

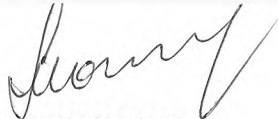


Vanity Fair

William Makepeace Thackeray



MACMILLAN READERS



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UPPER LEVEL

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

Vanity Fair

Retold by Elizabeth Walker



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Founding Editor: John Milne

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Level Control

Information, structure and vocabulary are controlled to suit the students' ability at each level.

The number of words at each level:

Starter	about 300 basic words
Beginner	about 600 basic words
Elementary	about 1100 basic words
Pre-intermediate	about 1400 basic words
Intermediate	about 1600 basic words
Upper	about 2200 basic words

Vocabulary

Some difficult words and phrases in this book are important for understanding the story. Some of these words are explained in the story, some are shown in the pictures, and others are marked with a number like this ... ³. Words with a number are explained in the *Glossary* at the end of the book.

Answer Keys

An Answer Key for the *Points for Understanding* section can be found at www.macmillanenglish.com.

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A Note About the Author

William Makepeace Thackeray was born in Calcutta, India on 18th July, 1811. He was the only child of Richmond and Anne Thackeray.

Richmond Thackeray was an official of the East India Company¹ and he had a large income³, so the Thackerays' lives were very comfortable. They lived in a large house with many servants and they enjoyed good food. The Thackerays attended dances and grand⁴ balls. William watched firework displays⁴ and visited beautiful palaces. He saw people driving fine carriages and riding elephants.

When he was four years old, William's father died and the boy was sent to school in England. He never returned to India.

In 1817, William's mother married Henry Carmichael-Smyth and the couple came to live in England. At the age of ten, Thackeray attended Charterhouse, a famous school for boys. Unfortunately, at this time, it was not a good school. The pupils received a poor education and there were often fights between the boys. Thackeray's nose was broken during a fight.

In 1829, Thackeray attended Cambridge University but he did not receive a degree. He became a wild young man, and spent his time dining on fine food, going to the theatre and gambling³. One evening, Thackeray lost £1500 – some of the money that he was going to inherit³ when he was twenty-one. When he left university, Thackeray decided to become a lawyer. But after only a few months, he stopped studying law. Once more, he spent his time drinking, gambling and flirting⁴ with young women.

Thackeray visited France in 1832. He edited a newspaper and tried to become an artist. He was now twenty-one and he inherited the rest of his father's money. But he spent this money wildly in the theatres, art galleries and restaurants of Paris.

In 1835, when most of his money had gone, Thackeray met

and fell in love with Isabella Shawe. She was a small, shy young woman with light-red hair. She was also poor. Although their parents did not approve⁴, William and Isabella married one year later. At first, they were extremely happy together. Thackeray wrote articles for a newspaper which was owned by Henry Carmichael-Smyth. He was paid eight guineas³ each week.

Thackeray and his wife returned to London in 1837 and had three children – Anne, Jane and Harriet. But Jane died while she was still a baby. After Harriet was born in 1840, Isabella became ill and Thackeray took her to Ireland so that she could stay with her family there. During their journey, Isabella's illness became much worse and she tried to kill herself several times. Thackeray did not stay in Ireland for long. He took Isabella to France after he had an argument with his wife's mother.

Thackeray now knew that his wife had a disease of the mind. His own mother took care of Isabella and their daughters in Paris while Thackeray lived in London. Thackeray loved his wife very much and her illness made him very unhappy. For five years, he travelled between Paris and London. He took his wife to many doctors but no one could help her. He did not want to put Isabella in an asylum⁴, so he brought her back to England and a nurse took care of her until she died.

Thackeray wrote reviews of art exhibitions in London, as well as articles for *The Times* newspaper and amusing stories for *Punch* magazine. In 1845, he began to write a novel – *Vanity Fair*. It was published in twenty parts between 1847 and 1848. Each month, another part of the story was printed. *Vanity Fair* was popular and successful, but it did not make Thackeray a rich man. By the time that the complete story was published as a book, Thackeray had become a famous author and he mixed with people in high society¹. He was invited to grand dinners and parties. His friends were poets, writers and artists.

By 1852 Thackeray was in his forty-second year. He was very heavy, and his health was poor. But although he was often unwell, he edited and wrote articles for magazines, gave lectures

and travelled a great deal⁴. In 1855, he wrote *The Four Georges* – essays about the terrible things that happened during the Crimean War – and he gave lectures on this material. Two years later, he tried to become a Member of Parliament², but he was an unsuccessful politician. He returned to writing.

Thackeray's best-known works are: *Catherine* (1839–40), *The Paris Sketchbook* (1840), *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844), *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), *The Book of Snobs* (1848), *The History of Pendennis* (1848–50), *The History of Henry Esmond Esquire* (1852), *The Newcomes* (1853–55), *The Rose and the Ring* (1855) and *The Virginians* (1857–59).

Thackeray and his two daughters moved to a larger house in Kensington, London, in 1862. He loved this house and there was space to show his collection of valuable paintings and artefacts⁴. But very soon, Thackeray's health became worse, and he died on 24th December 1863. He was only fifty-two years old.

Thackeray took the title of his book, *Vanity Fair*, from a poem. It describes a world where people are only interested in pleasure and the things that they can buy.

In this book, 'Vanity Fair' means a community, or a part of society, where people are only interested in themselves and the things which please them. The characters in this story are very interested in money and their place in society. Some of the characters always make sure that they look as good as possible. They arrange their hair attractively and they wear the most fashionable clothes. These people are always interested in their appearance – they are vain.

The author refers to the five main characters in his book as 'our friends'.

A Note About Europe in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, the richest and most powerful people were members of 'high society'. People in high society spent a lot of money on their clothes, houses and entertainment. They had strong ideas about what they should wear, where they should go, and what kind of music and art they should like.

Men and women in high society came from old families who had fine houses and a lot of land, property and money. Members of highest society were nobles and they had titles¹.

Few people from high society worked to earn money. And they certainly did not work in dangerous or dirty jobs. Men inherited money and property from their fathers. The eldest son usually received most of the money and property after his father's death. If younger sons did not choose to join the army, or the navy, they became lawyers or clergymen.

It was important for a girl to marry a man who had money and property. If a girl did not have any money of her own and she did not marry, her life was much more difficult. Many members of high society thought that women from poor, lower-class families would not be suitable wives. Many of these young women had to work as governesses – they taught the children of rich families in their homes.

At this time, a woman could not appear in society alone, and she could not be alone with a man who was not her husband. People got a bad reputation¹ if they did not behave correctly, or if they got their money in a bad way. If a man or a woman had a bad reputation, members of polite society would turn away from them.

In the nineteenth century, men and women talked about each other in a polite, formal way. They used titles in front of their last names. If they did not know the members of a family

very well, people used Miss (+ their last name) when they spoke to elder, unmarried daughters. And they used Miss (+ their first name) when they spoke to younger, unmarried daughters. For example, George Osborne has two sisters – Miss Osborne and Miss Maria Osborne. Married women were often called by their husband's name. For example, Bute Crawley's wife has the first name Martha, but she is usually called Mrs Bute Crawley.

Men often used only their last names when they spoke to, or spoke about, each other.

In 1789 there was a revolution in France and the country became a republic. French people no longer wanted a king, they wanted to rule their country themselves. King Louis XVI² was accused of treason² and executed² on 21st January, 1793.

In 1785, a young Corsican named Napoleon Bonaparte was a lieutenant² in the French army. Bonaparte was an extremely clever and successful soldier and he was quickly promoted². At the age of twenty-seven, Napoleon became a general. He led the French army to Egypt in 1798, to fight battles against the British. In the following year, Napoleon and his supporters² seized power in France and they began to rule the country. In June 1800, Napoleon's army won a battle against 30,000 Austrian soldiers at Marengo, in northern Italy.

In 1803, Napoleon made plans to invade² Britain. Early in 1804, Napoleon became Emperor of France and the Spanish joined the French in the war against Britain. Ships carrying French and Spanish soldiers were going to sail along the English Channel to southern England. However, Britain had a powerful navy. On 21st October 1805, Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, the commanding officer² of the British navy, defeated² the French and Spanish navies at the Battle of Trafalgar.

Although he was defeated at sea, Napoleon's power on land grew. In 1805, he defeated the armies of Austria and Russia at the Battle of Austerlitz. He defeated the Prussian army at the

Battle of Jena in 1806. And in 1807, the French defeated the Russians at the Battle of Friedland. When the French invaded the Iberian Peninsular, the British came to help the people of Spain and Portugal. This was the start of the Peninsular War.

The best British commander during the Peninsular War was Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington. Wellington's soldiers fought and defeated Napoleon's men at the battles of Talavera (July 1809), Vitoria (June 1813) and the Pyrenees (July 1813). Wellington's army then marched into France.

While there was war in Spain and Portugal, another part of Napoleon's army had invaded Russia. Napoleon wanted to be the master of the whole of Europe. Although his soldiers won a battle at Borodino on 7th September 1812, Napoleon's plan to conquer Russia was not successful. The weather was extremely cold and Napoleon's men waited outside the city of Moscow without warm clothes or strong boots. When the Moscovites left Moscow, there was a fire and most of the city was destroyed. Napoleon's soldiers could not find enough food and thousands of them died from cold and hunger as they tried to get home. When he returned to France, the people no longer supported Napoleon and he had to abdicate².

Bonaparte was exiled² to the island of Elba in April 1814. After Napoleon had abdicated, Louis XVIII – the brother of Louis XVI – became king of France. But in March 1815, Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France.

The French army welcomed Bonaparte and he entered Paris easily. Once more, he became Emperor of France. However, he only ruled for one hundred days.

On 18th June 1815, Napoleon's armies fought the allied armies² of Prussia, Britain, Holland, Belgium and Germany near a small town called Waterloo, in Belgium. With the help of Blücher, the commanding officer of Prussia, Wellington won the battle and Napoleon was defeated. He was exiled to the island of St Helena and died there on 5th May 1821.

The People in This Story

Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies, Chiswick Mall, London



Miss Barbara
Pinkerton



Miss Jemima
Pinkerton



Rebecca
'Becky' Sharp

Russell Square, and Fullham Road, London



John Sedley



Mrs Mary
Sedley



Joseph 'Jos'
Sedley



Amelia 'Emmy'
Sedley

96 Russell Square, London



John Osborne



Jane Osborne



Lieutenant
George Osborne



Maria Osborne

Thames Street, London

Sir Edward Dobbin

Lady Dobbin



Captain
William Dobbin



Jane Dobbin



Ann Dobbin

Queen's Crawley, Hampshire and Great Gaunt Street, London



Sir Pitt
Crawley



Lady Rose
Crawley



Reverend
Bute Crawley



Mrs 'Bute'
Crawley



Miss Matilda
Crawley

Violet Crawley
Rose Crawley

*Park Lane,
London*



Pitt Crawley



Lady Jane
Sheepshanks



Captain
Rawdon Crawley



Miss Arabella
Briggs

Gaunt House, London



Lord Steyne



Lady Steyne



Lady Gaunt



General Tufto



Rawdon
'Rawdy' Crawley



George
'Georgy' Sedley

Mr Raggles

Mrs Raggles

Isidor

Two Young Ladies

It was a sunny morning in June 1813, and a fine coach pulled by two large horses stopped outside Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies on Chiswick Mall, London.

Miss Jemima Pinkerton looked out of the window of the drawing-room.

'Sister!' she exclaimed. 'Mrs Sedley's coach has arrived!'

Miss Barbara Pinkerton, the headmistress of the school, was sitting at her writing-desk. She was a tall and grand old lady, who had been teaching for thirty-five years.

'Is everything ready for Miss Sedley's departure?' she asked.

'Yes, sister,' Miss Jemima replied. 'The other girls got up at four o'clock this morning, to pack dear Amelia's cases. And they've made her a beautiful bouquet⁴. All the young pupils are weeping – and most of the older ones too. Dear Amelia! We'll all miss her!'

'Miss Amelia Sedley has learnt everything that a young lady needs to succeed in society,' Miss Pinkerton said, with a smile. 'Miss Sedley can sing, dance and sew beautifully. She has been an excellent pupil here for six years.'

'And the dear girl is so sweet and charming⁴ too,' Miss Jemima said. 'Everyone loves Amelia.'

The headmistress nodded her head and smiled again. 'Yes,' she agreed. 'I've written a letter to Miss Sedley's parents. Please send it with the bill for Miss Sedley's stay here. Then bring me Dr Johnson's Dictionary¹ from the cupboard, sister. I'll sign it for Miss Sedley.'

Miss Pinkerton had known Dr Johnson when he was alive. The great man had once visited her school and each pupil who left the Academy was given a copy of his dictionary.

Miss Jemima took two dictionaries out of the cupboard and

gave one to her sister. When Miss Pinkerton had signed it, Miss Jemima held out the second one.

‘Who is this second dictionary for?’ Miss Pinkerton asked.

Miss Jemima’s face went red. ‘It’s for Rebecca Sharp, sister. She’s leaving too.’

‘Sister!’ Miss Pinkerton exclaimed. ‘Are you *mad*? Put that dictionary back! Then send Miss Sedley to me to say goodbye.’

So, what is the difference between Miss Amelia Sedley and Miss Rebecca Sharp? Well, Amelia Sedley’s father is a rich stockbroker³. Rebecca Sharp’s father had been a poor artist who had taught drawing at Miss Pinkerton’s Academy.

Rebecca Sharp was an orphan. Her mother had been a French opera-dancer¹. She had died when ‘Becky’ was young. Becky was seventeen when her father became very ill. Before he died, he had begged⁴ Miss Pinkerton to look after his only child.

