



THACKERAY'S DRAWING OF A PAGE
OF THE TIME OF HENRY ESMOND

THACKERAY'S FRIENDSHIP WITH AN AMERICAN FAMILY¹

FOR years the existence has been known of a series of jealously guarded and entirely unpublished letters by Thackeray, written to the various members of a single American family, namely, that of the late Mr. George Baxter of the city of New York. It has at last been decided to permit the publication of these letters in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE*, the consent having been obtained not only of Miss Lucy W. Baxter, but of Mrs. Ritchie, the great writer's accomplished daughter, and of the London publishers of Thackeray's works, Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. These letters have well-nigh the interest and completeness of a new story from the marvelous pen from which came "Pendennis" and "The Newcomes," for here, with all the spontaneity and exuberance of genius, are portrayed or reflected much of the thought and life not only of the author, but of his correspondents; while Miss Baxter's introduction and notes help to round out the story, with all its joyousness and pathos.—EDITOR.

INTRODUCTION BY MISS BAXTER

IN the early days of November, 1852, my father, to his own great surprise, found himself shaking hands with the great English novelist in the parlors of the Clarendon Hotel, New York. The reading public had been much interested and excited by the news that Thackeray was coming to America to deliver a course of lectures on the English humorists. We had talked of it

eagerly at home, having but lately read "Esmond," and having discussed in a lively fashion, as was usual in our family circle, the merits and demerits of Lady Castlewood, Beatrix, and the young Harry. We had made plans for securing seats for the lectures, which were to be given under the auspices of the Mercantile Library Association, whose president at that time was Mr. Willard Felt. We had no idea of

¹ The writings and drawings by W. M. Thackeray which are given in this article and its successors appear with the permission of Smith, Elder & Co., the owners of the copyright.

having any familiar intercourse with the famous author of "Vanity Fair." Indeed, we should have been almost alarmed at so ambitious a suggestion.

But a young Englishman and friend of Thackeray, Mr. B—— M——, of whom we had seen much during the preceding year, seeing the announcement of Thackeray's arrival, urged my father to go with him to the Clarendon and be presented to the famous author. To this my father strongly objected, saying, what was very true, that neither as a literary man nor otherwise had he claims on Mr. Thackeray's attention. Mr. B—— M——, however, was not to be denied, and thus, in this casual and unexpected manner, was begun a friendship which lasted, in spite of absence and separation, until the Christmas eve of 1863, when the great, kind heart was wholly stilled.

Mr. Thackeray gave us, too, a claim to the warm interest of his mother and daughters. We had kind letters from Mrs. Carmichael Smythe, thanking us for receiving her son into our home circle; and with the daughters the bond was closer still. The youngest, Mrs. Leslie Stephen, and her husband, came to us, very naturally, when they were in America in 1868, making us feel that they counted us as old friends, although we were meeting for the first time. Mrs. Ritchie is indeed a friend; and when, in 1892, I was in London, she gave me the truest welcome to her house at Wimbledon, and made me very happy by showing me that the recollection of her father's old affection for us was strong with her still.

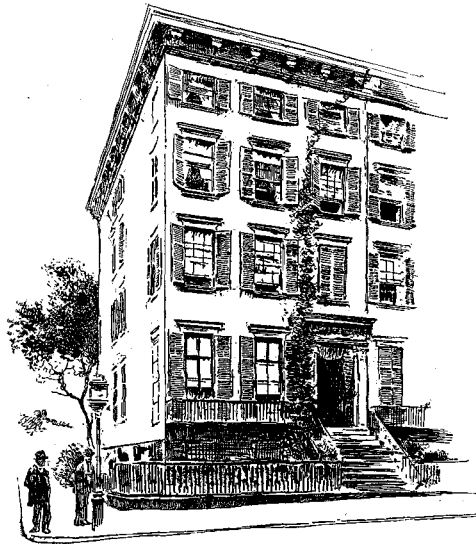
The entire simplicity and frankness of my father's accost, added to the warm expressions of interest from our English friend, seemed to attract Mr. Thackeray, and from the first visit to the "Brown House," as he later always called it, he

seemed to feel at home among us. No doubt he was very homesick when he first reached America, everything was so new and strange, and he had left, almost for the first time, the mother and daughters, so fondly loved, as his letters testify. He came to us whenever he could, with perfect freedom and informality. He begged to dine with us before the lectures, which even at first bored him greatly, and in the end became a real burden. The monotony of saying the same things over and over again,

and the constraint of being obliged to be ready at a given time, whether he felt in a talking mood or not, were very trying to him. He became greatly attached to my mother, whose quiet sympathy soothed him, and his place at her right hand, with the claret-pitcher ready for him, was an established arrangement before a lecture. He would sometimes stop in the midst of the desultory conversation then in progress, and roll out in a deep voice, with an exaggerated accent, the opening sentences of

the lecture next to be delivered, making us all laugh at his comic distaste for the performance. He did not like the lecture platform, and had it not been for the abundant shower of "American dollars," assuring the future of the much-loved daughters, he would doubtless have refused many of the invitations which came to him from all parts of the country. Indeed, his letters will show that he was often sorely tempted to throw up his engagements and run off to England by the next steamer.

He entered with great interest into all our plans and amusements, and on one occasion, when my eldest brother's costume for a juvenile fancy ball was under discussion, he took pen and paper as he sat chatting among us, and drew little sketches of the proper dress for a page of various periods, being well versed in all the details



THE "BROWN HOUSE"

Second Avenue and Eighteenth street, New York; the home of the Baxter family



Time of William III



Time of Mary 2 of Scots



THACKERAY'S SKETCHES OF PAGES OF VARIOUS PERIODS, FOR A FANCY-BALL COSTUME—I

belonging to each costume. He said that the quaint little figure with the big cuffs and broad brim to his hat was like little melancholy Harry Esmond when the kind Lady Castlewood first saw him and smiled so sweetly in his grave face. When my brother, on the night of the ball, came down to display himself to the family circle, Mr. Thackeray was present. After the boy went away Mr. Thackeray said to my mother:

"Well, that was most characteristic of Wyly."

