

servant girl — and proceeds to build a brief humorous essay around it.⁸⁶

In more somber mood, he uses an obituary notice:

And now, brethren, may I conclude this discourse with an extract out of that great diary, the newspaper? I read it but yesterday, and it has mingled with all my thoughts since then....

'Sir R. S., Agent to the Governor-General for Central India, died on the 29th of October, of bronchitis.'...In one of the stories by the present writer — a man is described tottering 'up the steps of the ghant,' having just parted with his child, whom he is despatching to England from India. I wrote this remembering in long, long distant days, such a ghant, or river-stair, at Calcutta.⁸⁷

This use of specific, sometimes obscure newspaper items as topics for essays leads directly — with inevitable overlapping — into the third main group of historical readings, those about persons. Often the interesting newspaper notices were about notorious, rather than famous people, but Thackeray was not snobbish in his choices. In mentioning "two biographies" of Cartouche which he is reading, he says:

...Think of the talent that our two countries produced about this time: Marlborough, Villars, Mandrin, Turpin, Boileau, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Moliere, Racine, Jack Shappard, and Louis Cartouche, — all famous within the same twenty years, and fighting, writing, robbing, a l'envi!

⁸⁶ "On a Chalk Mark on the Door," Roundabout Papers, pp. 92-35.

⁸⁷ "On Lett's Diary," Roundabout Papers, pp. 144-5.

Well, Marlborough was no chicken when he began to show his genius; Swift was but a dull, idle, college lad; but if we read the histories of some other great men mentioned in the above list — I mean the thieves, especially — we shall find that they all commenced very early; they showed a passion for their art, as little Raphael did, or little Mozart; and the history of Cartouche's knaveries begins almost with his breeches.⁸⁸

As in the quotation previously given from the "Literary Snobs," much exact, integrated information is implied in these lines. Such knowledge necessarily requires close study of the men discussed. Thackeray was interested in all types. For those in the Cartouche group he read contemporary newspaper accounts, the Newgate Calendar,⁸⁹ and Ainsworth. Thackeray read about the notorious characters deeply enough to know them as they really were, and he had no patience with maudlinism over criminals.

⁸⁸ "Cartouche," Paris Sketch Book, p. 70.

⁸⁹ Consultation of this record for a sort of "Jesse James" type of story led to a temporary "Newgate fiction" craze. Chief among the favorites were Bulwer's Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, Ainsworth's Rookwood and Jack Sheppard, and Dickens' Oliver Twist. Thackeray's Catherine, with what Elwin terms "its splendid irony and Defoe-like realism" (Thackeray, p. 89) was unappreciated, Carlyle being one of the few who lauded it.

...They don't quote Plato, like Eugene Aram; or live like gentlemen, and sing the pleasantest ballads in the world, like jolly Dick Turpin: or prate eternally about ~~τὸ ἄλγος~~ like that precious canting Maltravers, whom we all of us have read about and pitied; or die whitewashed saints like poor 'Biss Dadsy' in 'Oliver Twist.'⁹⁰

Besides this statement, which shows that Thackeray had read about the characters named, there are numerous other references, with Jack Sheppard mentioned most often. A few have the light touch of the Cartouche essay,⁹¹ but those in Catherine are likely to be bitter and satirical⁹² an indictment of a public "whom its literary providers have gorged with blood and foul Newgate garbage."⁹³

Turning to Thackeray's research on more savory characters, one finds a mass of references which are hardest of all to classify strictly. References to certain great literary or national figures themselves have been dealt with. These references are in most cases to the secondary reading which Thackeray credits in his primary studies. Again, among the hundreds of such references, there are listed here only the most obvious and representa-

⁹⁰Catherine, p. 468.

⁹¹"On a Pear Tree," Roundabout Papers, p. 219; - in a digression on "Hazlitt's admirable paper, 'Going to a Fight!'; "Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, p. 624; Barry Lyndon, p. 15.

⁹²Catherine, pp. 432, 455, 515, 573, 583.

⁹³Ibid., p. 573.

tive. If one were to track down all the "references within references," the ramifications would be endless.

On Marlborough, Thackeray mentions, in addition to Swift's work, an account by Coxe, and comments that he got from both only a false, or at any rate, only a partial picture of the man. He says he is inclined to doubt all such histories—even autobiographies—"except those, perhaps, of Mr. Robinson Crusoe, Mariner, and writers of his class."⁹⁴ About other historical writers he comments on Mr. Mills, and "Mr. MacCauly (who wrote that sweet book of bullets, 'The Lays of Hancient Rum';)"⁹⁵ and on Bolingbroke,⁹⁶ but most of the references are to critics or biographers of literary men.