Becky spoke French perfectly and good French teachers were difficult to find. So Miss Pinkerton agreed to keep Becky at the school. The young girl had taught the pupils French until, one day, Miss Pinkerton heard Becky playing the piano.

‘Miss Sharp, your playing is delightful,’ Miss Pinkerton said with a polite smile. ‘I think that you must teach music to our younger pupils.’

Becky Sharp stared at the old woman. The girl’s bright green eyes shone fiercely and she laughed unpleasantly.

‘I’m here to teach your pupils French and I do it very well,’ she said. ‘If I teach music too, you must pay me more.’

Miss Pinkerton was shocked. ‘No one has ever spoken to me like that!’ she said. ‘I agreed to help you when your father died. You should be grateful.’

‘Grateful? Why?’ Becky said. ‘You wanted to save yourself money. Good teachers of French are expensive. I’ve taught here for two years and I’ve worked well all that time. I hate this school – I always have – and I hate you too! I’ve been treated badly⁴ here because I’m poor. Find me a place⁴ as a governess for a nobleman’s family, and I’ll leave.’

Miss Pinkerton had been very angry, but she found Becky a place at Queen's Crawley, the home of Sir Pitt Crawley. Sir Pitt was a baronet¹ and a Member of Parliament. He had two young daughters and he wanted a governess for them.

Before she went to Queen's Crawley, Becky had been invited to stay with her dear friend, Amelia Sedley. And now the two young ladies were leaving Chiswick and going to Amelia's home in Russell Square.

Miss Pinkerton looked up and smiled when Miss Jemima brought Amelia into the drawing-room. The girl was smiling too, but her blue eyes had tears in them. She was happy to be going home, but sad to be leaving the school. Miss Pinkerton spoke kindly to her pretty pupil and Amelia said goodbye to the headmistress very politely. As Amelia and Miss Jemima left the drawing-room, Becky Sharp was coming down the stairs with her small bag.

'Miss Sharp, go and say goodbye to Miss Pinkerton,' Miss Jemima said.

'I suppose that I must,' Becky said. She knocked at the door of the drawing-room and walked in. '*Mademoiselle, je viens vous faire mes adieux,*' she said with a perfect French accent⁴.

Miss Pinkerton did not understand French.

'Miss Sharp, I wish you a good morning,' she said coldly, holding out her hand. But Becky did not shake hands with the old lady. She simply smiled, bowed¹, and left the room for the last time.

All the pupils were crying as they said goodbye to Amelia. Becky walked quietly out of the door and got into the Sedleys' coach. No one was crying for her.

At last Amelia was in the coach too and it was ready to move. At that moment, Miss Jemima ran out of the school house and passed two parcels through the window of the coach.

'Here are some sandwiches, my dear,' she said to Amelia. 'And Becky, here's your dictionary. You mustn't leave without that!'

The coach began to move along the street. Suddenly Becky's pale face appeared at the window and she threw the book into the garden of the Academy. Poor Miss Jemima was horrified.

Becky Sharp sat back in her seat and smiled at Amelia.

'That's what I think of the dictionary!' she said. 'Thank God, I'm leaving Pinkerton's. No one but you has spoken a kind word to me. Old Pinkerton treated me like a servant for two years. I hate her and I wish she was at the bottom of the River Thames! She doesn't know a word of French but is too proud to admit it'. That's why she was glad to get rid of^t me. I thank God for France and the French. *Vive la France! Vive Bonaparte²!*

Amelia was very shocked. 'Becky!' she cried. 'You shouldn't say such wicked things! And why do you want such terrible revenge⁴ on Miss Pinkerton?'

'Revenge may be wicked,' Becky said, 'but it's a natural feeling. I'm not an angel⁴, my dear.'

And, as this story will show, Miss Becky Sharp certainly was *not* an angel.

By the time that the coach reached the Sedleys' house in Russell Square, Amelia had forgotten the girls at the school and dried her tears. Amelia's parents and all the servants were waiting to welcome their 'Emmy' home again, and to greet her friend too.

Amelia showed Becky every room in the house.

In Amelia's bedroom on the second floor, Becky saw all of Amelia's pretty things. Amelia gave her friend a ring and a necklace, as well as a pretty white dress. And she showed Becky two beautiful Cashmere shawls⁴ that her brother, Joseph, had brought her from India.

'Oh, Amelia!' Becky exclaimed. 'You're very lucky! You have a kind brother and dear parents too! But I'm alone. I have no friends or family.'

'Becky, you'll never be alone now,' Amelia replied sweetly. 'I'll always be your friend, and your sister too.' And she put her arm round Becky's shoulders.

'You must love them all very much, especially your brother,' Becky said, wiping tears from her eyes.

'I don't think that my brother cares if I love him or not,' Amelia said, laughing. 'Jos is twelve years older than me and has been in India for ten years. I was only a child when he went away.'

'I suppose he must be very rich,' Becky said. 'I've heard that all Englishmen who live in India are rich.'

'I believe he has a large income,' Amelia answered.

'And what about your brother's wife?' Becky went on. 'Is your sister-in-law very pretty? How many children do they have?'

'Jos isn't married,' Amelia said. 'He's very shy⁴ – as you'll see.'

Becky pretended to be surprised, but she was thinking hard.

'If Mr Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why shouldn't I marry him?' she thought. 'I'm only here for two weeks, but I'll try to make him like me.'

And so Becky put on the white dress and the necklace that Amelia had given her.

When it was time for dinner, the two young ladies went downstairs together. Becky stopped outside the drawing-room door and looked at her friend. Her bright green eyes sparkled.

'Amelia, I'm frightened,' she said. 'My heart is beating very fast!'

Amelia laughed. 'There's nothing to be frightened about, Becky,' she said. 'My father won't harm you and neither will Jos. Come and meet them both.'

The Sedleys of Russell Square

A very fat young man was sitting by the fire, reading a newspaper. He was dressed in the very latest fashion. He wore a red striped waistcoat, a green coat with large buttons, and smart black boots. His white neckcloths almost reached his nose.

This dandy¹ was Mr Joseph Sedley, the Collector of Boggley Wollah¹, and he worked for the East India Company in Bengal.

Jos jumped up when he saw his sister and Becky. His face went very red and he looked down at his feet.

'Jos, this is my friend, Miss Rebecca Sharp,' Amelia said.

'Yes, yes, of course, Emmy. It's very cold weather for June,' Jos said quickly. He turned away from the two girls and put more coal on the fire.

'He's very handsome,' Becky whispered. 'But don't tell him I said this!'

'Thank you for the Cashmere shawls, Jos,' Amelia said. 'They're beautiful, aren't they, Becky?'

'Oh, yes. They're so soft ... and such delightful colours!' Becky exclaimed. 'What an interesting place India must be. I look forward to hearing more about it.'

'Well, really ... I – I must go now,' Jos said quickly, moving towards the door. He was very frightened of young women.

At that moment, Mr John Sedley and his wife came into the room.

'Where are you going, Jos?' Mr Sedley asked. 'Has Miss Sharp frightened you away?'

'No, no, of course not. But I must —'

'You must stay and have dinner with us,' Mr Sedley said.

'Yes, Joseph. We have all your favourite food,' Mrs Sedley told him. 'The cook has made a fine curry⁴.'

'Take Miss Sharp into the dining-room, Jos,' his father said. 'You're not afraid of her, I hope! She's much smaller than you!'

Mr Sedley laughed loudly. He enjoyed teasing⁴ his shy son.

So Joseph Sedley, with a very hot, red face, took Becky downstairs. She did not look at him and neither of them spoke.

The dinner was very good and Mr Sedley offered Becky some curry. She turned to Jos and smiled sweetly.

'What is it?' she asked. 'Is it an Indian dish? Then it must be good. Should I try it?'

'Yes, do try it, it's very good,' Jos answered.

Becky had never eaten curry before. The hot spices made her cough and her eyes filled with tears.

'Oh, it's – it's excellent!' she cried.

Jos Sedley was pleased. 'Here, try a chilli with it,' he said.

'Oh, yes, a chilli,' said Becky. 'They look so cool and green.'

Becky put a large chilli into her mouth and began to eat it, but to her surprise, it was even hotter than the curry.

'Water! Give me water, for Heaven's sake!' she cried.

Mr Sedley and his son could not stop laughing.

'Perhaps you won't like everything from India now, Miss Sharp!' the old gentleman said.

Becky did not reply, but she smiled sadly.

The ladies went into the drawing-room after dinner and Mr Sedley gave his son some more wine.

'Be careful, Jos,' he said. 'That little lady is interested in you.'

'That's nonsense, father,' Jos replied, but the vain young man was very pleased.

An hour later, Mr Sedley fell asleep.

'Is Miss Sharp interested in me?' Jos said to himself. 'She dropped her handkerchief twice at dinner. And she smiled and her green eyes sparkled when I picked it up for her! Is that her singing in the drawing-room now? Perhaps I'll go upstairs and ... no, she and Emmy will laugh at me. I'll go to the theatre instead.'

Upstairs in the drawing-room, Becky was playing the piano

and singing like a bird. Amelia was standing by the window and she saw her brother leaving the house.

'There goes Jos,' she said sadly.

'Miss Sharp has frightened him and he's running away,' Mrs Sedley said with a sigh. 'Oh, dear! That boy is so shy.'

Joseph Sedley stayed away from Russell Square for three days. During that time, Becky never spoke his name. On the day that Jos returned, Amelia found Becky in the drawing-room, weeping.

'My dear Becky, what's the matter?' Amelia asked her friend.

'I've been looking at some of my father's drawings,' Becky replied. 'When I thought about him, I realized that I'm now completely alone!'

Amelia told her mother and Jos about her dear friend's unhappiness.

'The poor child! I wish she could stay longer,' Mrs Sedley said.

At that moment, Becky came into the room, her eyes still full of tears. 'Thank you all for being so kind to a poor orphan,' she said quietly. Then she looked at Jos. '... all except *you*, of course.'

'Me, Miss Sharp? Good God! What have *I* done?' Jos cried.

'You made me eat that awful hot curry,' Becky replied. 'And then you gave me a chilli too. You were very cruel.'

'No, no, Miss Sharp! I would never hurt you!' Jos cried.

Becky looked up at him for a moment and then gently touched his hand. 'No,' she said softly. 'I know you wouldn't.'

At dinner, Amelia reminded her brother of a promise he had made to her the year before. 'Jos,' she said. 'You promised that you'd take me to Vauxhall Gardens¹. Why don't we go while Becky is here? She'd love to see them.'

'A visit to Vauxhall Gardens!' Becky said. 'That would be delightful!'

'Vauxhall Gardens is a place for young people to enjoy themselves,' said Mr Sedley. 'Mrs Sedley and I are too old to go.'

Jos can look after you, Emmy – he’s big enough.’

Mr Sedley laughed. ‘But he might not be able to look after two young ladies,’ he said. ‘Emmy, write a note to the Osbornes at number ninety-six, Russell Square. Ask George Osborne to go with you all to Vauxhall Gardens. He can look after *you*. Jos will be too busy looking after Miss Sharp to care about his sister.’

Amelia’s face went very red when she heard these words. Mrs Sedley smiled.

Mr John Osborne was a rich merchant. He had become wealthy because Mr Sedley had introduced him to important businessmen. Mr Osborne’s only son, George, was twenty-three years old. He was a lieutenant in an infantry regiment² of the army. George was Mr Sedley’s godson⁴ and the two families had been friendly for many years. Pretty Amelia Sedley was in love with the handsome and vain young soldier.

The young people decided which evening they were going to visit Vauxhall, and George Osborne was invited to the Sedleys’ house to dine with Jos, Amelia and Becky. Mr and Mrs Sedley were going out to dinner that night.

Then on the day of the visit to Vauxhall, there was a storm and heavy rain fell. So the trip was postponed⁴.

The two young couples were happy to stay in Russell Square and enjoy themselves at the Sedleys’ house. Jos Sedley was not shy when he was in George’s company. The two young men sat together after the meal, and talked and drank a good deal.

Later, when they were all sitting together in the drawing-room, Becky was very quiet. Amelia could see that her friend was crying.

‘I wish you could stay longer, dearest Becky,’ Amelia said

‘Why?’ her friend asked sadly. ‘It would just make me more unhappy to leave you all.’

Jos sighed and looked down at his boots.

‘Let’s have some music, Miss Sedley – Amelia,’ George said. They went off together to the piano, which was in a dark corner of the room.

Becky and Jos sat together at the drawing-room table. Becky was sewing a purse with green silk thread. She did not look up at Jos, but looked down at her work. Her pretty white fingers moved quickly.

‘We don’t have to ask about *their* secret,’ she said quietly. ‘Anyone can see that Lieutenant Osborne and Amelia love each other.’

‘George will be a captain soon,’ Jos said. ‘Then his marriage to Amelia will be arranged. George is an excellent fellow. I’ve known him for years.’

‘How happy they’ll be!’ Becky said, with a sigh. ‘But you must tell me more about India, Mr Sedley. There are tigers there, I believe. Have you ever hunted a tiger, Mr Sedley?’

‘Well, there was one time ...’ said the young man, and he began a long story. For almost the first time in his life, Jos was talking to a young lady and he was enjoying himself.

‘Who are you making that purse for, Miss Sharp?’ Jos said at last.

‘For anyone who wants a purse,’ said Becky, smiling sweetly.

‘Oh, Miss Sharp ...’ Jos began. But at that moment, Amelia stopped singing and Jos stopped speaking too.