"In what way?" asked my mother.

"Why, did you not notice? Wyly never once looked at *himself* in the mirror, but only at the dress, to see that it was quite correct."

This showed his quick appreciation of character and observation, for my brother was always entirely without vanity or self-consciousness.

After dinner Mr. Thackeray often sat chatting while my sister was dressing for a ball to which he himself might be going. It was on one of these occasions that, turning over the leaves of "Pendennis" as it lay on the table beside him, he said, smiling, from time to time:

"Yes, it is very like—it is certainly very like."

"Like whom, Mr. Thackeray?" said my mother.

"Oh, like me, to be sure; Pendennis is very like me."

"Surely not," objected my mother, "for Pendennis was so weak!"

"Ah, well, Mrs. Baxter," he said, with a shrug of his great shoulders and a comical look, "your humble servant is not very strong."

An American ball-room amused him greatly. The bright, gay talk, the lively girls full of enjoyment, which they did not fear to show, made a contrast to the more conventional entertainments of London. My sister was at that time going much into society—she was not yet twenty and had both wit and beauty. In his picture of Ethel Newcome, as she holds a little court about her at one of the great London balls, Thackeray reproduces some impressions made by the New York girl. Some of Ethel's impatience for the disillusion of society, its spiteful comment and harsh criticism, might well be reflections from discussions with my sister in the Brown House library, where Mr. Thackeray passed

many an hour talking of matters grave and gay.

With December came the course of lectures in Boston, and his first letters told us of the people he met there. One, no doubt, was Longfellow, whose tall figure, whistling charming notes to a fascinated little bird, he sketched on the cover of "Putnam's Magazine." This magazine was sent by my mother to Mr. Longfellow a short time before his death, and after the end came Miss Longfellow returned it. She wrote that it had much amused and gratified her father, and that the book had been lying on his table up to the last moment. Naturally it now has an added value.

Another pen-and-ink drawing on the cover refers to Mr. George William Curtis, whom Mr. Thackeray, after reading his "Nile Notes," always called the Howadje. He is drawn lying among cushions, with an Oriental dress and pipe. Above is a little vignette which refers to an article in the magazine, "Uncle Tomitudes." In

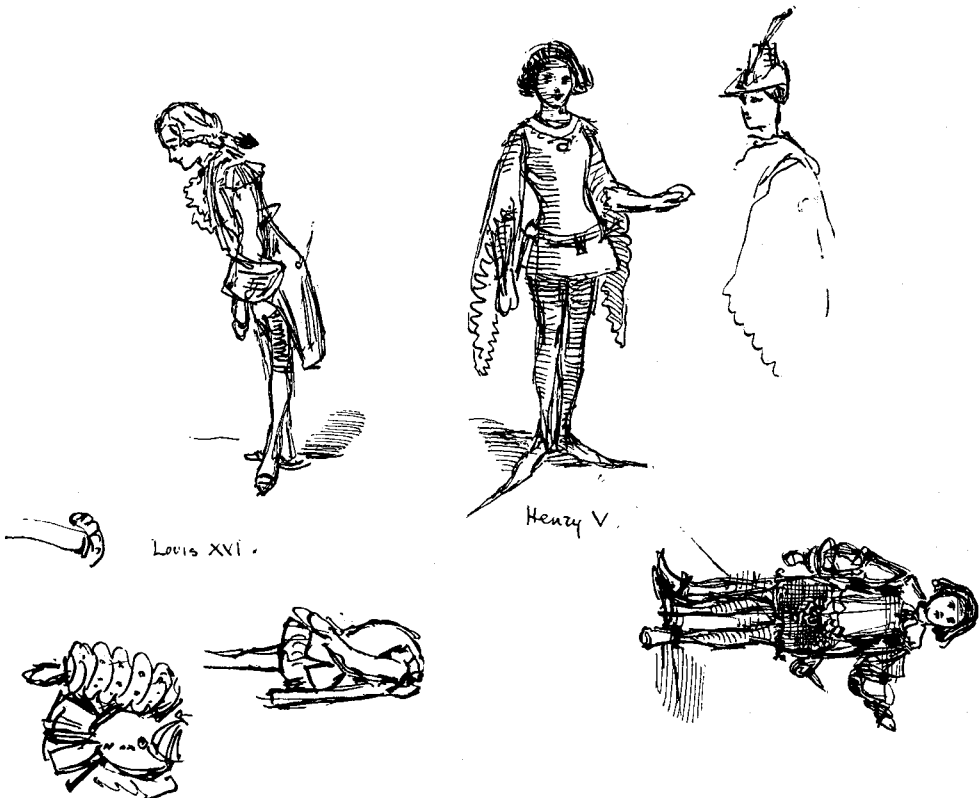
one of his letters Mr. Thackeray speaks of meeting Mrs. Stowe and being pleasantly impressed by her looks and manner.

When the return from Boston was at hand, my mother suggested to the younger members of the family that, should Mr. Thackeray appear during the day at Brown House, it were best not to ask him to dine.

"I have not just such a dinner as I like to give him," she said.

Whatever was the deficiency, my mother had to overlook it, as the sequel proved. As she stood in the dining-room just before the dinner-hour, giving some orders to the maid, a summons came from the front door. After it was opened, steps were heard coming steadily through the hall to the dining-room. As my mother turned in surprise to see who could be coming at so late an hour, there in the doorway stood the tall figure with kind eyes and silvery hair which had become so familiar to us.

"Oh, Mrs. Baxter," he said, "let me show you what capital copies Crowe has made of the Boston pictures."



THACKERAY'S SKETCHES OF PAGES OF VARIOUS PERIODS, FOR A FANCY-BALL COSTUME—II

In each hand he held an unframed oil sketch of Gilbert Stuart's portraits of General and Mrs. Washington, then, as now, in the Boston Museum of Art. Mr. Eyre Crowe was Mr. Thackeray's private secretary, and had a good deal of artistic ability. The pictures were placed on chairs, examined and admired. Mr. Thackeray was greatly pleased, especially with the portrait of Washington.