He quotes from Carlyle's Essays when speaking of Goldsmith,⁹⁷ and says of his Miscellaneous Criticisms (in 1839):

...I have read a little in the book, a nobler one does not live in our language I am sure, and one that will have such an effect on our ways and thought and prejudices. Criticism has been a party matter with us until now, and literature a poor political Lackey—please God we shall begin ere long to love art for Art's

⁹⁴"Steele," English Humorists, p. 430.

⁹⁵"Diary of C. Jeames de la Pluche," Yellowplush Papers, p. 97.

⁹⁶"Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, pp. 484-5.

⁹⁷"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 541.

sake. It is Carlyle who has worked more than any other to give it its independence.⁹⁸

Macauley is quoted again for his literary criticism;⁹⁹ Forster and Cumberland for information on Goldsmith;¹⁰⁰ Lord Orrery on Swift,¹⁰¹ and Dr. Delany on Orrery,¹⁰² and, naturally, Sir William Temple in connection with Swift.¹⁰³

In his studies on Fielding, he read Hazlitt,¹⁰⁴ Charles Lamb,¹⁰⁵ Gibbon,¹⁰⁶ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,¹⁰⁷ Coleridge,¹⁰⁸ and Mrs. Barbauld.¹⁰⁹ Lady Mary is also quoted on Hogarth,¹¹⁰

⁹⁸Ritchie, Thackeray and His Daughter, p. 89.

⁹⁹"Swift," English Humorists, p. 391; "Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, pp. 416, 418.

¹⁰⁰"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 539.

¹⁰¹"Swift," English Humorists, p. 375.

¹⁰²"Swift," English Humorists, pp. 371-400, especially p. 379.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 380-1.

¹⁰⁴"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, p. 495.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 495; see also tribute to Lamb's writing in The Newcomes, p. 256.

¹⁰⁶"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, p. 516 - the famous comment that having his [Fielding's] name mentioned by Gibbon "is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it."

¹⁰⁷"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, p. 512.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 516.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 515.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 512.

with Nichols,¹¹¹ and the Stevens edition of Hogarth's works.¹¹²

Among the writers on Addison and Steele, Thackeray mentions Lady Mary,¹¹³ also Tickell¹¹⁴ and Hoodley.¹¹⁵

Thackeray also mentions reading many other authors and works, not part of any special group. He admires Arbuthnot greatly, quotes from his letters, and gives a sketch of his life.¹¹⁶ He quotes from Gray's letter to Sterne;¹¹⁷ satirizes John Dennis, whom he considers as deluded as Bulwer;¹¹⁸ and on two occasions speaks of reading Hood and the "memorials of Hood."¹¹⁹

From Thackeray's discussion of Collier's attack on the theater and Congreve's defense, it is evident that he had studied

¹¹¹"Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding," English Humorists, pp. 501ff.

¹¹²Ibid., passim.

¹¹³"Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, pp. 417, 423.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 418; praise of Boileau on Addison is also given "Prior, Gay, and Pope," English Humorists, p. 483; "Strange to Say, on Club Paper," Roundabout Papers, p. 268.

¹¹⁵"Steele," English Humorists, pp. 450-1.

¹¹⁶"Pope, Gay, and Prior," English Humorists, p. 485.

¹¹⁷"Sterne and Goldsmith," English Humorists, p. 524.

¹¹⁸"Steele," English Humorists, pp. 457-8; "Epistles to the Literati," Yellowplush Papers, p. 525.

¹¹⁹"Cruikshank," Critical Reviews, pp. 614-15; "On a Joke I Once Heard," Roundabout Papers, pp. 68-70.

about that famous controversy,¹²⁰ and he draws from Thomas Davies' Dramatic Miscellanies for comments and anecdotes about Congreve, Swift, and Dennis.¹²¹

It is evident that Thackeray seldom mentions reading in the fields of science, metaphysics, ideals of government and economics; but he must have been acquainted with some of them to have made such a satirical remark as this: "...Nature provides supply for demand (see the romances of Adam Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo, and the philosophical works of Mrs. Martineau.)¹²² He says Pen read Hobbes' Leviathan when he was a schoolboy,¹²³ and has another character bewail that he "found himself one month a Papist, next a Protestant with Chillingworth, next a skeptic with Hobbes and Boyle."¹²⁴

Thackeray's many references to material such as Spence's Anecdotes, the Newgate Calendar, and the Court Chronicle have already been listed. Others mentioned less frequently include Baker's Chronicle,¹²⁵ Annual Register,¹²⁶ the Cabinet Cyclo-

¹²⁰"Congreve and Addison," English Humorists, p. 406.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 405.