Amelia asked Becky to sing and she happily agreed. Becky played the piano well and she had an excellent voice. The songs she sang that evening were very sad. They were about departures and unhappy journeys.

Jos Sedley was very fond of music and he was so pleased by Becky’s singing that he nearly told her about his feelings for her. But then a servant brought some cold food into the room, and the greedy young man moved to the table.

‘Oh, Miss Sharp, my dear Miss Sharp, do have some fruit jelly!’ he said politely. ‘You must need it after all that delightful singing.’

‘Well done, Jos, my boy,’ Mr Sedley said, as he came into the room with his wife. ‘I’ve never heard you talk like that to a young lady before.’

Jos hated being teased by his father and he left the house soon afterwards.

'I do believe that Miss Sharp is in love with me,' Jos said to himself, as he lay in his bed. 'Why don't I ask her to marry me? She's prettier and cleverer than any of the women I've met in India. She's not rich, but that doesn't matter. I've got plenty of money.'

George Osborne came to the Sedleys' house again the next morning. To everyone's surprise, Jos came too. He was carrying two huge bouquets – one for Amelia and one for Becky.

'What delightful flowers!' Becky said. She looked for a note hidden in her bouquet, but she was disappointed. There was no secret message of love from Jos Sedley.

'I've brought a sweet pineapple for our lunch,' Jos said to his sister. 'I hope you and Miss Sharp will like it.'

Amelia thanked him. 'I'll take it down to the kitchen,' she said. Then she left the room, taking George Osborne with her.

Jos and Becky were alone. The girl's pretty white fingers moved quickly as she sewed her green silk purse. Her bright green eyes looked down at her work and curls of her light-red hair covered her face.

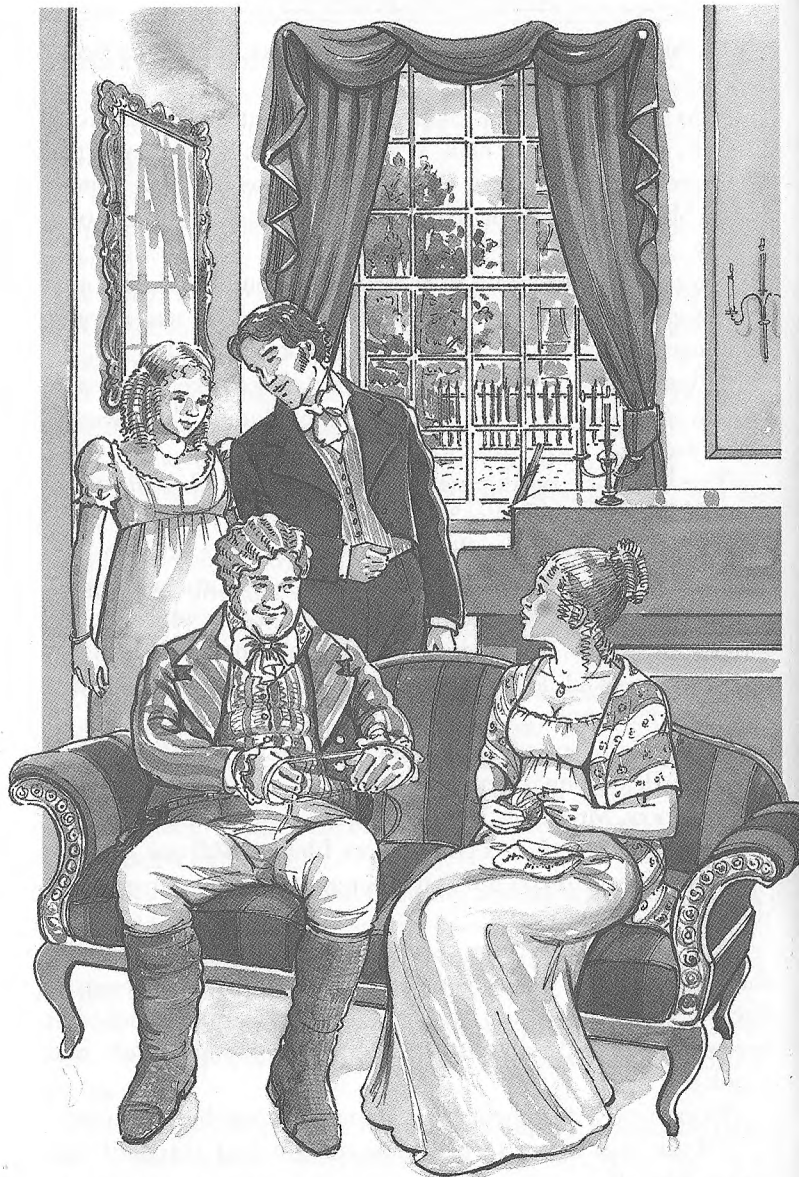
'That was a beautiful song you sang last night, Miss Sharp,' Jos said. 'Please sing it again for me.'

'Not now, Mr Sedley,' Becky replied. 'It would make me feel too sad. I must finish this purse before I leave. Will you help me with this thread? If you hold out your arms, with your hands like this ...'

And so when George and Amelia came into the room again, they saw Jos and Becky sitting together. Jos had the threads of Becky's green silk around his large, fat hands. Amelia looked at her friend but Becky did not speak. She simply smiled sadly and shook her head.

'Don't worry, dear, he'll ask you tonight,' Amelia whispered.

'I'll ask Miss Sharp to marry me tonight – at Vauxhall!' Jos said to himself.



Jos had the threads of Becky's green silk around his large, fat hands.

Vauxhall Gardens

It was the day of the young people's trip to Vauxhall. George Osborne came to dine at the Sedleys before the visit to the gardens.

'I hope you don't mind^t, Mrs Sedley,' George said, 'but I met William Dobbin yesterday, and I invited him to join our party this evening. He's a captain in my regiment and you know his parents, I believe.'

'I *do* know Captain Dobbin,' Mrs Sedley said, laughing. 'He used to come to Amelia's parties when you were all children. I remember that he broke my punch-bowl^l. He was a tall, very awkward boy.'

George laughed too. 'Dobbin is a good fellow and a very fine officer,' he said. 'But he hasn't changed very much. He's very tall and awkward, and not at all handsome.'

As George said this, he looked at his own face in the mirror and smiled. Suddenly, he saw Becky looking at him with her bright green eyes and his handsome face went red.

'Lieutenant Osborne, *you* know that you're handsome,' Becky thought. 'And *I* know that you're vain, too. I'll remember that! I may find it useful one day.'

That evening, Captain William Dobbin was the first guest to arrive at the Sedleys' house. Amelia, wearing a pretty white dress, greeted him sweetly. They had not seen each other for several years.

Dobbin was tall and thin, with large hands and feet, and a long, plain face. As he shook hands with Amelia, he dropped his hat and the pretty girl smiled at him. And at that same moment, Dobbin fell in love with Amelia Sedley, even though he knew that she loved his handsome friend.

When they were young boys, William Dobbin and George

Osborne had attended the same school. Dobbin, who was five years older than George, had looked after the young boy and they had been friends ever since. They were in the same infantry regiment, His Majesty's Regiment of Foot² and they both wanted to fight against the French.

During dinner, the conversation was all about war and glory². Becky's bright green eyes sparkled with excitement, but Amelia was pale and quiet. Jos told all his stories about tiger-hunts in India. He gave Becky food from every dish on the table, and ate and drank a great deal himself.

'Look at Jos,' George whispered to Dobbin. 'He's giving himself courage to propose⁴ to the little governess.'

Soon the young people were in the Sedleys' coach and on their way to Vauxhall Gardens. Everyone believed that Jos would propose to Becky sometime during the evening.

'Let Jos marry who he likes,' Mr Sedley had said to his wife. 'He's twenty-nine years old. He doesn't need our permission to marry. Miss Rebecca Sharp is clever and perhaps she will keep him in order⁴.'

The coach stopped outside Vauxhall Gardens. Jos, Becky, Amelia and George got out and walked away. Dobbin paid for all their tickets and followed behind with the ladies' shawls. Inside the gardens, crowds of people were walking slowly along the wide paths. They admired the flowers, the lights, and the trees. They watched the singers and dancers and listened to music. There was noise, happy voices and laughter everywhere.

The young people promised to stay together all the evening, but of course, they separated ten minutes afterwards. Dobbin sat alone as he watched the two couples walk away. George and Amelia went towards the centre of the park. Jos lead Becky down a dark little path.

'He's sure to propose to me now,' Becky thought.

The fat young man told her all of his Indian stories for the second or third time and Becky listened to every word.

'What an exciting life you've had, Mr Sedley!' she

exclaimed. 'I should like to see India very much!'

'Would you, Miss Sharp?' Jos said. He held Becky's little white hand very tightly in his own large, fat hand. 'Then I —'

But at that moment, a bell rang. A display of fireworks was going to begin and everybody hurried towards the centre of the gardens. Soon the sky was filled with red, yellow and green lights and the ladies were all screaming with excitement as the fireworks exploded.

Later that evening, the two couples met again and went into the supper-box that Captain Dobbin had ordered for them. There was only space for four people at the table, so Dobbin walked away alone.

Waiters brought cold food – chicken and ham and salad – and cool white wine to drink. Jos was very happy. He called the waiters back to the table and ordered champagne. As usual, Jos ate and drank more than anyone. But he also took good care of Becky, giving her more food than she could eat. Then, although he had already drunk far too much, Jos did something that was to change the lives of everyone in the box that night.

'Waiter!' he called, 'bring me a bowl of Vauxhall punch!'

Now Vauxhall punch was very strong. Osborne did not like it and the young ladies did not drink it. So Jos drank it all. The greedy young man began to talk and laugh so loudly that there was soon a crowd of people standing outside the box, staring at him. When Jos began to sing, in a high, drunken voice, people cheered.

'Well done, Fatty!' someone shouted. 'Have another drink!'

Everyone outside the box laughed and cheered again as Jos drank another glass of the strong drink.

'Sing us another song!' someone else called out.

George Osborne was very angry. 'For Heaven's sake, Jos, you're making a fool of yourself,' he said. 'Ladies, we must go,' he whispered to the young women. 'Where's Dobbin? I need his help!'

The two young women stood up.

But Jos, who was no longer shy, held Becky tightly round her waist.

‘Stop! Don’t leave me, my dearest, my diddle-diddle-darling!’ he cried, waving his glass in the air.

The crowd outside the box laughed and cheered even louder. Jos smiled at them and offered to buy them some punch. He called Becky ‘his darling’ again and again.

At that moment, Dobbin appeared. He pushed the crowd of people away and stepped into the box.

‘Where have you been?’ George said. ‘Hold Jos and keep him here while I get the ladies into the coach. Give me Emmy’s shawl.’

Jos tried to stop George leaving the box, but Dobbin pushed the fat young man back onto his chair. Suddenly Jos held Dobbin’s hand and began to weep.

‘I love that w-wonderful girl!’ he cried. ‘I’ll m-marry her tomorrow, I swear⁴ that I will. No, I’ll m-marry her now! Help m-me to find a clergyman D-Dobbin, and I’ll m-marry her immediately.’

‘We’ll go and find a clergyman together,’ Dobbin said. ‘Come this way, Jos.’

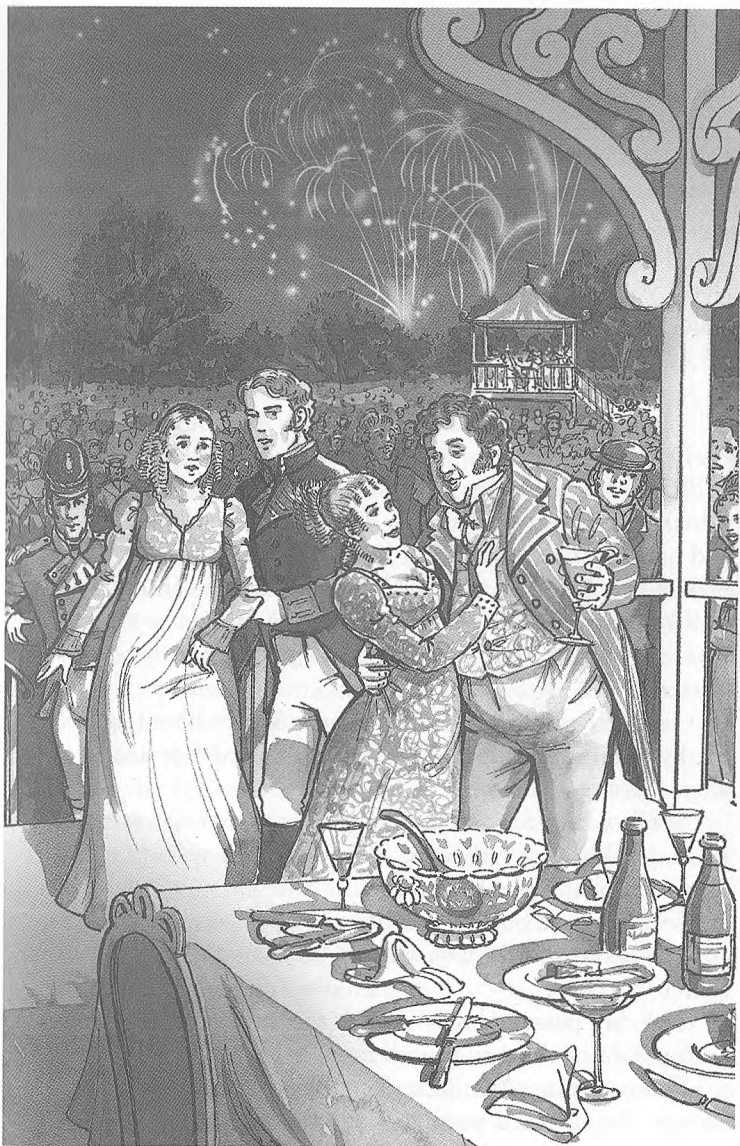
At last, Dobbin was able to get Jos back to the gate and out of the gardens. Then he called a cab to take Jos back to his rooms and left him there. Meanwhile, George had taken the ladies home to Russell Square. Amelia kissed Becky goodnight and they went to their rooms.