"Look at him," he said. "Does he not look as if he had just said a good, stupid thing?"

Then, turning to my mother, he said:

"Now you will give me some dinner, won't you?"

The younger people were greatly delighted by my mother's discomfiture. I doubt if Mr. Thackeray discovered anything amiss in the dinner. He always laughed at our American idea of making a "feast" for a guest, saying that we did not understand at all "just to fetch a friend home to a leg of mutton."

No one must think, from the remark just quoted, that Mr. Thackeray undervalued Washington, or wished to hold him up to ridicule. On the contrary, in later years letters show how grieved and hurt he was by the misconception in America as to a passage in "The Virginians" which roused the indignation of our thin-skinned people. He fully appreciated Washington's great qualities, often spoke warmly of him, but he did not consider him brilliant in conversation. An impartial examination of the portrait in question would possibly prove the remark to be not an unjust one.

With the New Year Mr. Thackeray started to fulfil his Southern engagements, and his letters brought us little sketches of the negroes, whose ways and sayings amused him greatly. From Washington he wrote to beg my father, mother, and sister to join him for a few days; but an unfortunate accident at the gymnasium, which made me an invalid for a number of weeks, prevented the accomplishment of such a plan. One of his most charming letters was sent to me after the accident. Before going to Charleston, he ran back to New York to give a lecture for the benefit of the Sewing Society of the Unitarian church, in which the mother of Mr. Felt was much interested. He wrote an introduction, in the course of which he

repeated Hood's poem, "The Bridge of Sighs." No one who heard him would easily forget the pathos of his voice in the verse:

"Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care!
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!"

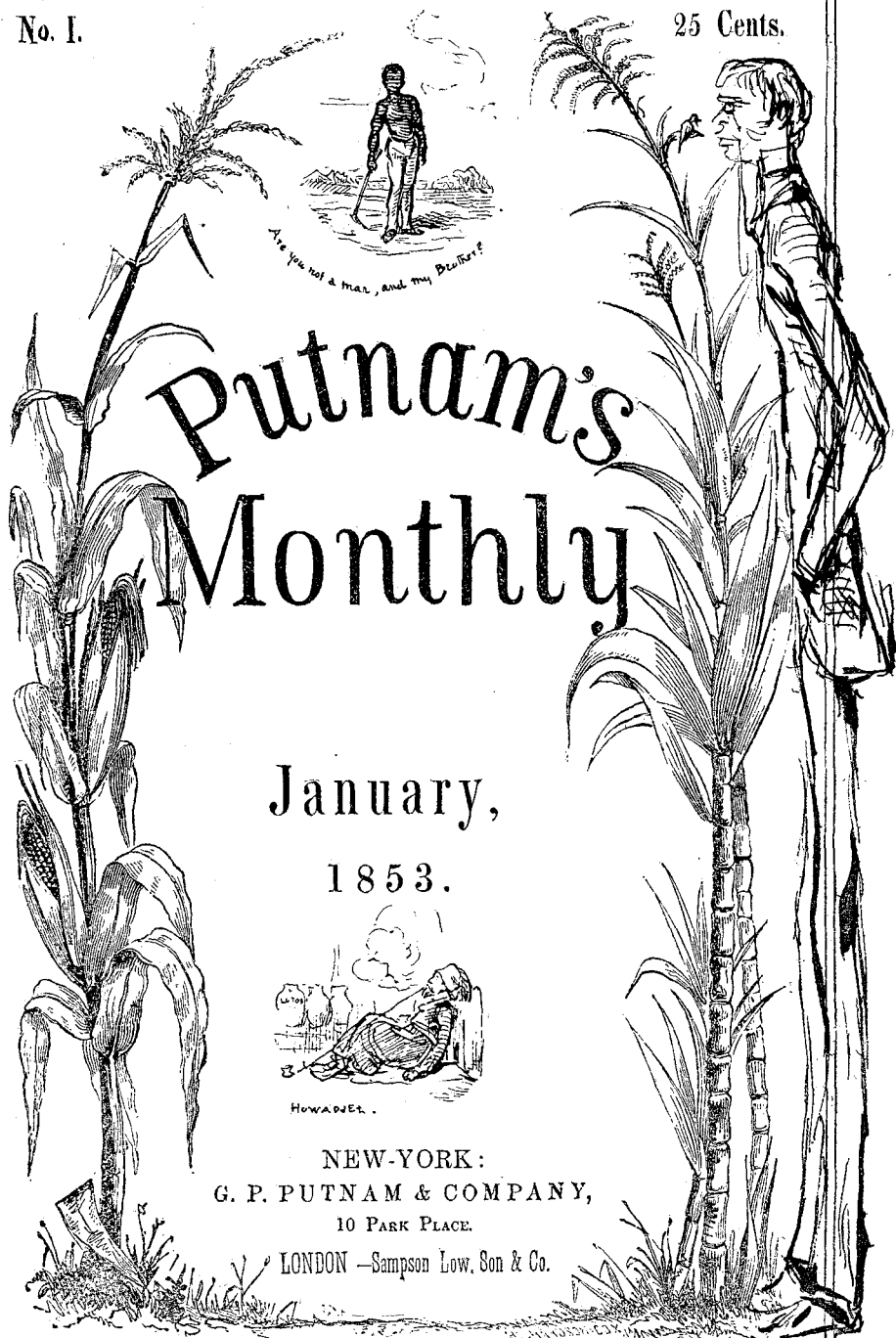
No more tender appreciation of distress could be found than that which always responded in the great author (cynic as he has been called) to any tale of trouble or want. His purse was constantly at the service of his friends, or often mere acquaintances, much to his own pecuniary detriment, and his glasses were dimmed when he spoke of the sorrows which day after day came to his knowledge. His liberality to those who served him was unflinching. Even he, however, was daunted somewhat when, on leaving the Clarendon, he found Mr. Crowe had dispensed five-dollar gold pieces to high and low, including even the bootblack.