¹²²"Captain Rook and Mr. Pigeon," Character Sketches, p. 554.

¹²³Pendennis, p. 29.

¹²⁴Esmond, p. 104.

¹²⁵The Virginians, p. 162; Sketches and Travels in London, p. 533.

¹²⁶"Belfast to the Causeway," Irish Sketch Book, p. 543.

pædia, Bentley's Miscellany, and the Literary Chronicle.

These last three, and Fraser's, are discussed in a satire on Bulwer's criticism of the Cyclopædia.¹²⁷

A few references indicate that Thackeray read "travel books," especially about places he visited, some of such references falling also into the second main division of this group — the geographical reading. As Pendennis, he says he read Hakluyt's Travels,¹²⁸ and as Denis Duval he remarks that Dampier's Voyages were as much his delight as those of Sindbad or his friends Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday.¹²⁹ When writing on his Eastern tour, Thackeray comments "What do mountains become in type, or rivers in Mr. Vizetelly's best brevier?"¹³⁰ and "You could write so far, nay, much more particularly and grandly, without seeing the place at all, and after reading Beaufort's 'Caramania,' which gives you not the least notion of it."¹³¹ Traveling in Ireland, he mentions a Mrs. Hall as describing the sites of great universities in old Ireland,¹³² and later — after discus-

¹²⁷"Mr. Yellowplush Ajew," Yellowplush Papers, pp. 500ff.

¹²⁸Pendennis, p. 29.

¹²⁹Denis Duval, p. 677.

¹³⁰"Telmessus," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 672.

¹³¹Ibid, p. 672.

¹³²"A Summer Day in Dublin," Irish Sketch Book, p. 291.

sing the castle which "honest Thurst" stormed as explained in that "scarce work," the Annual Register — he adds:

...By the way, another excellent companion to the traveller in Ireland is the collection of the 'Irish Penny Magazine,' which may be purchased for a guinea, and contains a mass of information regarding the customs and places of the country.¹³³

For real geographical information, however, Thackeray relied on his Guide Books. Murray's seems to have been of most use, and is mentioned often, usually with a word of praise.¹³⁴ In going from Richmond to Brussels, he makes two characteristic statements showing his dependence on Murray:

...To the right, as the 'Guide-book' says, is Walcheren: and on the left Cadsand, memorable for the English expedition of 1809....

As many hundreds of thousands of English visit this city (I have met at least a hundred of them in this half-hour walking the streets, 'Guide-book' in hand), and as the ubiquitous Murray has already depicted the place, there is no need to enter into a long description of it, its neatness, its beauty, and its stiff antique splendor.¹³⁵

In Ireland, Thackeray depended on another Guide-book which he recommended highly: "The above facts about Thorot and Carrickfergus castle may be relied on as coming from Messrs.

¹³³ "Belfast to the Causeway," Irish Sketch Book, p. 543.

¹³⁴ See especially "Waterloo," Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, p. 811; The Kickleburys on the Rhine, p. 119.

¹³⁵ "Richmond to Brussels," Little Travels and Roadside Sketches, pp. 787-8.

Curry's excellent new Guide-book,"¹³⁶ He mentions its good map,¹³⁷ quotes a legend from it,¹³⁸ and gives statistics.¹³⁹ The references given are only representative; Thackeray uses the Guide-book constantly and quotes from it often.

One other work to which he refers is the Handbook of London. He quotes statistics and gives descriptions from it, as in the lecture on "Sterne and Goldsmith,"¹⁴⁰ but he does not say who wrote or compiled it, although he comes close in Pendennis: "...and the learned and pleasant writer of the 'Hand-book of London' tells us that 'the commonest and hardiest kind of rose has long ceased to put forth a bud' in that smoky air."¹⁴¹

From the representative references given, it can be seen that Thackeray's reading in these historical-geographical groups was extensive and that anything he read was grist for his mill. His travels were on the Continent, the Near East, Ireland, and America; so were his studies. His essays, parodies, and lectures were on some of the outstanding men in their fields; and his

¹³⁶"Belfast to the Causeway," Irish Sketch Book, p. 543.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 544.