‘Jos *must* propose to me tomorrow,’ Becky thought. ‘He called me his darling four times.’

Amelia also thought that Jos would propose to Becky.

But neither of them knew the awful effect⁴ that a bowl of Vauxhall punch could have on a foolish young man. Jos Sedley woke up the next morning with a terrible headache. When Dobbin and George went to see him, they found him sitting on his sofa with his hands on his head. He looked very ill.

Dobbin and George began to tease Jos.



'Don't leave me, my dearest, my diddle-diddle-darling!' he cried.

'How're you, Sedley?' Dobbin asked, looking down at the fat young man. 'Do you remember how many people you fought last night? You can fight as well as a soldier when you have to!'

'Fight?' Jos repeated. 'Did I fight? I fight like a tiger when I'm angry, you know.'

George laughed. 'You fight?' he repeated. 'You were too drunk to stand up. But you sang a song and called Amelia's little friend your diddle-diddle-darling. Don't you remember that? Don't you remember the crowd laughing? You made a fool of yourself, Jos. And you nearly made fools of us too!'

Jos closed his eyes. 'Please leave me alone,' he said. 'I'm very ill. I've a terrible headache.'

'George, you were very unkind to Sedley,' Dobbin said as they left Jos's house.

'Why shouldn't I be unkind to him?' George asked. 'Sedley thinks he's important because he rides on an elephant in India and has plenty of money. But he's no better than us. And why is Sedley interested in that little governess? He should marry a well-bred¹ lady. I don't want a penniless orphan to become my sister-in-law. It's time that Miss Sharp left Russell Square and started work.'

George went to see Amelia and told her about Jos. When Becky came into the room, George teased her and laughed about Jos's behaviour.

'Well, you can make as many jokes about me as you like,' Becky said with a sad smile. 'I'm poor, I have no family, and there's no one to speak for me.'

Becky smiled, but she had begun to hate George Osborne.

'What has he said to Jos about me?' she thought. 'And why hasn't Jos come?'

The day passed slowly. Becky waited and waited, but Jos Sedley did not come to Russell Square. He felt too ill.

That evening, Amelia sent her brother a letter, asking how he was. She received a reply the next day.

Dear Amelia,

I couldn't write yesterday – I was too ill. I'm leaving London today and going to Cheltenham. Please give my apologies to your friend, Miss Sharp. I behaved very badly at Vauxhall and I'd like her to forget every word I said.

When I leave Cheltenham, I'll be going to Scotland for a few months. I'm very unwell.

Truly yours,
Joseph Sedley

All of Becky's hopes were gone. Jos would not propose to her now. Amelia gave Jos's letter to her friend and went upstairs.

When she finished reading, Becky's face was very pale, but she did not cry. She just went upstairs to pack her case. There was no reason to stay in Russell Square now and she wanted to leave immediately.

The servants were pleased that Becky was leaving.

'She smiles and gives us orders,' the cook said. 'But Miss Sharp's not a well-bred lady, she's a governess. And she's very sly'. I've seen her reading Mrs Sedley's letters. And when Miss Amelia is out, Miss Sharp often goes to Miss Amelia's room to look at her jewellery and put on Miss Amelia's new dresses.'

Kind-hearted Amelia *was* very upset. She gave Becky many little presents before she left. And she asked her father to give Becky some money and told George to buy her a present too.

'Look, Becky, this bonnet is from George,' Amelia said, holding up a green hat with white ribbons on it. 'Isn't it pretty?'

'Yes, it is,' Becky replied. But she knew that it was George Osborne who had stopped Jos marrying her, and she would never forgive the young lieutenant.

Amelia and Becky wept as they said their sad goodbyes. A few minutes later, Becky was sitting in the coach that was taking her to Queen's Crawley. She was going to begin her new life as governess to the daughters of Sir Pitt Crawley.

News From Queen's Crawley

To Miss Amelia Sedley, from Miss Rebecca Sharp
Queen's Crawley, Hampshire.

July 1813

My dearest, sweetest Amelia,

I hope you've not forgotten your little friend, Becky, who certainly hasn't forgotten you. I've a great deal to tell you about my new home.

Queen's Crawley is a fine, big house, but many of the rooms are shut up and the furniture is covered by sheets. I'm afraid that the house is also dark and dirty.

Sir Pitt is a baronet, but I never thought that a nobleman would look and behave like him! He wears old-fashioned clothes and they're rather dirty too. He is short, with a red face and a bald head and little grey eyes. Sir Pitt speaks roughly, with a strong Hampshire accent. He smokes an awful, dirty pipe all the time. And, I'm sorry to say, he swears a great deal. However, he seems to like your little friend, Becky. I'm treated as one of the family, not as a poor governess.

Sir Pitt's first wife died about twelve years ago. His second wife, Lady Rose, is the mother of my little pupils, Rose and Violet. But Sir Pitt's wife was not always a lady. (Her father was a shop-keeper!) But when she became Lady Crawley it didn't make her happy. She always looks very miserable and her clothes are very old-fashioned.

As well as teaching the little girls, I help Sir Pitt with his accounts. I check all the bills that he has to pay. The old man is very mean, so any money I can save him makes me his good friend.

Sir Pitt's brother is the Reverend Bute Crawley. He is a clergyman and lives with his wife and family in the rectory near the church.

Sir Pitt has two sons. Pitt Crawley, the elder son, lives with his

father at Queen's Crawley. He's not very interesting. He reads us sermons and other religious books every night!

Rawdon Crawley, the younger son, is a captain in the Life Guards². Captain Crawley lives in London. I've heard that he's a very wicked young man who is always gambling and fighting duels¹. I wonder when I'll meet him!

I can't write more now, my dear friend. My candle must be put out by eleven o'clock – that is an order from Sir Pitt.

I send my love to your dear parents. Is your poor brother better now? He must keep away from that terrible Vauxhall punch!

From your loving friend,

Becky

At first, Becky enjoyed her life at Queen's Crawley. She liked unusual people and interesting places. Becky was quick and clever and she had soon found out a great deal about Sir Pitt, his family, and his money problems.

The old baronet had a sister, Miss Matilda Crawley. She was very rich, so Sir Pitt always welcomed her at Queen's Crawley.

A few months after Becky arrived in Hampshire, Miss Crawley decided to visit her brother. The old lady came with a lot of luggage and a little dog.

By this time, Becky had changed. She was nothing like the schoolgirl who had stayed with her friend in Russell Square. Becky had watched how noblemen and noblewomen behaved. She had quickly learnt how people lived in Vanity Fair. She now saw that money and a person's place in society were more important than honesty and kindness.

'Amelia's dowry¹ of ten thousand pounds, her blue eyes and her pretty pink face will bring her a rich husband,' Becky thought. 'But I'm alone in the world and must look after myself. I'm much cleverer than her and I've a better figure. I must use my wits⁴ to find a husband and a house of my own. One day, I'll have a higher place in society than Amelia, and I'll have done it all myself!'

To Miss Amelia Sedley, from Miss Rebecca Sharp
Queen's Crawley, Hampshire

December 1813

My sweetest Amelia,

Life is usually very dull here for your little Becky. I teach all day, I prepare Sir Pitt's accounts after tea, and then I listen to Mr Pitt Crawley's sermons after dinner.

But now, everything has changed! Miss Matilda Crawley has arrived from London, with her fat dog and her thin companion, Miss Briggs. You won't believe this, but I have become the great lady's favourite companion! This doesn't please Mrs Bute Crawley, the Reverend Bute Crawley's wife. She wants some of the old lady's money for her husband. Mrs 'Bute' never smiles and she's always looking at me with her unkind, sharp black eyes. If she can find out anything bad about poor little Becky, I'm sure that she will.

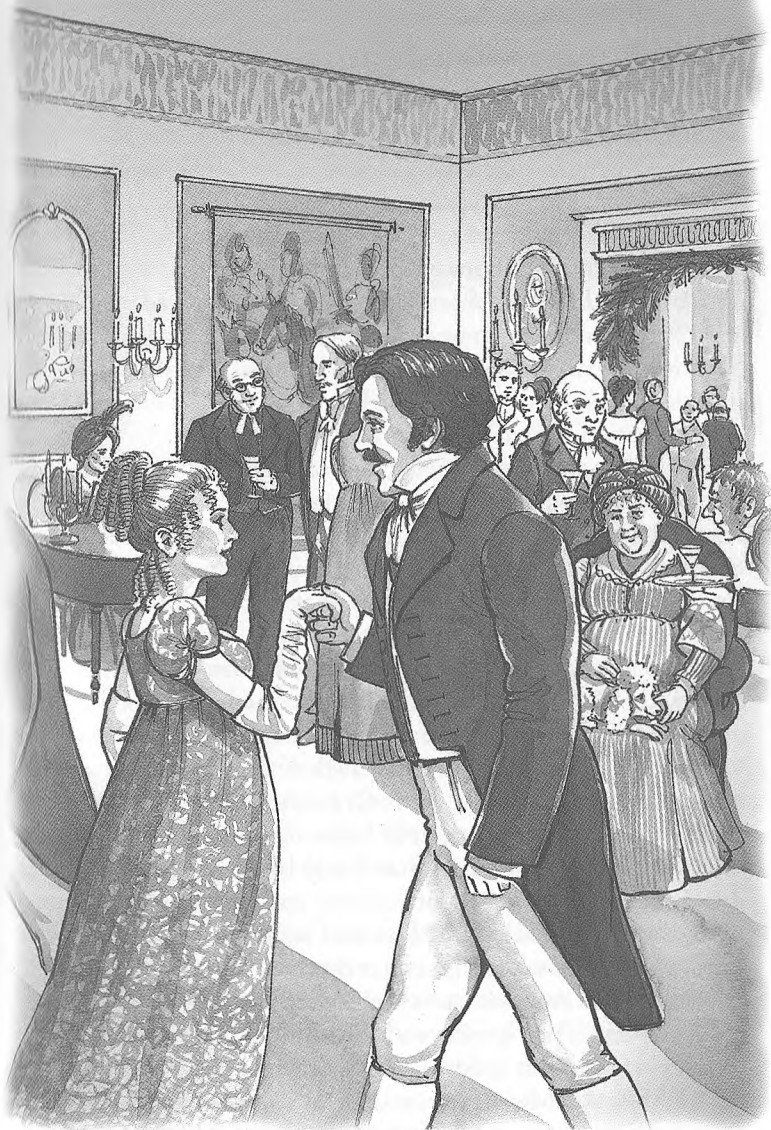
And we have another visitor too – the wicked Captain Rawdon Crawley! He's a fine young dandy, six feet tall, with a deep voice, a loud laugh and a splendid black moustache.

Miss Crawley doesn't like Mr Pitt Crawley. So when she dies, her favourite nephew, Rawdon, will inherit half of her money. Everyone is a little afraid of Miss Crawley, even Captain Crawley. He knows that he will inherit this money, and he's always very kind to her. He seems to like my company too.

Last night we had a little ball here and Captain Crawley danced with me while Mrs Bute played the piano. So, my dearest Amelia, your little friend is quite a success here in the country!

Your loving friend,
Becky

But there was a great deal more happening at Queen's Crawley than Becky had told Amelia in her letter. We have already learned that our little friend Miss Sharp did not always tell the complete truth.



'...my dearest Amelia, your little friend is quite a success here in the country!'

Miss Crawley made sure that Becky always dined with the family and always sat next to her too. Becky spoke to the old lady in perfect French and always made her laugh.

'You've more wit, beauty and intelligence than anyone else who dines here,' Matilda Crawley said. 'I don't care if you're a well-bred lady or not. Good Heavens! I wish some great lord would take you away and marry you, my dear.'

'I like runaway marriages,' the old lady went on. 'I'd like my wicked Rawdon to run away with someone and marry them.'

'A rich someone or a poor someone?' Becky asked.

'Oh, a rich someone of course!' Miss Crawley replied. 'Rawdon has no money – except the money I give him. Then he gambles, loses it, and gets into debt³.'

'Is Captain Crawley clever?' Becky asked.

'Clever?' said Miss Crawley, smiling. 'No, my dear, of course not. All Rawdon cares about are his horses and gambling. He has fought three duels and killed a man in one of them. But everyone in his regiment loves him. Rawdon may be stupid, but he isn't dull. And he is delightfully wicked.'

Mrs Bute Crawley's sharp black eyes soon saw something that Miss Crawley had not seen. Captain Crawley was falling in love with Miss Becky Sharp! Mrs Bute had found out a little about Becky's family and she did not think that a poor governess would be a suitable wife for Rawdon Crawley. However, if Rawdon married Becky, Miss Crawley might disinherit her nephew. Then most of the old lady's money might go to Bute Crawley. Mrs Bute thought that would be a very good idea. She decided to say nothing about Rawdon and Becky.

Meanwhile, Becky and Rawdon walked in the gardens at Queen's Crawley every night after dinner.

'How beautiful those stars are!' Becky said one night, looking up at the sky. 'They sparkle and shine so brightly!'

Her bright green eyes shone as brightly as the stars.