After his return from the South, Mr. Thackeray found there was to be a little celebration of my seventeenth birthday. There was to be music, dancing, and flowers, for what was called in those days a "small party." Mr. Thackeray made the occasion memorable by the verses he sent with some flowers. With them came also the quaint little rhymed note, striking a lighter key. The verses have always been very precious to me, but the first form (which will be printed later in facsimile) I think more attractive than the shorter lines used in the published poem. The month of May carried Mr. Thackeray back to England, and he was not again in America until 1855.

The second course of lectures, on "The Four Georges," was not, I think, as well received in America as that on "The English Humorists." He speaks of this in one of his later letters, when he mentions that the lectures were much more popular in England than in "the States." We had hoped that on his second visit to America Mr. Thackeray would bring his daughters to be our guests, but it was decided that they must remain with their grandmother, Mrs. Carmichael Smythe. At his request, we met Mr. Thackeray in Boston on his second arrival, and remained with him a few days before he went to fulfil an en-

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LONGFELLOW

CARICATURES BY THACKERAY OF LONGFELLOW, GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, AND "UNCLE TOM"

None it, that I hardly knew where I was. I never felt so at again young ladies unless you
 let me - And upon my word I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it.
 And I hope Mr. Barker shall kiss my daughter. I hope they are not so pretty as his. And they
 are as good as any man's. I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it.
 (Only mine is much better than yours.) Please keep the letter for me and I hope Mr. Thackeray
 would shoot you - In the Boston box for Miss Selby a Sadie - it's the most absurd
 way of spelling your name Miss. Fancy Abraham calling Sarah Selby! - It doesn't become her



FACSIMILE OF A PART OF A LETTER BY THACKERAY, WRITTEN IN DECEMBER, 1852

gagement in Buffalo. My sister was to be married in a short time, and we had an autumn full of busy days for my mother, complicated with much illness in the Brown House. After Buffalo came his second course of lectures in New York, and later he returned to Boston. We saw him but seldom during this last visit, compared with the earlier one. There were changes in the circle of the Brown House. My sister had, as he said, "slipped away smiling, on her husband's arm," and the gap thus made could not be filled. In February we met in Charleston, where I had gone to be with my sister and brother-in-law, and he writes most kindly to my mother of us there. One experience of what was another side of Mr. Thackeray's temper came to me in Charleston. Up to this time we had never seen anything of the roughness sometimes attributed to him when he was annoyed.

At a certain dinner-party where I went alone with him, my sister not being well, a lady was present who from their first meeting had antagonized Mr. Thackeray. She was clever and rather brilliant, but had written some very trashy novels, whose reputation had certainly not extended beyond her native city. On this and other occasions she seemed determined to attract Mr. Thackeray's attention, to his great annoyance. At last, when something was said about the tribulations of authors, the lady leaned across the table, saying in a loud voice, "You and I, Mr. Thackeray, *being in the same boat*, can understand, can we not?" A dead silence fell, a thunder-cloud descended upon the face of Mr. Thackeray, and the pleasure of the entertainment was at an end. The hostess was no doubt grateful when the novelist had to excuse himself for the lecture and take his departure. Certainly one of the guests was, for the first time in her experience, relieved to see the door close upon her kind friend. This annoyance on the part of the lady was the culmination of numerous attacks, and struck just the wrong chord. She is referred to as the "Individual" in a letter to my mother.

In all *our* intercourse with Mr. Thackeray we saw only the kind, sympathetic, loving side of his great nature. It was always impossible for us to feel afraid of his cynicism, his sharp criticism, of which others speak. He could not help seeing

the weakness of human nature, but he did the fullest justice—as he would say, he “took off his hat”—to whatever was fine or noble in man or woman. He was, too, very patient with weakness of character, but he hated and despised pretense and humbug. All this has been said before, but I feel I must add my confirmation of such a view of his character from our personal experience.

In May, as will be seen from his letters, Mr. Thackeray took a sudden resolution and went off, without warning, to England. It was a real distress to my mother, as to all of us, that he should go thus, without a word of good-by; but that was just what he wanted to avoid. We never saw him again, but letters came from time to time, telling of himself, his daughters, “a little

tourkin in ‘Switzerland’ for *their* benefit, the fine house he was building at Kensington, “the reddest house in the town,” as he said we should find it if we came to London. Later he wrote of his stepfather’s death—the original of Colonel Newcome—and of his mother’s grief. In the last years he wrote in full and affectionate sympathy with our great anxiety and sorrow. These letters speak also, alas! of increasing attacks of illness, and we felt that the hope he had long cherished of writing the history of Queen Anne in the new house at Kensington was not likely to be realized. Still the shock caused by his death was very great. It brought sorrow to many hearts, but I think to none more acutely than to those so truly loving him in the Brown House.

Lucy W. Baxter.

THACKERAY'S BAXTER LETTERS

Tremont, [Mass.] Tuesday [1852].

LOTS of dollars (1500 already) for the lectures.

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER & —: This is not the letter at all. This is only to say that I’m going to write a letter tomorrow. I have begun one (I have had ceaseless visitors ever since this morning at 10), but I want to say God bless you! God bless you! and can hardly see the paper for— for something in my eyes which brings a film over them as I think of you and your great goodness to me. You must let me write to you often and often, won’t you? And do the same to me, please. Now will you, and *You* write tomorrow? Poor B.! I feel for him now.

Boston, Dec. 22, 1852.

Wednesday.

I HAVE put the two letters in the fire which I wrote yesterday—two very fine, long, fond sentimental letters. They were too long and sentimental and fond. A pen that’s so practised as mine is, runs on talking and talking; I fancy the people I speak to are sitting with me, and pour out the sense and nonsense, jokes and the contrary, egotisms—whatever comes uppermost. And you know what was uppermost yesterday. My heart was longing and yearning after you, full of love and gratitude for your welcome of me—but the words grew a little too warm. You

would n’t like me to write letters in that strain. You might like me to write no more; and if you did, I should burst out into a misanthropical rage again. Please to let me write on.