¹³⁸"Rainy Days at Glengariff," Irish Sketch Book, pp. 370-1.

¹³⁹"Belfast to the Causeway," Irish Sketch Book, p. 545.

¹⁴⁰English Humorists, p. 529.

¹⁴¹Page 500.

writing shows that besides knowing his subjects thoroughly, he knew their histories and environments, and the opinions of critics on their lives. Works like Esmond, The Newcomes, Vanity Fair, and The Virginians show a tremendous amount of national historical research; here this study has little to offer in the way of sources, for Thackeray does not give many in the body of his works. Here again is a field of research which would bear careful working and which should be done before Thackeray is assigned any permanent place as a critical writer.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGION

A man's reading on religion, whether extensive or not, needs to be considered by itself. A study of such references in context, as found in Thackeray's own works, might help reconcile such statements as these:

Indignation he knew, but it was roused by the fool, not by the knave....For Thackeray saw morality mainly as a matter of income....It was his whole reading of life, as his whole philosophy was acceptance of life, and his sole tribute to it a faint pity.¹

Another critic says that Thackeray's philosophic thought is "...Typically Victorian, I must explain, in its belief that goodness is preferable to cleverness, in its unobtrusive religious conformity."²

...Malory believed that men in armor should be religious gentlemen capable of no 'vileinye'; and to his order of the white knights belong the good knights and chivalrous gentlemen in Scott and Thackeray, who recognize religion as the only antidote to the poison of sin.³

Thackeray certainly knew and appreciated the great moralistic stories in both the Old and New Testaments. He often is

¹Ellis, Thackeray, pp. 76-7.

²Frank Swinnerton, "William Makepeace Thackeray," Great Victorians (London: Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1932), p. 522.

³Robert Whiteford, Motives in English Fiction (New York: J. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), p. 8.

informal, but never irreverent, in introducing Biblical characters into his stories. Among such references⁴ are: "...Lay it down...Herodias! You know not what you carry in the charger."⁵ "...There are others who never see Dives' chariot but to growl and hoot at it."⁶

During his travels through the Holy Lands, Thackeray spent some time reading the Bible, and had its stories constantly in mind. It can be argued that this reading indicates merely his meticulous study of background, not a deep religious interest; but that question does not concern the problem of what Thackeray read. That he did read his Bible as a matter of course, with reverence and appreciation, is shown by one of his comments while he was in Jerusalem:

I went out at the Zion Gate, and looked at the so-called tomb of David. I had been reading all the morning in the Psalms, and his history in Samuel and Kings....You see one green place far down in the valley: it is called En-Rogel. Adonyah feasted there, who was killed by his brother Solomon, for asking for Abishag for wife....Ahaz, and the idolatrous kings, sacrificed to idols under the green trees there, and 'caused their children to pass through the fire.'... In the centre of this history of crime rises up the

⁴Esmond, pp. 328, 346; The Virginians, pp. 285, 613-4, 714; The Newcomes, p. 775; A Collection of Letters of Thackeray (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1887, p. 35.

⁵Esmond, p. 354.

⁶The Newcomes, p. 47.

Great Murder of all....

Oh! with what unspeakable shame and terror should one think of that crime, and prostrate himself before the image of that Divine Blessed Sufferer!⁷

Scattered through the essays are many other references all similar in tone. Women drawing water from the well remind him of Rebecca giving the pitcher of water to the lieutenant of Abraham;⁸ in Athens he recollects Paul's exhortations on the Unknown God;⁹ and at Calvary he remembers with "shame and humility" the story of the crucifixion.¹⁰

Statements which Thackeray made about his own religious beliefs have not been counted here, although they do strengthen the evidence. Such "borderline" references, which have been rejected as not sufficiently definite for this paper, are of this type: "...Might I, as a son, be equal able to answer for myself, and to show when the Great Judge demanded the question of me, whether I had done my own duty, and honored my father and mother!"¹¹

Among religious authors and works other than the Bible, Thackeray seemed most impressed by Keble's The Christian Year and by Bishop Heber's writings, although Amy Cruze says that

⁷"Jerusalem," Cornhill to Cairo, pp. 698-9.

⁸"Jaffa to Jerusalem," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 689.

⁹"Athens," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 634.