'So they do, Miss Sharp, so they do,' said Captain Crawley. 'You don't mind the smell of my cigar, do you, Miss Sharp?'

‘I enjoy the smell of a cigar more than anything,’ Becky answered. ‘Perhaps I can smoke it a little, too?’

Rebecca put the cigar to her lips, gave a little scream, and then returned the cigar to the captain.

Rawdon laughed loudly. ‘My God, now it’s the best cigar I ever smoked in my life!’ he said.

Sir Pitt saw all this from the drawing-room window and swore. He was angry and jealous because his younger son was flirting with the governess. But there was nothing that he could do. If he sent Rawdon away, Miss Crawley would be furious and leave too. Becky Sharp had captured the hearts⁴ of both the slow-witted soldier and his father. And although she was young, Becky had more wits than both of them.

5

Amelia in Love

And what about Amelia Sedley – what was happening to her? Amelia was meeting all the best people in London society, but she was not completely happy.

The pretty, kind girl had been very popular with the pupils at Miss Pinkerton’s Academy for Young Ladies. But now that young men at balls and parties were interested in Amelia, the young women were jealous of her.

George Osborne had two pretty sisters – Jane and Maria. They did not like Amelia. Jane and Maria Osborne thought that their handsome brother spent too much time at the Sedleys’ house and they wanted George to marry the daughter of a lord.

William Dobbin’s sisters, who were rather plain, were both jealous of Amelia. Ann and Jane Dobbin teased their brother about his feelings for Amelia, and they were unkind to *her* because she was pretty and they were not.

William, himself, was not happy with George's treatment of Amelia. 'You're not treating poor Emmy well, George,' he said to his friend one day. 'She sits at home, waiting for you to call, and you don't visit her. You spend too much time gambling or drinking with your friends in the regiment.'

'And my friends are beginning to laugh at me, because Emmy writes so often!' George replied. 'I know that she adores me, but I must spend time with my own friends. I wish that our regiment was fighting in Europe.'

'I don't think Emmy would agree with you,' Dobbin said. 'She's happy that you are safe in England.'

It was Amelia who was soon to have her wish, not George Osborne. Napoleon Bonaparte's armies fought battles all over Europe. But by the spring of 1814, Napoleon's soldiers were tired, weak and ill. In April, Napoleon was defeated. He was forced to abdicate and then exiled to the island of Elba.

'Oh, my dear, dear George!' Amelia cried. 'Peace has come at last and your regiment will never have to fight again! We can look forward to long years of perfect happiness together!' And she put her arms around George and began to cry with joy.

When he was with his regimental friends, George never spoke Amelia's name. He did not want the other officers to know about his relationship with Amelia. It was Captain Dobbin who told George's secret.

One day, two young officers were trying to guess who sent so many letters to Lieutenant Osborne.

'She must be a duchess!' one young man said. 'George would only love a well-bred, rich young lady!'

'No,' his friend answered. 'Perhaps Osborne keeps the lady's name a secret because she's a milliner¹ ... or an opera-dancer!'

'Miss Sedley is a sweet, charming young lady and I've known her for many years,' Dobbin said angrily. 'The engagement between Osborne and Miss Sedley has been agreed between their two families for a long time.'

When George heard about this conversation, he was angry.

'Who asked you to talk about my private life to everyone in the regiment?' he shouted at Dobbin. 'You never had my permission to tell anyone that I was engaged!'

'Aren't you engaged to Miss Sedley?' Dobbin cried. 'You can't be ashamed of her, George. She's the best girl in the world!'

'You're right, Dobbin. She's a wonderful girl and I know she's fond of me,' George replied more calmly. 'And I'm fond of her too. I'll go and see her this afternoon and I'll take her a present. Can you lend me some money, my friend?'

On his way to Russell Square, George saw a shirt-pin in the window of a jeweller's shop. After he had bought the jewel for himself, there was no money left to buy a present for Amelia.

But Amelia did not think about gifts. She only wanted to see her handsome George. When he came into the room, the kind-hearted girl ran into his arms immediately.

'I'll take you to see my sisters,' George said. 'You can dine with us this evening. I must do some business now, but I'll see you at dinner.'

Mr John Osborne was not happy that evening and he frowned when he saw Amelia. The old man was even more angry when his son arrived half-an-hour late for dinner. But George's cheerful conversation improved his father's temper a little. When the ladies went upstairs to the drawing-room, Mr Osborne ordered a servant to bring some bottles of the best wine. Soon, the old man was in a good temper and smiling happily. But he had questions to ask his son about his future.

'What about that young lady upstairs, my boy?' Mr Osborne said. 'What is the relationship between you and Miss Sedley?'

George laughed. 'You can see how she feels about me!' he said. 'And, of course, I'm fond of her. That's what you want me to say, isn't it, sir? Since we were children, our families have believed we would marry. And I'm happy with this arrangement!'

Mr Osborne frowned angrily. 'Miss Amelia Sedley is only a stockbroker's daughter,' he said. 'You belong in the best society

now, George, and my money keeps you there. Call at my office tomorrow and there'll be more money for you, if you need it.'

George was pleased. 'I always need money,' he replied. 'Life in the regiment is expensive. Mr Sedley has plenty of money, you know. I'll marry his little Emmy very soon.'

The old man shook his head. 'That's the problem,' he said. 'When Old Sedley helped me to start my business, he was rich. But recently he's been investing in the French markets³. If war comes to Europe again, Sedley may lose everything. If he can't give his daughter her dowry of ten thousand pounds, then you can't marry her. That's my decision. Now go and join the ladies. I'm going to read my newspaper.'

George said nothing about this conversation to Amelia. He did not want to spoil their evening together. He was sure that their future would be happy. Amelia loved him, tomorrow he would have money in his pocket, and Napoleon was a prisoner on Elba.

6

Miss Crawley at Home

Miss Matilda Crawley stayed at Queen's Crawley for several months. Everyone flattered⁴ her and made sure she had everything she wanted. The old lady was soon tired of them all, except Miss Becky Sharp, who was a much more interesting companion. She was cheerful and told amusing stories, so Miss Crawley spent most of the day with her young friend.

Then one evening, there was a dish of lobster⁴ for dinner. Miss Crawley ate far too much and became extremely ill. Little Becky became her nurse, as well as her companion. When Miss Crawley was well enough to travel back to London, Becky went with her to the big house in Park Lane.

Captain Crawley rode to the house every day on his fine black horse. But no one was sure if he was coming to call on his aunt, or Miss Sharp.

Becky's life was not easy in Park Lane. Miss Crawley, who was very afraid of dying, could not sleep and Becky sat with her each night.

Poor Miss Arabella Briggs, Miss Crawley's companion, was very upset.

'My dearest friend is so ill, but she refuses to see me!' Miss Briggs cried one evening, at dinner. 'Oh why does dear Matilda refuse to see me? I've looked after her for many years!'

'Your dear Matilda says I'm a better nurse than you,' Becky replied. 'I don't enjoy sitting with her all night. When Miss Crawley is better, I'll leave. You mustn't be jealous of me,' she said with a sly smile. 'I'm only a poor person who needs friends. Promise that *you'll* be my friend, dear Miss Briggs!'

After a time, Miss Crawley was able to leave her bed and go downstairs. Soon she was going out for short rides in her carriage – with Miss Sharp, of course. One of the places they visited was Russell Square, where Becky called on Amelia Sedley.

'Becky, your pretty friend is charming,' Miss Crawley said at dinner that evening. 'I'll invite her to Park Lane. Rawdon, you must meet Miss Sedley.'

'Amelia's a sweet girl,' Becky said. 'She's engaged to a soldier – Lieutenant George Osborne of His Majesty's Foot Guards. Perhaps you know him, Captain Crawley? His friend is Captain Dobbin, I believe.'

'Oh, they're in an infantry regiment,' Rawdon said. He was in the Life Guards, a cavalry regiment. Cavalrymen thought that they were better than infantrymen. 'I know Dobbin, and Osborne too,' Rawdon went on. 'I played cards against young Osborne last night. I won two hundred pounds from him. I could have won more, but Captain Dobbin made him stop playing.'

'You're very wicked, Rawdon,' Miss Crawley said with a smile.

'Osborne can afford to lose the money,' Rawdon replied. 'His father's a rich merchant here in London. Osborne is a gambler and he's always losing money. Let's invite them both here and I'll play cards with the young fool again.'

'You will *not* gamble in my house, you wicked boy!' Miss Crawley said. 'But we'll invite pretty Miss Sedley and her George to dinner. I'll enjoy that.'

That evening, Captain Crawley watched jealously as the handsome young lieutenant walked up to Becky and spoke to her.

'Good evening, Miss Sharp,' George said, holding out his hand. 'Do you like your new place in the country?'

Becky gave a little nod of her head and held out just one finger of her right hand.

'My *place*?' she said coldly. 'How kind of you to remind me of it. My *place* is quite good and I'm *paid* quite well too. Spending time with a *gentleman's* family has been good for me. But how are your sisters and how is the *great* Mr Jos Sedley? Is he married yet?'

'You seemed to like Jos last year,' said George.

Becky smiled. 'I'm a penniless orphan and I wanted to marry well,' she replied. 'You can understand that, I'm sure, lieutenant. I nearly became your sister-in-law. I'm still a poor governess, of course, but I live in a *real* gentleman's house now.'

Captain Crawley, who had been listening to this conversation, smiled.

When the gentlemen were alone, George warned Rawdon against Miss Sharp. 'Be careful, Crawley,' he said. 'Miss Sharp is a sly little thing and a flirt.'

'Well, thank you for your warning, Osborne,' Rawdon said. He was very amused.

The next day Rawdon told Becky everything that George had said and her thoughts about George did not change. But when George told Amelia what he had said, she was horrified. She understood the relationship between Becky and Captain

Crawley because Amelia was in love with a soldier herself. She was delighted that her friend had fallen in love too.

Becky was still at Park Lane when sad news came from Queen's Crawley. Sir Pitt's wife, Lady Crawley, was dead.

'I hope my brother won't marry again,' Miss Crawley said.

'My brother will be angry if father *does* marry again!' Rawdon said with a smile.

Becky said nothing, but she had looked very upset when she heard the news.

The next day, as she was looking out of a window, Becky suddenly cried out to Miss Crawley, 'Here's Sir Pitt, ma'am!'

'I'm too ill to see my brother now,' Miss Crawley said quickly. 'Please go and tell him.'

Becky hurried downstairs. 'Your sister is too ill to see you, sir,' she said.

'Good. I want to see *you*, Miss Becky,' Sir Pitt replied. 'I have to speak to you. I want you to come back to Queen's Crawley. You've been away too long. My sister doesn't need you, but I do. I'm going back to Hampshire after Lady Pitt's funeral⁴. Will you come back with me? Yes or no?'

'What will be my place, sir?' Becky asked. 'I couldn't stay in your house as a governess now.'

'Then come as Lady Crawley!' the old man cried. 'Marry me! Come back to Queen's Crawley as my wife!'

'Oh, Sir Pitt!' Becky exclaimed.

'You'll be a better Lady Crawley than anyone else I know,' Sir Pitt said. 'I'm an old man, but I'll make you happy. You can have money and do as you wish! Just say yes, Becky!'

The old man got down on his knees and smiled up at the girl. Becky was crying now, but not because she was happy.

'Oh, Sir Pitt, I *can't* marry you,' she said. 'Oh, sir, I'm – I'm married already!'

'Married? Who would marry you?' the old man shouted, as he stood up again. 'Who's your husband? When were you married?'

Why aren't you with him now?"

'Let me come back with you to Queen's Crawley, sir. That dear house is my home,' Becky cried. 'Let me help you and your dear children, as I did before.'

'Your husband has left you, has he?' Sir Pitt said with a sly smile. 'Don't worry, Becky. I'll take care of you.'

When she heard those words, Becky went down on her knees. Curls of her light-red hair fell over her face and she held out her little white hands. Tears fell from her eyes.

'Oh, sir!' she wept. 'Thank you very much. I can't be your wife, sir. But let me ... let me be like a daughter to you!'

Sir Pitt looked at the governess for a moment and then began to laugh. He was still laughing when the door opened and Miss Crawley came in, followed by Miss Briggs.

'Briggs told me that she saw you on your knees, brother,' the old lady said. 'You were wrong, Briggs. The lady's on her knees. What's happening here?'

'Sir Pitt asked me to be his wife – to become Lady Crawley,' Becky said, 'but I refused.'

Miss Crawley looked at her brother, who was smiling happily.

'You don't look upset,' she said.

'I'm not,' Sir Pitt replied. 'What a sly little thing Miss Becky is! Who would have believed it?'

'Believed *what*, Sir Pitt?' Miss Crawley shouted.

'Oh, please, please, you've both been so kind to me,' Becky said, her green eyes still full of tears. 'You've both helped me and I'm truly grateful. Please be friends with each other and with your little Becky too!'

'Well, you're a good girl and I *am* your friend,' Sir Pitt said to Becky. Then he left the house without saying another word.

Becky, holding her handkerchief, ran upstairs to her room.

Miss Crawley knew nothing about Becky's secret. She came to speak to Becky later. 'Someone has captured your heart,' the old lady said. 'Who is it, my dear? Is it Miss Sedley's brother? I'll invite him here, if you wish.'

'Don't ask me now, ma'am,' Becky replied. 'You'll know soon. But please say that you're my friend, my dear Miss Crawley. Promise to love me always!'

'Of course I will, my dear,' Miss Crawley said.

That night, when Becky went to her room, she wrote a letter which ended like this:

... she'll be angry when she learns our secret, you wicked man. But I'm sure she'll forgive you. We shall all be happy together and when she dies, you'll inherit all her money.