Enter Dr. O. W. Holmes half an hour—a dear little fellow, a true poet. I told him how much I liked his verses, and what do you think he did? *His* eyes began to water. Well, it’s a comfort to have given pleasure to that kind soul. . . .

And now Interruption No 3, . . . and that is, 1, 2, 3 letters from home that have been lying here ever so long. . . . I send you one of Anny’s. . . . That’s a pretty picture of the grand old mother and her old husband, such a fine gentleman and lady, so handsome—I’ve never seen any one so handsome, Mademoiselle; no, NEVER. . . . I suppose you know that the two hand-writings are by the same hand; and hope you don’t think it is Mr. Crowe the Secretary writing.

I wonder whether, if any body were to say, “Come, Friend, and pass Christmas Day with us,—you can be here to dinner, you can pass Sunday here and a part of Monday,”—I wonder whether I would come. New Year’s day is not so pleasant. There are visitors all that time, and all those visitors would be saying, “there’s that old Mr. Thackeray here again.” May I come? You kind dear Mrs. Baxter, your first impression will be yes. Your second

very likely no. Think over for half an hour which way it shall be, and whether you will have me gladden my eyes by seeing your faces again. Why it's only a few hours from here to the Second Avenue; and I whisk off the car at 27th Street, and leave my bag at the Clarendon, and am down 18th St. in no time. Say if you "approve and honour the proposal."

*Dec., 1852.
Thursday Ev'g.*

HERE is something that I must send to a young lady by Mr. Crowe because I think it will please her, and with it I send the very kindest wishes to the very kindest family that I have met many a long day—and I hope you young ladies were not offended by that parting benediction the other day—could n't help myself. I was n't in the least aware of it, and was so astonished when I had done it, that I hardly knew where I was. I never will do it again, young ladies, unless you let me—and upon my word, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter, I ask your pardon; but I did n't mean any harm, and I hope Mr. Baxter shall kiss my daughters, though they are not so pretty as his. But they are as good as any man's. Here's another letter from Anny. "One of Mr. Doyle's little dogs" is this [drawing] (only mine is much better drawn). Please keep the letters for me, and I hope the Theology won't shock you. In the Bon-bon-box for Miss Sally or Sallie—it's the most absurd way of spelling your name, Miss. Fancy Abraham calling Sarah Sally! It does n't become his age—there's a ring, as she likes 'em. I hope she may keep it. It's made of American pearls (of very mild water, and American gold). Do let me give something for New Year! I have been so immensely paid that I must make presents to somebody. And as, in writing

home tomorrow, I shall say who has been kindest to me, and whom I have learned to love best in New York, you will please permit me to mention the name of the Saint's Everlasting Rest, viz., B—xt—r.

I am now engaged every day to dinner and supper at Boston (pronounced Bawsn). It is quieter, but I think we drink more than at New York—and on Saturday 8th shall be once more in your neighborhood. What this can mean except a wish to be asked to dinner on that day I cannot conceive. And shall we go to hear Alboni ever or to the play once?

The letter about New Orleans sent from here on Friday 24th did not reach its destination till the 29th. They only offer 2500, and not 5, as I had wildly hoped. I think I may end by taking the half loaf. In spite of the newspapers and their jocularities, my affairs prosper here nearly as much as at New York, and the audiences are in a great state of contentment.

And so I close my letter and wish a happy New Year

to you all who have made the close of this one so happy to me.

W. M. T.

Boston, Jan., 1853.

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: Thank you for your kind friendly wishes and for the welcome you have given me—God bless you! How very, very kind you have been to me! I think the young girls write dear pretty letters; and as for the eldest, it is just possible you found out what I thought of her.

I wish I had n't sent away my aide de camp. It's dreadfully lonely and dismal here—awfully slippery in the streets. How can people go out to lectures in such weather? I was quite angry with the audience for being so foolish last night. I went to the Ticknors' last night, and our



THE CLARENDON HOTEL
Thackeray's home in New York city

talk fell on the M's. H. and B.; and I mentioned how the latter had introduced me to a family at New York—a family of the name of Baxter, and the girls began such a laughter! They were on the other side of Lake George, it appears, last year, and he used to go over and pour out his soul to them about Miss Baxter. The report was that he was going to be married to her. Is he? says I, confound him; then I hope he'll never come back again. Then I owned myself that I was far gone about that young lady, dilated on her good qualities, ran up her flag, and owned I sailed under it. "And they heard me as I talked an hour of their Eliza" with &c., &c.

I shall see you all once again before I go after the dollars, and,—who knows?—the Mississippi snags. We will try and be jolly a little next week, won't we? and then I shall go on my way like an old Mountebank (I get more ashamed and disgusted of my nostrums daily), and send round the hat through the republic.

Is n't this a merry letter for a New Year? Well, the writer is n't very merry; but he is very sincerely and affly yours all
W. M. T.

Washington.

Mr. Anderson's Music Store, Pa. Ave.,
Wednesday Bordig. 1853.

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: Thank you for your kind letter of Saturday, which came to comfort me on Monday morning, though that other which you promised is still on its way.

A plan came into my head in the dark this morning which has not permitted me to sleep since, and which I humbly submit to you, as good for Mrs. & Miss, for Mr. & Miss or Mr., Mrs. & Miss Baxter.

Monday morning from New York to Baltimore. Eutaw Hotel, where Mr. Thackeray hopes for the honor of seeing you; and will be in waiting.

Tuesday. Washington. President's Levee. Ball at the Assembly room—perhaps dinner at Crampton's.

Wednesday. Receive visits of swells after the ball. Dine with a select party at Mr. T's before his lecture.

Thursday. Go to Mount Vernon and back.

Friday early to Baltimore and see that city.

Saturday—back to New York after embracing Mr. T., who will turn his face towards the South.