¹⁰"Jerusalem," Cornhill to Cairo, p. 695.

¹¹The Virginians, p. 656.

both Thackeray and Fitzgerald declared the volumes of Newman's sermons (published between 1834 and 1843) the best that ever were written.¹² The Christian Year was a two volume collection of poems, one for each Sunday and for each Saint's Day and festival of the church, published in 1827. Of this very popular work Thackeray wrote:

...The son and the mother whispered it to each other with awe. Faint, very faint, and seldom in after-life Pendennis heard that solemn church music: but he always loved the remembrance of it, and of the times when it struck on his heart, and he walked over the fields full of hope and void of doubt, as the church bells rang on Sunday morning.¹³

He says Bishop Heber was one of his mother's favorites which he read to her when he was a boy.¹⁴ Later he continued his reading in Heber, but probably for his description of the times of George the Fourth and his Travels through India more than for religious inspiration.¹⁵

Others mentioned include Bishops Taylor,¹⁶ Tillotson,¹⁷ and Hennet.¹⁸ He quotes from Cudworth,¹⁹ and has Beatrix recommend Dr. Atterbury's sermons as one of the good books Esmond ,

¹²Cruse, The Victorians and Their Reading, p. 40.

¹³Pendennis, p. 31.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵"George the Fourth," The Four Georges, pp. 365-6.

¹⁶Esmond, p. 132.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁸"Swift," English Humorists, p. 384.

¹⁹Esmond, pp. 59, 62.

should read.²⁰ One "religious scoffer" whom Thackeray does not like is Quinet, in whose poem, "...Christ and the Virgin Mary are made to die similarly, and the former is classed with Prometheus."²¹ He bases some of his dislike to Mme. Sand on this skepticism, and says her Spiridion is like Heine's "God is Dead."²²

It can be seen from these references that Thackeray was thoroughly familiar with the Bible. It is also evident, unless one doubts his sincerity, that he used his Biblical references with reverence and discrimination. He obviously was most attracted by narrative elements, not by those problems of doctrine which keep theological controversies raging. He read simply, as a child reads, and accepted what he read in the same way. And if there are those religious critics who would doubt his appreciation, he could reply with an apt quotation from that "Blessed Divine Sufferer" himself.

²⁰ Esmond, p. 417.

²¹ "Mme. Sand," Paris Sketch Book, p. 194.

²² Ibid., p. 194.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this study is that Thackeray's reading has never been adequately evaluated. He received the customary classical background of any English schoolboy, studying Horace, Ovid, Anacreon, Homer, and Virgil. His love for Homer's Iliad, emerging despite Dr. Russell's severe tutelage, increased with the years, although he preferred Pope's translation to the original. Virgil's Aeneid and Georgics, of which he later spoke so highly, were the other permanent favorites gained during his early schooldays. The notion that he lacked appreciation of the classics is not supported by his comments throughout his works. If he referred to his Greek and Latin less often than might have been expected, it was because he hated literary ostentation and took care never to parade his learning.

He enjoyed fanciful literature far more than any other, possibly because it furnished an escape from the insecurity of his own emotional life. His taste in imaginative narrative ran from the questionable high life of Tom and Jerry to that "sweetest of all stories," Cinderella. Oddly enough, among all his references to famous legends, he made none to the Arthurian romances. His prime favorite was always the Arabian Nights. It seems strange that so little account has been taken of the influence of Orientalism, the Arabian Nights in particular, on

Thackeray's writing. Examination of his works shows this influence both by his innumerable references to Arabian Nights events or characters and by his habit of suddenly wandering off into a dream world. His Oriental leanings are easily traceable through his family background and through his lifelong friendship with Edward Fitzgerald, Oriental scholar best known for his translation of Khayyam's Rubaiyat. A study of Thackeray's Orientalism, based upon the primary evidence in his works, needs to be made.

In the fields of the drama and novel, Thackeray liked plots full of romantic adventure. If such reading had a flavor of authentic history, so much the better. It has been a generally accepted idea that Thackeray disliked French authors; yet in his writings he expressed keenest admiration for Dumas, Molière, and Hugo. Among the English he liked best Fielding, Scott, and Dickens. Thackeray's interest in the drama should prove a fertile field for research. Brander Matthews has an article "Thackeray and the Theater" in Scribner's Magazine for April, 1921, but he discusses Thackeray as a potential dramatist rather than as an authority on dramas.