Your loving friend and wife,

R

7

A Marriage and Money

When Lady Rose Crawley died, Mrs Bute Crawley decided to stay in Park Lane with Miss Crawley. The Bute Crawleys had four children and Mrs Bute wanted to make sure that they would inherit some, or all, of Sir Pitt's and Miss Crawley's money. Mrs Bute's bright black eyes had seen how Sir Pitt needed Becky. The clever young woman had charmed the old man. And now she was staying with Miss Crawley and charming her. Something had to be done!

Mrs Bute was at Park Lane on the afternoon when Miss Briggs found a letter on her bed. The letter had been written by Becky. This is how it ended:

... Miss Crawley's Rawdon is my Rawdon now. I've followed him to the simple house where we will live. Oh, my dear friend, please tell Miss Crawley everything and beg her to forgive her loving nephew and his wife,

Rawdon and Rebecca Crawley

Miss Briggs was horrified. She was too frightened to take the letter to Miss Crawley, but she showed it to Mrs Bute at once.

'Well, Miss Briggs,' Mrs Bute said. 'I'm not surprised that this has happened. Rawdon Crawley is a fool, as well as a wicked gambler. And that little governess has always been very sly. She wanted a rich husband, so she flirted with Rawdon and started an affair with him. Miss Crawley needs good people to look after her now. Don't worry, Miss Briggs. I'll tell her the news myself.'

When Miss Crawley came into the drawing-room at midday, the two ladies were waiting for her.

'Where's Becky Sharp?' Miss Crawley asked. 'Why has she gone out without telling me? I want to speak to her as soon as she comes back.'

'Becky has gone —' Miss Briggs began.

'And she isn't coming back,' Mrs Bute said.

'Not coming back? What do you mean? Has she gone to Queen's Crawley with my brother?'

'Miss Sharp isn't with Sir Pitt,' said Mrs Bute. 'She's with your — She's with your nephew, Rawdon. She's married to him!'

'Rawdon?! *Becky Sharp* is married my *Rawdon*? You must've told her to do this!' the old lady screamed at Mrs Bute. She was furious. 'You don't want him to have my money! You want it yourself! And you, Briggs! You must've known about their affair! Get out of my house at once, both of you!'

'I didn't want a poor artist's daughter to marry a Crawley,' Mrs Bute said.

'Her mother was a French noblewoman. Becky told me so herself!' Miss Crawley replied.

'Her mother was an *opera-dancer*,' Mrs Bute said with an unpleasant smile.

Miss Crawley screamed in anger, then fell to the floor in a faint. The old lady was taken to her bed and a doctor was sent for.

Then Sir Pitt arrived. 'Where's Becky?' he asked. 'I'm taking her back to Queen's Crawley.'

'She's married, Sir Pitt,' Miss Briggs whispered.

'I know she is,' Sir Pitt shouted. 'I don't care. Tell her to hurry up.'

'But she's not here. She's with her husband. She's married your son, Rawdon.'

When Sir Pitt heard the news, he swore so terribly that the two ladies had to leave the room. They heard the furious old man bang the door behind him as he left the house.

About a month later, there was a sale at a house in Russell Square. Everything in the house was being sold by auction³. The furniture, wine and silverware had already been bought when the auctioneer held up a painting.

'Portrait of a large gentleman on an elephant!' he cried. 'Who will pay twenty guineas? Fifteen guineas? Five?'

'Five shillings!' called a tall army officer, who was standing beside a young lady with light-red hair and green eyes. Everyone laughed and the officer bought the picture. The same officer also tried to buy a little piano, but this time he was unsuccessful.

'Oh, look,' the lady said, pointing to a tall, thin man who was standing on the other side of the room. 'That's Captain Dobbin! He's bought Amelia's piano, Rawdon. What can he want with a piano? He can't play.'

'Dobbin's a strange fellow, Becky. I never could understand him,' her husband said. 'Well, it doesn't matter. We don't need another piano. Let's take the painting and go.'

Captain and Mrs Crawley were now living in a little house that Rawdon had rented³. He had filled the house with pretty things for his wife. Everything had been bought on credit³. Miss Crawley was still refusing to see her nephew, but he had not given up hope. One day she would forgive him, he was sure.

Rawdon and Becky had gone to Russell Square to visit Amelia. They were very surprised to learn that the Sedleys had left the house and now everything in it was for sale. Mr Sedley had bought a great deal of stock on the French stock market.

Then Napoleon returned from Elba and the stockbroker lost all his money. All his things were being auctioned.

'Mr Sedley was a kind old man,' Becky said, as they went home. 'I feel sorry for him.'

'I suppose Osborne won't be marrying your friend Amelia now,' Rawdon said. 'Will she be very upset?'

'Yes, but she'll forget about George Osborne one day,' Becky replied.

But Amelia Sedley was extremely unhappy. She had a gentle heart and that heart was broken. George's father wrote her a cruel letter, saying that the friendship between the two families was finished. Mr Sedley told his daughter to send back all of George Osborne's gifts and letters.

Amelia sent back the gifts, but she kept the letters. She read them over and over again in her room in the little house in Fulham Road. The only thing that she could enjoy was her piano. It had been sent to her after the auction in Russell Square. There was no letter with the piano, but Amelia knew that George Osborne had bought it for her.

8

A Marriage and a Honeymoon

Napoleon had reached Paris and the British army was called to war. The British were going to help their allies in Europe.

William Dobbin found George Osborne in his room at the army barracks² at Chatham. He was looking at all the things that Amelia had returned: a ring, a little silver knife and a gold locket on a gold chain.

'My engagement to Amelia Sedley is ended, William,' George said. 'She has sent me a letter. Read it, if you wish.'

My father has told me to return these presents which you gave me in happier days. I'm writing to you for the last time and I know you share my unhappiness. Goodbye. Goodbye. I'll often play the piano – your piano. It was so kind of you to send it.

*Yours once, but no longer,
Amelia Sedley*

'That poor child! She's an angel,' William Dobbin cried.

'Where are the Sedleys living?' George asked. 'There's no address on the letter. And what does she mean about the piano?'

'I bought her piano at the auction and sent to her,' Dobbin said. 'I suppose she thinks that it was a gift from you. I went to see her, George,' he went on. 'The Sedleys are living in a small house in Fulham Road. They're very poor.'

'How did Amelia look, William? What did she say?'

'She's very ill. She's ... she's dying,' Dobbin replied.

Four hours later, the Sedleys' servant came into Amelia's room with a letter in her hand. 'Don't look at those old letters any more, ma'am,' the girl said. 'Here's a new one. Do read it.'

I must see you, Amelia read. Dearest Emmy, dearest love. Come to me. I want you to be my dearest wife.

The young woman stood up and ran to the door. Her mother and George were outside, waiting for her.

Dobbin now made the arrangements for Amelia and George's marriage. Mrs Sedley wanted her daughter to marry George Osborne, but she told Dobbin that Mr Sedley would never give his permission.

'Then they must run away together, like Captain Crawley and Amelia's friend, the governess,' Dobbin said with a laugh. 'I'll go and speak to Mr Sedley myself.'

When Dobbin spoke George Osborne's name, Mr Sedley was furious

'Don't ever say that name to me!' he shouted. 'I hate the son as much as I hate his father. I helped John Osborne when he had

no money, but will he help me now? No! Osborne and the French have ruined me. I'd rather see my daughter dead, than married to that man's son! I refuse to give my permission for their marriage!

'Then I must tell you this,' Dobbin said. 'They'll marry *without* your permission, sir, and Mr Osborne will be more upset than you. Captain Crawley ran away to marry that pretty little governess, Miss Sharp. Now George Osborne will do the same thing.'

This news about the Crawleys amused Mr Sedley.

'You captains are terrible fellows,' he said with a cruel smile. 'But you'll have to arrange the wedding yourself. My daughter will have to get married without me.'

George went to see his father, but when he began to speak about Amelia, Mr Osborne became furious. 'Never say that name here!' he shouted.

'Why not?' George shouted in reply. 'Amelia Sedley is the sweetest girl who ever lived! I love her. You wanted me to marry her when she was rich. I can't leave her, now that she's poor.'

'Leave my house!' Mr Osborne screamed. 'If you marry that man's daughter, you're no son of mine!'

'Then goodbye, father,' George said and he walked out of the house.

And so, on a windy day at the end of April, Amelia married her beloved George. Mrs Sedley and Jos were there and Captain Dobbin too, of course. Jos was fatter than ever and splendidly dressed. He had given his sister her lace veil⁴ and she wore a brown silk dress and a bonnet with a pink ribbons.

'God bless you, Dobbin,' George said, as he and Amelia left the church. 'We're going to Brighton for our honeymoon. Please come and stay with us there.'

Mrs Bute had now become Miss Crawley's companion and she was living with her in Park Lane. She terrified the old lady by talking about her health all the time. The doctor came to the

house every day. Mrs Bute also made sure that Rawdon and Becky were never allowed to visit Miss Crawley.

Mrs Bute was clever but very dull. Miss Crawley had laughed when she was with Becky, but Mrs Bute was not amusing. And she was certainly not amusingly wicked like Rawdon Crawley.

However, Mrs Bute was able to find out a great deal about the early life of Miss Rebecca Sharp. Mrs Bute was told that when she was a little girl, Becky had lived with her parents in Soho¹. Her father, an artist, was always in debt. He did not marry Becky's mother, an opera-dancer, until long after their daughter was born. While she was a child, Becky had been an artists' model¹, drank gin with her father and probably danced on the stage too. Not all these stories were true, but Mrs Bute was happy to believe them. She repeated them to Miss Crawley.

'Rawdon and his wife are both wicked,' Mrs Bute said to herself. 'I'll make sure that they never see Miss Crawley again.'

Mrs Bute also made sure that Miss Crawley stayed in her bedroom. She closed the curtains so that the old woman was in darkness. She tried to make the old lady change her will. But every time she talked about the will, Miss Crawley wept and her body shook with fear.

'Miss Crawley's health is not improving,' the doctor said to Mrs Bute one day. 'She needs to get out of the house. Take her for a drive in the fresh air. Go to Hyde Park.'

'The Rawdon Crawleys often drive in Hyde Park,' Mrs Bute replied. 'She mustn't see them.'

Finally, on a sunny day, Miss Crawley did go out in her carriage. And she saw her nephew, who was also driving in the park. Rawdon's smartly dressed wife, with her pale face and light-red hair was sitting next to him.

As the carriages came side-by-side, Becky leaned forward and held out her hands. Her bright green eyes filled with tears as she tried to speak to Miss Crawley. But the old lady turned her face away and her carriage did not stop. Rawdon's face was red as he drove on.

'It's hopeless, Becky,' he said. 'She'll never speak to us. She'll disinherit me. I'll get no more money from her!'

Mrs Bute was delighted by what had happened in Hyde Park, but she wanted to take Miss Crawley away from London. She decided to take the old lady to Brighton for a holiday. The sea air would be good for her health.

Dobbin now had to tell Mr Osborne about his son's marriage. But when the captain called at Russell Square, the old man thought that Dobbin had come with an apology from George.

'Dobbin, you're welcome here,' old Osborne said. 'Sit down.'

Dobbin sat down awkwardly. His face became red and he looked down at his hands.

'The news from Paris is not good, sir,' he began. 'The French are very strong. Our regiment will soon be going abroad – to Belgium, I believe. The Duke of Wellington is already there.'

'The British army has always been brave and strong when it fights the French,' said Mr Osborne. 'Our soldiers will fight well there.'

'Sir, I was hoping that you and George could meet before we go. Then, if ... if anything happens to him —'

'If my son apologizes. And if he agrees to marry the wife that I choose for him, we can be friends again,' interrupted Mr Osborne.

'But you chose a wife for your son years ago,' Dobbin replied, 'when her father was your good friend.'

'Do you mean that fool, Sedley? My son is never going to marry a poor man's daughter!'

'He has already married her,' Dobbin said quietly. 'Your son and Amelia Sedley were married five days ago.'

Mr Osborne jumped up, his face with red with anger. 'Get out, get out, sir!' he shouted. 'You come here and tell me *that!* I have no son now! I never want to see him or you again!'

That night, Mr Osborne changed his will and left all his money to his two daughters.

Then he wrote a short letter to Captain Dobbin.

If your friend calls on my bankers before he goes to Belgium, he wrote, they will give him two thousand pounds. This money is an inheritance from his mother. He will get nothing more from me.

In Brighton, the sun was shining on the bright blue sea. A line of bathing-machines¹ stood on the beach. Young people were walking along the beach or driving their fine carriages past the pretty new houses. Several of our friends were enjoying a holiday in the little sea-side town.

After their marriage, George and Amelia had gone to Brighton for their honeymoon. Jos Sedley had joined George and Amelia a few days later. He let them use his carriage. Jos was even fatter, but his clothes were made in the very latest fashion. He was very proud of his new coat which was like a soldier's uniform.

Rawdon and Becky Crawley were also in Brighton. They had followed Rawdon's aunt to the town, because they hoped to speak to her.

The two married couples were great friends now and were always together. During the day, Becky and Amelia drove about in Jos's carriage. In the evenings, the men played cards together and Rawdon won a good deal of money from his companions. After several games, George owed Rawdon a large amount.

One morning, as the three men were walking together, they saw a tall, awkward man getting out of a coach. He was wearing the uniform of a captain in His Majesty's Foot Guards.

'Look, there's Dobbin!' George said. 'What's the news, William?'