Now is n't that a nice plan? If you 2 ladies come, I shall instal you in my rooms and go sleep next door. You'll be my guests during the trip—what a pleasure it will be to me to pay back a little bit of the hospitality I owe you! The ball is very sober, but a beautiful thing, and it would do my weary old eyes good to see a young lady I wot of once again before I go to the South. Send off a telegraph *Yes* tomorrow, won't you, please? I hope all 3 of you will come. But you know how fond I am of Lady Castlewood and how I want her especially. And I want Lucy and Libby, too, but rooms are hard to find.

I sha'n't go farther than Charleston; and am making some arrangements for Rochester and Buffalo at the end of April, before which I shall go probably to Montreal. This might bring me a day or two in New York, might n't it? And then there is Niagara we might see. And then and then, who knows what lies in future years, and whither the winds will blow us? That sounds like po'try, does n't it? I have the most cheering accounts (but this is a secret, I believe) of the international copyright bill, which, upon my conscience, will make me 5000 dollars a year the richer.¹ And I came thundering back from Baltimore yesterday, and look wistfully at the door every moment—but no Postman from Second Avenue—plenty from home and good news of my women.

Yesterday a grand dinner at Mr. Crampton's. I sat next a young beauty, who told me she admired my beautiful hands—all Englishmen *kept their nails well!* (upon my word) and my way of "*conveying my food to my mouth*"; all Englishmen, &c. Mme. B—— (an American married to the Russian minister) told me her husband did not belong to the Greek church. "Is he a Lithuanian?" says I (where there are many Catholics). "He leaves me to do the religion," says Her Excellency, thinking Lithuanianism was a form of belief.

Enter Postman. But your letters are always 2 days on the road, and this is a very little bit of a letter, Miss S. S. B. Never mind, you can make up for all by coming, as I do beg and hope you will.

[¹ Unfortunately, the international copyright movement did not succeed till nearly thirty years after Thackeray's death.—THE EDITOR.]

What fun we will have! What dismal, little, queer bed rooms to sleep in! . . . I am yours and everybody's in Brownhouse Street.

[Signed in monogram W. M. T.]

*Philadelphia, Thursday,
Jan., 1853.*

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: The only fear I had about giving a charity lecture now was lest other cities should ask me for similar exercises, and spoil the run of my lectures, or delay me in their delivery. But I don't think this objection need be a serious one, and if Mrs. Felt and your benevolent ladies think fit on Thursday or Friday in next week, I will gladly work for you. *Fielding & Goldsmith* would, I think, be a good lecture, with possibly a little apropos introduction that I could put together with the aid of a Secretary. It must n't be later than Friday though, as the next day I am engaged here. Mr. Crowe is gone to Baltimore and Washington to arrange about the course there; and everything here is most flourishing—papers full of praise, room full of people, &c. I don't like to send the papers somehow, unless they have any claim to literary merit, and these have no special merit of that sort. I have the same course of dinners and suppers to steer through, the people being rather offended because I will go to New York.

Miss B. writes me word that she intends to come, if possible, to Mrs. Rush's on Thursday, which will deprive me of the pleasure of seeing her for 2 days; but on Sunday morning I wonder what time you will breakfast, and whether I shall be up time enough to be at the old brown house. God bless every body in it! and as for Lucy, who wrote me the kindest and prettiest little letter, I know what she deserves, and what I would like to give her. And I am in the middle of a letter to Lucy's sister, too; but that time and the hour won't allow me to finish it.

I am very sorry you have come to that fatal resolve about Washington; but wise Papas and Mammias know best what is good for themselves and their children, and though I don't think I should like any society as much as yours, I shall have plenty of pleasant company between one city and the other. And then for the South; and then for the Spring, and to see you all

again; and then for home and my dear young ones; and then for the Second Campaign. That is the way man disposes at present; but Fate? who knows how that may settle for me? I send the kindest regards to you all, and am gratefully yours, my dear friend,

W. M. Thackeray.

MY DEAR LUCY: Your dear, kind little letter has given "a fine-looking old gentleman" a great deal of pleasure; and I am sure my girls at home will be grateful to a dear pretty girl that is kind to their father. Well, I 'm not at all frightened now that I had that little parting—ahem! *dass ich dich, mein liebes schönes Mädchen, so herzlich einmal geküsst habe*—that 's between you and me, is n't it? though you may show it to your Mamma, if you like.

There 's nobody here to fill the place of certain young ladies. There 's a number of other pretty girls, but none like those in the brown house.

I shall see it next week for a little time, and then go away money-hunting for the girls at home; and have no such fun, and meet no such dear friends, as in that Second Avenoo. I don't want to meet such or to like other people so much; for there comes the pain at parting with them, and after being very happy, being alone. God bless all good girls! I say; and a happy New Year to 'em! Some day—well, some day I was going to say you will send me a piece of wedding-cake, and though I shan't like it, I shall say happy is the young fellow who fetches Lucy out of the brown house!

God bless you in this and all years—and believe me

Sincerely your friend,

W. M. T.

IF you please, Mrs. Baxter, I think I can do without the new supplies till I return to N. Y.

*Washington, Saturday,
Feb. 19, 1853.*

MY DEAR LITTLE KIND LUCY: I began to write you a letter in the railroad yesterday, but it bumped with more than ordinary violence, and I was forced to give up the endeavour. I did not know how ill Lucy was at that time, only remembered that I owed her a letter for that pretty one

you wrote me at Philadelphia, when Sarah was sick and you acted as her Secretary. Is there going to be always Somebody sick at the brown house? If I were to come there now, I wonder should I be allowed to come and see you in your night-cap—I wonder even do you wear a night-cap?

dicular is not so pleasant, though. I have just come back from Baltimore and find your mother's and sister's melancholy letters. I thought to myself, perhaps I might see them on this very sofa and pictured to myself their 2 kind faces. Mr. Crampton was going to ask them to dinner, I had

is it his name Herr Strumpf?—the German master in /y/onn
 Fräulein ist krank and bursts into tears on the ~~to~~ Piano forte's
 shoulder when they hear the news (through his sobs) from black
 John. We have an Ebony femme de chambre
 here: when I came from Baltimore just now
 I found her in the following costume and
 attitude standing for her picture to Mr. Crowe.
 She makes the bed with that pipe in her
 mouth and leaves it about in the rooms.
 Wouldn't she have been a nice lady's maid for
 your mother and Miss Sally Satter?