Thackeray's knowledge of the theater, actors, and repertory of the preceding centuries is impressive. In his travel sketches and lectures he usually goes into detail about plays he has seen, giving critical opinions about both the

play and the players. He was especially fond of attending the theater in Paris; so his knowledge obviously included dramatic offerings of both England and France in his own time. With ~~dramas~~ of the eighteenth century he seemed equally familiar. Whether he had seen revivals or had just studied them carefully enough to place them in their proper settings is not indicated in his references.

Thackeray's preferences among Shakespeare's plays are consistent with his preferences in other reading. He is little concerned with Hamlet's mental struggles or the metaphysical implications of the ghost. His references are to the action — the hasty wedding with its funeral baked meats, the murders, and Ophelia's mad scenes. In Coriolanus, King Lear, and Othello, apparently his favorite, he refers most often to those powerful scenes which record tense, emotional action — King Lear abused by his daughters, Desdemona accused and murdered by the jealous Othello.

Thackeray liked to find a man's life consistent with ideas expressed in his work. When he discovered inconsistencies, he studied both work and author more deeply, attempting to reconcile them; this habit may affect the value of the number of references as an index to Thackeray's liking for certain men or books. Swift, Sterne, and Byron, whose weaknesses he could see all too clearly, would fall in such a group; he deplored Swift's personal vindictiveness, Sterne's vulgarity, and Byron's sensa-

tionalism.

Thackeray disliked intensely what he considered the superficial, clever, immoral writings of the Restoration, but not because he was a prude. He admired honest Fielding and dignified Smollett; he made sincerity the norm by which he judged, and both men met his standard. Addison he seemed to like best of all, finding a combination of a sincere, intelligent gentleman and sincere, intelligent writing. His interest in Moore's poetry is more significant than has been usually observed; the same is true of his keen appreciation of Swift's Gulliver, which he mentioned much oftener than the Journal to Stella. Pope he loved but did not idealize; Bulwer Lytton he disliked intensely as the epitome of those traits he most abhorred — insincerity and ostentation.

It is high time that a revaluation of literary influences on Thackeray should be made. For this purpose a careful primary study of his works is indispensable. He acknowledges Fielding's mastery of the novelist's art; he envies him his forthright style; but he realizes that he cannot imitate that style in a time when piano legs had to be draped in lace for modesty's sake. The references to Dickens reveal a sincere liking for the man and appreciation of his work, not any petty jealousy. Interest in, and honest competition with, a fellow author scarcely justify the many chapters which have been written about the "rivalry" between Thackeray and Dickens; they were too different

to be rivals. Important references less generally noticed are those to Dumas. Thackeray loved the romantic Dumas heroes, but even more he admired Dumas' ability to tell a story concisely. Obviously, from his own statements, Thackeray regretted his inability to build compact plot structures as he felt Dumas did so well.

Thackeray's authenticity and realism in historical scenes go unquestioned; yet studies of his sources for such material are incomplete. In this paper little information can be added, as direct references through his novels are not given. For his general background, his knowledge of customs of court and country, Thackeray is more informative, giving many of his sources in his lectures on The Four Georges. He was especially partial to letters and journals, believing that personal ideas and comments gave truer pictures of the times than so-called histories.

For many of his references to particular events or persons, especially to the careers of adventurers, Thackeray consulted such official sources as the Newgate Calendar, Court Chronicles, magazines, and newspapers. A complete study of all Thackeray's contributions to magazines, newspapers, and journals should be combined with a study of his reading in these fields before he can be properly revaluated as an author and critic.

In religion, Thackeray read the Bible, religious poetry, and well-known volumes of sermons. The common impression that he had only a childish appreciation of Biblical teachings prob-

ably resulted from his avoidance of controversial problems which he recognized as unsolvable.

It can be readily seen that much literary research on Thackeray needs to be done. The old prejudiced criticisms, based on personal opinions of men who were too close to him, need to be tossed out the window. Too many secondary and tertiary references have been accepted already. Frederic Harrison, among the older critics, is probably most accurate and objective; Quiller-Couch and Sadleir are obviously prejudiced against Thackeray; Trollope is sentimentally prejudiced in his favor. Elwin has provided a start in the new criticism with his fine biography, already restated by Ellis; Gulliver has made a scholarly study of Thackeray's early newspaper and magazine contributions, and David Cecil has added to the revaluation of Thackeray's writings. There is room for much more research, and this should begin with a re-reading of Thackeray himself with the modern perspective.

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