'The army has been given it's orders. We're going to Belgium,' Dobbin said. 'The infantry, cavalry – all of us. We'll be sailing from Chatham next week!'

This news of war affected our friends in Brighton in different ways. Some of them were excited and others were afraid.

Rawdon Crawley told Becky the news that evening, and he was surprised when she did not cry. 'Don't you care that I'm leaving, Becky?' he asked his pretty little wife.

'No, because I'm going with you!' Becky said with a laugh. 'You'll be travelling comfortably with General Tufto. You're not in the infantry like George and Captain Dobbin! They'll have to stay with their men. And they'll be the first to fight when there's a battle. Rawdon, you must make sure that George pays you the money that he owes you. How dear little Amelia will cry when Lieutenant Osborne leaves!'

When George told Amelia the news, she was terrified. They had been married only a few days. 'Are you leaving so soon?' she cried. 'Are you going to Brussels? Will there be a battle?'

'I don't know,' George replied. 'Will you come with us? Mrs Crawley's going across the Channel with the army.'

'Then I'll go too!' Amelia cried, putting her arms around her husband.

Amelia had seen Becky flirting with George and she had seen that her husband was flattered by Becky's attention. Perhaps that was the reason why Amelia decided to go to Belgium.

The next morning, Becky had some good news for Rawdon.

'Mrs Bute Crawley has left Brighton,' she said, with a sly smile. 'Her husband's ill and she's returned to Hampshire. This is lucky for us, Rawdon. I have an idea!'

Becky knew that Miss Briggs, Miss Crawley's companion, bathed in the sea every morning. She would enter the water from a bathing-machine on the beach.

The next day, Becky waited for Miss Briggs to enjoy the seawater and return to her bathing-machine again. As she stepped out from it, onto the beach, Becky was waiting for her.

'Oh, Miss —! I mean, Mrs Crawley!' Miss Briggs exclaimed.

'Dear, dear friend,' Becky said, putting her arms around Miss Briggs. 'You must always call me Becky! And how is dear Miss Crawley? I'm very fond of her, you know. It was because of Miss Crawley that I got to know my dearest Rawdon. Is Miss Crawley

feeling better now? Do tell me everything, *dear* Miss Briggs.'

This clever speech captured the kind heart of Miss Briggs and the two ladies had a long conversation.

Becky told her husband what she had done. 'You must send your aunt a letter before we sail from Chatham,' she said. 'Sit down now, Rawdon, and I'll tell you what to write.'

When Miss Briggs read the letter to Miss Crawley, the old lady laughed. 'Rawdon didn't write that letter, his wife did,' she said. 'Becky is much cleverer than he is, but she won't trick me! I'll meet my nephew, but I won't meet her. Write and tell him this, Briggs.'

So Rawdon and his aunt did meet before he left for Belgium, but they did not go into the old lady's house.

'You're a fool!' Becky told her husband angrily. 'You should've stayed with the old woman until she agreed to be friends again. Did she give you any money?'

'Don't call me a fool, Becky,' Rawdon replied. 'I may *be* a fool, but you're my wife and shouldn't say so. The old woman gave me twenty pounds, that's all.'

Becky laughed. 'It doesn't matter,' she said. 'We've been living on credit in London and Brighton. We can do the same in Belgium!'

'I'll let you arrange everything,' Rawdon said with a smile.

9

Before the Battle

It was May, 1815. Last goodbyes had been said and the British army was moving. This time, Napoleon had to be defeated for ever. The British army sailed across the English Channel to Ostend and then marched to the Belgian capital – Brussels. The soldiers took everything with them – horses, guns, food and

equipment. Many other people followed the army – soldiers' families, servants and other travellers. When they arrived in Belgium, these followers bought horses and carriages, and took rooms in all the hotels and inns. They behaved as if they were on a holiday, not going to war.

Jos Sedley travelled with his sister, Amelia. He had grown a large moustache and his clothes were so rich and grand that many people thought he was an important officer in the army.

Amelia's feeling of fear had disappeared. She now felt pride when she saw her handsome husband in his uniform.

Brussels was a beautiful, elegant little city. The hotels were good. There were fine old buildings: churches, opera-houses and art galleries. And there was a beautiful park where people could walk, ride, or drive their carriages.

George Osborne took his wife somewhere new every evening and bought her something new every day. Amelia wrote to her mother about her happiness and her love for her husband.

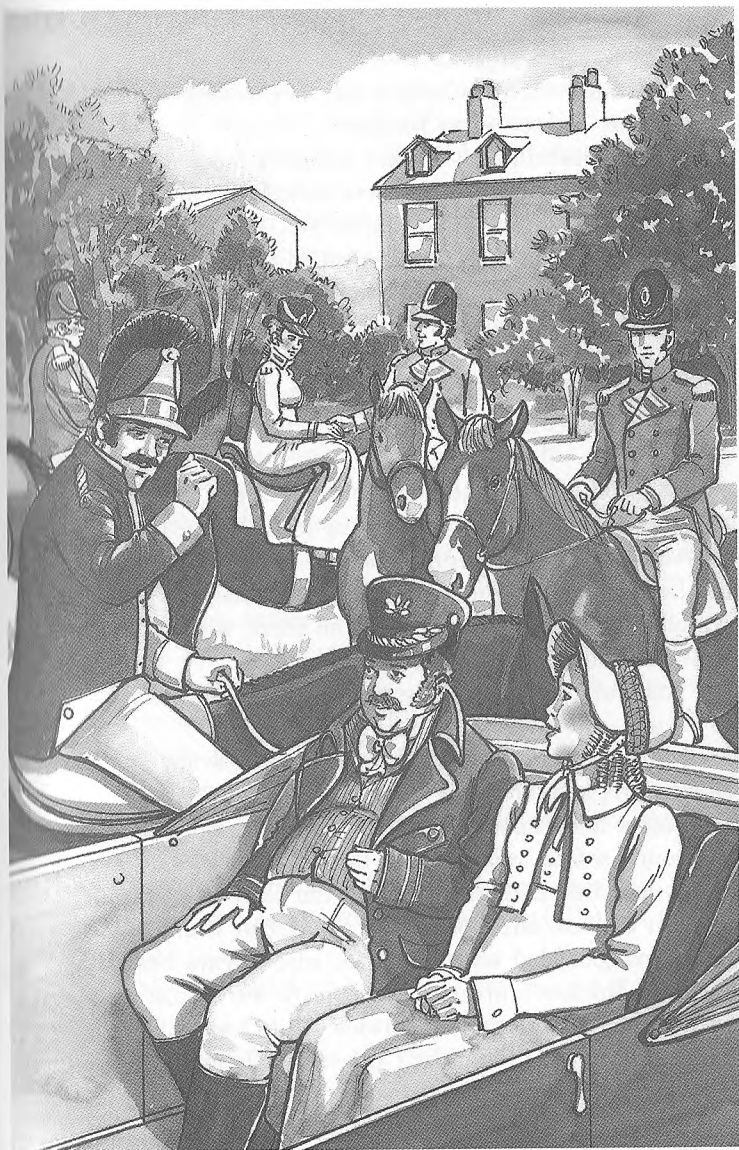
The infantry regiments had been in Brussels for several days when the cavalry regiments arrived. Soon our friends were together again.

One morning, Jos was driving in his fine carriage in the park, with Amelia sitting beside him. Suddenly they saw Becky and Rawdon Crawley. Becky was riding a beautiful little horse while she talked to General Tufto, the commanding officer of the Life Guards. The general smiled down at Mrs Crawley as he rode his big red horse close beside her. When Becky saw Amelia, she quickly waved her hand and then continued her conversation.

Rawdon rode up to Jos's carriage and greeted Amelia politely. 'I'm delighted to see you, Mrs Osborne,' said the captain. Then turning to Jos Sedley, he said, 'Well, Jos, how are you? Look after your charming sister well!'

Then Lieutenant George Osborne rode into the park with his friend Captain Dobbin.

'My dear Mrs Crawley, good morning!' George said, touching Becky's hand politely. Then he looked at Rawdon, smiled and



Rawdon rode up to Jos's carriage and greeted Amelia politely.

said, 'Did you get the rest of the money I owed you?'

'Yes,' Rawdon replied. 'We must play some games of cards while we are here. Mrs Crawley and I are staying at the Hôtel du Parc. Come and see us on Tuesday.'

When Amelia heard this she suddenly felt unhappy. It was a beautiful May afternoon, but everything around her suddenly seemed to be less beautiful than before.

That night, all our friends went to the opera-house. Becky, dressed in a fine white dress, sat with General Tufto. She was waving and smiling at everyone she knew. George Osborne soon joined her.

'My dear Lieutenant Osborne!' Becky cried. 'Take me to your wife. The General will let me leave, and I must speak to dearest Amelia!'

The General was jealous, but he could do nothing. He watched Becky laughing and talking with George Osborne.

Amelia watched George and Becky too. Her husband had left her alone so that he could flirt with Becky. But was Becky Amelia's friend? As Becky became more witty and amusing, Amelia became more silent and unhappy.

'You don't think Emmy is *jealous*, do you?' Becky whispered to George.

'Jealous?' George said with a laugh. 'All women are jealous. Don't worry about *her*!'

George and Amelia had been married for only six weeks, but the young soldier was flattered by Mrs Crawley's attention. He began spending his evenings with the Crawleys and left Jos or Dobbin to look after Amelia. The foolish young man played cards and gambled with Rawdon, who always beat him. But George did not care. He was quite sure that the witty, fashionable and pretty Mrs Crawley was in love with him.

On the 15th of June, the Duchess of Richmond held a great ball in the city of Brussels. Everyone wanted to be there. The only person who was unable to buy a ticket was Jos Sedley.

George had just been promoted to captain and he was

delighted. He bought Amelia a new dress, took her to the ball, and left her sitting alone. She could see no one she knew, except for Captain Dobbin, and the poor girl was very unhappy.

Becky arrived very late. Her hair was arranged in the latest fashion and she was wearing a very elegant dress. Everyone turned to look at the beautiful woman. Immediately, fifty men wanted to dance with her, but Becky shook her head. She refused to dance with them and went across to where Amelia was sitting alone.

'My dear Amelia, you look pale!' Becky cried. 'Your dress is very pretty, but that colour isn't good for you. Why do you never visit us, my dear? Captain Osborne plays cards with my Rawdon every night and Rawdon always wins. You should come with your husband, then you can stop him losing all his money!'

Becky looked up and saw George walking towards them.

'We were just talking about you, you wicked man,' Becky said. 'I suppose you have come to dance with me. May I leave my shawl and bouquet with you, Emmy? We won't be long!'

George did not return to Amelia for a long time. Dobbin brought poor Amelia something to eat. When George and Becky finally returned, George picked up Becky's bouquet and shawl without saying anything to his wife.

As Becky took back her flowers, she saw a note hidden among them. She smiled and held out her hand to the young soldier, who kissed it. She looked into George's eyes, but said nothing.

Amelia turned to Dobbin, who was standing near her.

'Please, William, please take me to my hotel. I'm not feeling well,' she said.

When she reached the hotel, Amelia went to bed immediately.

George Osborne stayed at the party and went to play cards. He was lucky. He played and won many games. And he drank more and more wine as he won more and more money.

Captain Dobbin found his friend some time later. He went

up to him and whispered a few words. George gave a shout, and put down his glass.

'The fighting has begun,' Dobbin told him. 'The enemy is close. We will march in three hours!'

As he hurried back to his rooms, George felt unhappy and confused. He had been married for only a few weeks, but he had already been flirting with another woman. He had quarrelled with his father, because of his marriage to Amelia. His father had always been kind to him and yet he had disobeyed his father's orders.

At dawn, George sat down and wrote his father a long letter. He apologized and asked his father to forgive him. Then George went quietly into the bedroom, to look at his wife.

Amelia opened her eyes. At that moment, she heard the sound of bugles, drums and pipes². The army was being called to fight and no one in the city could sleep. Amelia jumped out of bed and when she saw her husband's face, her eyes filled with tears.

Dobbin came into the Osborne's sitting-room as George and his servant were packing their cases. Dobbin would never forget the sight of poor Amelia, dressed in white and holding George's blood-red sash⁴. Her face was extremely pale and her blue eyes stared in front of her, without seeing anything.

When everything was ready, George led Amelia into the bedroom to say goodbye for the last time. Then he and Dobbin left. As he ran down the stairs, George was glad to be going into battle.

Amelia looked out of the window as the army began marching from the city. Her husband was proudly leading his men. He looked up, smiled, and then he was gone.

At the Hôtel du Parc, Rawdon Crawley's feelings were very different as he prepared for battle. He loved his wife. Becky had made him very happy. And perhaps there were tears in her eyes too, as Rawdon got ready.

'Listen,' he said to Becky, giving her a purse of money. 'Here's

two hundred and thirty pounds that I won at cards this evening. Take it, you may need it. I'm leaving my good horses here too – I'll ride one of General Tufto's horses. If anything happens to me, you can sell my horses. Here are my rings, the gold watch Aunt Matilda gave me, and other things that you can sell.'

Then the captain put on his oldest uniform. He was leaving his beautiful new uniform and his warm cloak with his wife so that she could sell them, if she had to. So Captain Crawley, who had always been a beautifully-dressed dandy, was going to battle in an old, worn uniform.

He kissed his wife once, held her close in his arms and left. He said nothing more.

Becky waved goodbye to him from the window and then looked at herself in the mirror.

'I'm pale,' she said.

She undressed and put her bouquet in a bowl of water. The note that George Osborne had given her was locked inside a drawer of her desk. Becky smiled, then got into bed and fell asleep immediately.