FACSIMILE OF A PART OF THACKERAY'S LETTER FROM WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 19, 1853

I should step up, take your little hand, which I daresay is lying outside the coverlet, give it a little shake; and then sit down and talk all sorts of stuff and nonsense to you for half an hour; but very kind and gentle, not so as to make you laugh too much or your little back ache any more. Did I not tell you to leave off that beecely jimnayshum?¹ I am always giving fine advice to girls in brown houses, and they always keep on never minding. It is not difficult to write lying in bed—this is written not in bed, but on a sofa. If you write the upright hand it's quite easy; slanting-

made arrangements to get Sarah nice partners at the ball—Why did dear little Lucy tumble down at the Gymnasium? Many a pretty plan in life tumbles down so, Miss Lucy, and falls on its back. But the good of being ill is to find how kind one's friends are; of being at a pinch (I do not know whether I may use the expression—whether “pinch” is an indelicate word in this country; it is used by our old writers to signify poverty, narrow circumstances, *res angusta*)—the good of being poor, I say, is to find friends to help you. I have been both ill and poor, and found,

¹ See Introduction.

thank God! such consolation in those evils; and I daresay at this moment, now you are laid up, you are the person of the most importance in the whole house—Sarah is sliding about the room with cordials in her hands and eyes; Libby is sitting quite disconsolate by the bed (poor Libby! when one little bird fell off the perch, I wonder the other did not go up and fall off, too!) the expression of sympathy in Ben's eyes is perfectly heart-rending; even George is quiet; and your Father, Mother, and Uncle (all 3 so notorious for their violence of temper and language) have actually forgotten to scold. "Ach, du lieber Himmel," says Herr Strumpf—is n't his name Herr Strumpf?—the German master, "die schone Fräulein ist krank!" and bursts into tears on the Pianofortifier's shoulder when they hear the news (through his sobs) from black John. We have an Ebony femme de chambre here; when I came from Baltimore just now I found her in the following costume and attitude standing for her picture to Mr. Crowe. [See page 59.] She makes the beds with that pipe in her mouf and leaves it about in the rooms. Would n't she have been a nice lady's-maid for your mother and Miss Bally Saxter?

But even if Miss Lucy had not had her fall, I daresay there would have been no party. Here is a great snow-storm falling, though yesterday was as bland and bright as May (English May, I mean) and how could we have lionized Baltimore, and gone to Mount Vernon, and taken our diversion in the snow? There would have been nothing for it but to stay in this little closet of a room, where there is scarce room for 6 people, and where it is not near so comfortable as the brown house. Dear old b. h., shall I see it again soon? I shall not go farther than Charleston, and Savannah probably, and then I hope I shall get another look at you all again before I commence farther wanderings—O, stop! I did n't tell you why I was going to write you—well, I went on Thursday to dine with Governor and Mrs. Fish, a dinner in honor of me—and before I went I arrayed myself in a certain white garment of which the collar-button-holes had been altered, and I thought of the kind, friendly little hand that had done that deed for me; and when the Fisheses told me how they lived in the Second Avenue (I had forgotten all about 'em)—their house and the house

opposite came back to my mind, and I liked them 50 times better for living near some friends of mine. She is a nice woman, Madam Fish, besides; and did n't I abuse you all to her? Good bye, dear little Lucy—I wish the paper was n't full. But I have been sitting half an hour by the poor young lady's sofa, and talking stuff and nonsense, have n't I? And now I get up, and shake your hand with a God bless you! and walk down stairs, and please to give everybody my kindest regards, and remember that I am truly your friend.

W. M. T.

Washington,
Thursday, Feb. 24,
1853.

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: It may be I shall not have time to write to day before post, and I send a 5 minutes scribble over my breakfast, to say thank you for the kind, kind letters and those which are to come. We are going off in a party to the *Ericsson*, and afterwards I dine at the President's, and then go in the evening to a very, *very* pretty little girl, whom I have been obliged to snub for pertness—it's a long story, too long for now. And on Sunday I have asked 8 or 10 men to dinner,—what a piece of folly it is to spend 100 dollars upon their waistcoats!—and on Monday morning I go to Richmond, Va., where I shall be all the week till Saturday, when I am bound for Charleston. There I shall stop another week, sha'n't I? and the Fates will dispose of me afterwards. So P. cried, did he, on going away? As for C. P., he is a dear young fellow, and I feel quite a regard for him, and a comfort in thinking about a character that seems to me so manly and generous and honest. And my pretty Sarah practises music, does she? and beaux 1, 2, 3, are gone. There is a faithful old fellow, not much of a buck, who is her very humble servant always, and, with those new shirts and that bag full of new dollars, who knows what a dandy I sha'n't be?

My English acquaintance, Mr. S., has married a charming young creature. . . . I pity her for the life which she is going to lead in our country, her husband away from home all day, and she with scarce enough money to buy enough mutton-chops. But I wish you would all go to

Europe; you would be rich there, at least as rich as your neighbours, and happy amongst yourselves. How I should like to take my place at that kind table again! Well, it will be before very long, please God—and far or near, you know I shall always say Grace for the meals I have had there. I send my best regards to old birds and young birds, and am so sorry for George's sore throat. I have got one too.

Friday, Feb. 25, Washington.
1853.

MY DEAR MRS. BAXTER: Let us write the other half of the letter this morning. We did not come home till too late from the excursion down the Potomac to the *Ericsson*, through the bitterest cold weather—so cold that had parties from New York come for pleasure to Washington, they would have rued the day when they left a comfortable warm brown-house shelter for Mr. T's dismal little lodgings over the music-store. We had the hoighth of foine company to the *Ericsson*, the 2 Presidents, the Secretaries, Commodores without end, large newspaper editors, and Messrs. Irving and Thackeray, literary gents. The Presidents were both very pleasant; and none of the pictures I have seen do any justice to General Pierce, who is a man of remarkably good presence and fine manners, as natural as any of those English men our friend admired. We talked together very affably for $\frac{1}{4}$ an hour; I daresay he was relieved by talking with a man who wanted nothing from him—and in the evening I dined with President Fillmore, who gratified me by saying that Pierce had proposed to him that they should go together to my last lecture here on Saturday night. I think the proposal was uncommonly friendly and thoughtful, and the news, if puffed properly in the papers, may do the lecturer good. But he is growing so mortally sick of the business that you may hear of his striking work any day. I have been paid for these lectures four times as much money as they honestly deserve, and—&c., &c., I will not entertain you with these old grumbles.

How is it that the post has brought no letter from Miss Saxter this morning? Perfidious Thou, how many disappointments dost thou bring me? But Lucy's was a very pleasant, kind little letter yesterday, and I should like to hear that a

good Surgeon had examined the poor little back and pronounced that there was nothing wrong. Do have a surgeon, not a doctor.

To all outward appearance I am having a very good time here, but there's something wanting. . . . Bon Dieu! what are oysters that we should be mindful of them, or champagne that we should wish to go on drinking it? We have had some great feasts, though—that Colonel Preston of Kentucky is a rare good fellow. He kept us roaring with laughter last Wednesday from four o'clock till eight—it's a mussy that the professional moralist who had to lecture exhibited no sign of the Madeira.

My house in London is let till July. You will go somewhere in June, won't you? Sha'n't we go to Rhode Island? Shall we go to Niagara? You don't know how pleased I am that you should be anxious to hear from me—I wager twopence a halfpenny ($2\frac{1}{2}$ d Sterling) you thought because no letter was sent on Saturday or Sunday, "Mr. T. is offended because we don't accept his invitation. Mr. T. is very apt to take offense when none is meant," says Miss Sarah, with a sort of half-sigh. No such thing; it was Crowe who forgot to post the letters—and I never like that young woman half so much as when she is performing the 5th commandment with variations; and I think her one thousand times handsomer at Lucy's or her mother's bedside in a peignoir (if such be the garment of young ladies) than at Delmonico's in the brilliantest of gowns, whirled round the room by one of those little dandykins. At the balls here Quadrilles are danced, and the waltz does n't seem to me to go above 6 knots an hour. There was a lamentable wheezy Schottisch played last night (at Mrs. —'s—mother of pretty girl of 16; little Impudence, very penitent and on her good behaviour—brought her a bonbon of a butterfly from the President's, which she pinned on to an exceedingly pretty little—neck, I believe that is the word) and my thoughts went straightway to New York—and while the fair Penitent was dancing, I slipped off in spite of the mother's entreaties to stay and see "such a pretty little supper," and was in bed by $11\frac{1}{2}$, greatly to the bed's surprise. Why, I am got to the end of the page,—you may be sure by that that Crowe is out,—I never can talk freely when he is in the room;

and can't tell why; for I like him as I would like my son, I think. We laugh and roar with absurd jokes—we get on, *à merveille*; but when I want to be very confidential and spoony, his presence interrupts the sentimentality (here he is; no, it's the black femme de chambre, thank my stars!) and lo! I am over at page 5—with this abominable gold pen, too, which won't write plain:

Why did n't the girls send me the daguerreotype? I thought of sending you one, too; but my blushing modesty prevented; and one good one, which has been done here, I thought it was my duty to keep for the children at home. Pretty young girls may please an old fellow by such a present; but the old fellow must be rather shy about proffering representations of his ugly countenance—there's something grotesque in that elderly gallantry. How pleasant it is to be alone for half an hour! I talk to you as if we were sitting in the brown house—but then you know I was always thinking, "Why won't Mademoiselle come down?" And when she came, why, the odds were we had a skirmish. But I never found fault with *you*, did I, or

was out of humour with any one else? Everybody seems to be aware of my intimacy with the brown house; and ladies mention Miss Baxter to me with a knowing look, of which I acknowledge the meaning with a perfect blandness and readiness of acceptancy. They don't seem to be aware though that Lucy and Libby and my dear Lady Castlewood have no small share of the regard in which I hold that Second Avenue, and angle of Eighteenth Street. Writing home to the children the other day, and talking of you, there were so many "dears" in the sentence, that I laughed myself when I read it over. . . . Ah, here comes Monsieur Corbeau! Adieu, sentimentality—let me huddle up the two papers together so that he may n't see what an immense long letter I have written you, and all about nothing, too. And next week I shall write, let us hope, from Richmond, Va., and answer such kind letters as it pleases young persons to send me. I send you all the usual remembrances, and wherever I am, and however good *the time* is, am always wishing I was at home in New York.

Yours always, my dear Mrs. Baxter,

W. M. T.

(To be continued)

NIGHT SONG

BY MARION COUTHOUY SMITH

COME, my soul, and to thy fastness
Flee away;
Close the shadowy doors of silence
On the day.

Come, and let all hope and passion
Fall to rest;
Let the sphinx of midnight fold thee
To her breast:

She whose ears no moan nor murmur
Ever reach,
And whose lips are closed to question
And to speech;

She whose eyes are as the brooding
Lights of fate,
And whose silence to thy sorrow
Answers—Wait!

Thou shalt learn in that pure stillness
What thou art—
All the wonder and the wisdom
Of thy heart.

Not in dreams, for they are shadows;
Not in sleep—
That is soulless: but in vision
Clear and deep;

In the rest nor pain nor longing
Put to flight;
In the sweet and cold Nirvana
Of the night.

Learn the power, the calm, the worship
That shall be.
Come, my soul! For in the darkness
Thou art free.