Captain Dobbin had spoken to Jos Sedley before he joined his regiment. The fat young man was sleeping and Dobbin had to wake him.

'What's the matter, Dobbin?' Jos asked angrily. 'Why are you waking me so early?'

'We're marching to battle in a few minutes, Sedley,' Dobbin told him. 'George and I may never come back. If anything happens to George, take care of Emmy and protect her from danger. Take her back to England. And if we're defeated, you must get her out of Brussels. Do you understand?'

'Defeated!' Jos cried. 'That's impossible, sir! There won't be a defeat! But I'll take care of my sister, don't worry.'

Waterloo

After the British army marched south, the city of Brussels was full of frightening rumours⁴. The Belgians believed that the French and their allies would win the battle and that Napoleon would soon be emperor again.

Jos Sedley had a Belgian servant called Isidor. Isidor quickly told his master what he thought.

'We won't have to wait long, sir!' he cried. 'Two or three days perhaps. Then Napoleon will enter Brussels! He'll be our emperor again! The British army will be defeated. Everyone knows that.'

Jos Sedley was already very frightened and he believed every word that his servant said. But at first he tried to be brave.

'Nonsense!' Jos cried. 'The British army is never defeated. Give me my coat. I'm going to find out the truth!'

'Sir, you should not go onto the streets wearing a soldier's coat,' said Isidor. 'And if the people see your moustache, they'll think that you are a British soldier.'

'Give me another coat!' shouted Jos, pointing at his cases. 'And remove my moustache – cut it off, quickly!'

At that moment, Becky arrived. She smiled when she saw Isidor removing Jos's moustache. She looked at Jos's cases.

'Don't tell me that you're leaving, Jos,' Becky said. 'Amelia and I need you to protect us, now that our husbands have gone. You left me two years ago. Don't leave me again.'

'My dear Mrs Crawley!' Jos cried. 'Of course I won't leave you. I've promised to protect my sister and I'll protect you too. I'm going out to find the latest news.'

Becky smiled as Jos hurried away and, a moment later, Amelia came into the room. She was very pale and she was trembling with fear. But when she saw Becky, her face went red.

'What's the matter, dearest Amelia? You look ill,' Becky said.

'Why are you here?' Amelia cried. 'I've always been kind to you, but you've been false to me⁴ and to your husband too. You're a false friend and a false wife. You have tried to take my husband away from me!'

'She must have seen George give me the note,' Becky thought.

'Even when we were in Brighton, you flirted with George,' Amelia went on. 'You tried to take him from me, but you couldn't!'

'Good. She knows nothing about the note,' Becky thought.

'You're ill, Amelia,' she said. 'You must rest.'

When Becky had gone, Amelia burst into tears and ran into her room. 'I'm a weak person. And I thought that I had married a bad husband!' she said to herself. 'I must try to be strong for him, and for our child who will be born in the winter!'

Jos returned to his hotel in time for dinner. He had not heard any bad news and the thought of food made him more cheerful.

'Amelia, come and have a little soup with me,' he said to his sister. 'A glass of wine will help you feel better too.'

'Thank you, Jos, but I'm not hungry,' Amelia replied.

So Jos sat down to his meal alone. Isidor was just filling his master's glass with wine, when they heard a terrible sound coming from the south of the city.

'What's that?' said Jos, jumping up quickly.

'It's cannons – the big guns!' Isidor cried, running towards the window. Jos looked out too and listened in terror as the dreadful roaring sound came again.

Pale, frightened faces appeared at every window in the street. And when they heard the roar of the cannon again, everyone rushed out into the street. The terrible sound continued through the day until sunset. Everyone asked for news, but there was no news – only frightening rumours. The French are coming! The Emperor has won! He has cut his enemy's army in two! Napoleon is marching to Brussels!

‘The French will be here tonight!’ Isidor cried, running into the room some time later.

Jos stood up, shaking with fear. ‘Then I must depart at once!’ he said. ‘Get the carriage and horses ready! I’m leaving in half an hour!’

He turned to Amelia’s maid. ‘Tell your mistress to get ready quickly. We’re leaving the city!’

In less than ten minutes, Isidor returned with worse news.

‘There are no horses left in Brussels!’ the servant cried. ‘The soldiers took them all. No one can leave! The British army has been cut to pieces and soon we will be too!’

Jos ran up and down in terror. ‘There must be horses!’ he cried. ‘I’ll go and find some myself!’

He hurried to Becky’s hotel. He remembered that Captain Crawley had left his own horses with his wife. Outside the Hôtel du Parc, Jos saw two ladies sitting in a carriage. All their luggage was piled into the carriage, but it had no horses.

Upstairs in her room, Becky was looking down at the ladies and laughing.

‘Look at Lady Bareacres and her daughter!’ she said to Jos as he came into the room. ‘They wouldn’t speak to me at Lady Richmond’s ball because I don’t have a title. And now they want to buy my horses! She’ll never have them! Lady Bareacres and her diamonds will never leave Brussels with *my* horses!’

‘Then let *me* buy your horses!’ Jos said quickly. ‘If you sell your horses to me, dear Mrs Crawley, you can have a seat in my carriage.’

‘I have two horses to sell, but they’re not carriage horses,’ Becky replied. ‘They’ve never pulled a carriage. They would kick your carriage into pieces.’

‘Then I’ll only need one horse,’ Jos replied. ‘I’ll ride it.’

‘I’ll sell the two horses together, or not at all,’ Becky said. ‘And what about Amelia? Are you going to leave your sister behind?’

'Napoleon's soldiers won't kill women,' Jos answered quickly, 'but they *will* kill all the men they find, I'm sure of that.'

'Then sit down and we'll try to agree a price for my horses,' Becky said calmly. She had already decided to stay in Brussels.

'I'll be safe whatever happens,' Becky thought. 'Of course I want our soldiers to win. But if they don't, I speak French perfectly. No one will know that I'm English.'

Becky wanted to sell the horses for a very high price and they talked for many hours. At last, Jos agreed.

In the morning, new rumours went through the city, but at last the truth was heard. On the 16th of June, the French had been beaten at a battle near Quatre Bras, a village to the south of Brussels. Jos repeated the good news to his sister and he decided it was safe to stay. He believed that Wellington and his allies would defeat Napoleon.

At dawn the next day, wagons full of wounded English soldiers slowly began to arrive in the city. Many of the men cried out in pain from their terrible injuries. Amelia was watching from her window, when a voice called her name.

'It's George!' she shouted as she ran downstairs.

The wounded English soldier was not George Osborne. But he was in the same regiment as Amelia's husband, and had good news. George Osborne was safe and so was Captain Dobbin. Both men had fought bravely and they had not been wounded.

But everyone in Brussels was waiting for another, bigger battle to take place. Napoleon had not yet fought his greatest enemy – Wellington. Jos was ready to leave the city, but while the English were between Napoleon and Brussels, he was safe.

Becky stayed away from Amelia. She looked again at the bouquet George had given her. Once more, she read the note that he had sent her.

'Amelia's a poor little fool. I could ruin her life⁴ if I showed her this,' Rebecca said to herself. 'The man she adores begged me to run away with him. My Rawdon is worth ten George Osbornes. But will Rawdon come back to me?'

The next day was Sunday and late in the morning, the guns of Waterloo began to roar. Jos Sedley was terrified. He rushed into his sister's room.

'I can't stay any longer,' he said. 'I'm leaving! I'll ride one horse. You and Isidor can ride on the other. But we must all leave now!'

Amelia smiled and shook her head. 'No. I won't leave without my husband. I'll wait for him here,' she said.

'Goodbye, then!' Jos cried. 'Becky is staying. She'll take care of you.'

The cannons roared on the battlefield of Waterloo all day. It was sunset before they were silent. The Imperial Guard – Napoleon's best soldiers – were retreating. Wellington and his allies were driving Napoleon further away from Brussels.

Darkness fell on the city and on the battlefield where our friends had fought so bravely. In Brussels, Amelia was praying for George. But her husband was lying dead on the battlefield. A bullet had gone through his heart.

11

After the War

Rawdon Crawley had fought bravely at Waterloo. And a few weeks after he returned from the battle, he was promoted to colonel.

The brave soldier had not forgotten his aunt, Miss Crawley, who was still living in Brighton. She soon received a letter from Rawdon, giving his news of the great victory at Waterloo.

A box came with the letter. It was full of things that had been taken by Colonel Rawdon Crawley from the battlefield at Waterloo: a broken French sword, a French medal and a helmet taken from one of Napoleon's Imperial Guards.

Dear Aunt Matilda,

My kindest and most affectionate friend, I send you these things to remember that great battle at Waterloo on 18th June. The army is marching to Paris now and we'll be staying there for some time. I hope that you'll allow me to write to you again from the city and send you the latest news.

From your loving nephew,
Colonel Rawdon Crawley

'Briggs,' Miss Crawley said to her companion, 'write and tell Rawdon that I'll welcome more letters from him. I know he won't write them, of course. Clever little Becky will do that. I don't mind. Her letters are always amusing. But Colonel and Mrs Crawley will *never* get any of my money!'

Of course, Becky had written the letter. And the things from the battlefield were as false as the letter. Becky had bought the sword, medal and helmet from an old soldier, but Miss Crawley never knew this. She now had a new favourite nephew – Pitt Crawley. Rawdon's elder brother was engaged to Lady Jane Sheepshanks, who was the daughter of a lord. Lady Jane did not amuse old Miss Crawley like Becky had done, but she was a charming, sweet girl.

Becky was a great success in Paris society and the winter of 1815 passed delightfully for her and her husband. They could live for a year on the amount of money Jos had paid for their horses.

'Becky!' Rawdon cried when he heard about Becky's time in Brussels. 'You should've been a general!'

The name of Crawley was already well-known in Paris. Old Miss Matilda Crawley had many high society friends living in the city.

'Colonel Crawley's wife is so charming and her French is perfect!' the noblewomen cried. 'Her husband is our dear Miss Crawley's nephew and heir. So, of course, they'll always have money. Colonel Crawley is a little dull perhaps, but his little

wife is so clever and so witty. We do hope they'll both stay in Paris for a very long time.'

Rawdon Crawley might have been dull, but he almost never lost money when he gambled. The money he won helped to buy Becky's elegant clothes and his own fine horses and cigars. No one guessed that his aunt gave him no money at all.

Early in the spring of 1816, this announcement was printed in the newspapers: *On the 26th of March, to Colonel and Mrs Rawdon Crawley – a son and heir – Rawdon.*

When Miss Matilda Crawley read this, the old lady was furious. She screamed and sent for Pitt, Rawdon's older brother.

'You and Lady Jane must get married at once! You must have children of your own!' she ordered. 'I'll give you a thousand pounds a year while I'm alive, and you'll have all my money when I die. Your brother and his son won't get a penny!'

The news of George Osborne's death at Waterloo had been a terrible shock for his family. John Osborne was especially upset.

George's last letter had reached Mr Osborne, but it had not softened the bitter old man's heart.

In his letter, George had begged his father to forgive him. He had asked his father to accept his apology for marrying Amelia and to look after her. But John Osborne was too angry and upset. He did not accept the apology and forgive his son.

The old man travelled to Belgium. He went to the battlefield and then saw the place where his only son was buried.

As he drove back to Brussels, he passed a young woman in a carriage. Her face was pale and thin and she stared in front of her, with sad eyes.

At first, old Mr Osborne did not recognise the lady, but then he saw that the soldier riding beside her was William Dobbin. Dobbin was now a major – he had been promoted after the Battle of Waterloo.

'That's Sedley's daughter in the carriage,' Osborne said to himself. 'She ruined my son's life and I hate her.'

'Drive on quickly!' he shouted to his servant.

'Mr Osborne! Mr Osborne!' Dobbin called. 'Please stop. I must speak to you.'

'Drive on!' Osborne shouted again. 'Leave me alone, Major Dobbin. I've nothing to say to you.'

'But I've a message for you,' Dobbin said. 'It's a message from your son. I was your son's closest friend. He wrote a will before he died, but he had very little money to leave to his widow.'

'I don't know his widow,' Osborne said. 'Let her go back to her father.'

'Mr Osborne, sir,' Dobbin said quietly, 'your son's widow is going to have a child. Amelia has very little money and no hope for the future. Please help her and the unborn child – your grandchild!'

'No, sir!' the bitter old man shouted. 'I was always a good father to my son. I gave him all the money he wanted, but he disobeyed me and married that unsuitable woman. You helped them to marry, I know you did. I said that I'd never speak to her again, and I won't. Now leave me alone.'

Dobbin was very worried about his dearest Amelia.

'Perhaps Jos will take care of her and give her a little money,' he said to himself. 'And I'll do what I can. But now I must help Amelia to get back to England safely.'

And so Amelia's son was born in London, in the little house in Fulham Road where her parents lived. Amelia named the boy George, and William Dobbin became the boy's godfather. The baby was very beautiful and looked exactly like his dead father. Amelia thought that the child was perfect and she loved him with all her heart.

Major Dobbin visited the Sedleys' house nearly every day. He bought little Georgy all kinds of presents. He was in love with Amelia, but she did not realize this. George Osborne was dead, but Amelia would always be his wife.

Little Georgy was six months old when Dobbin called for the last time.

'I've come to say goodbye, Amelia,' he said quietly, holding her hand.

'Goodbye? Why, where are you going?' she asked.

'I'm going to India with my regiment,' Dobbin replied. 'I'll be away for a long time. Will you write to me, Emmy?'

'Yes, of course,' Amelia replied. 'I'll write about Georgy.'

'God bless you,' Dobbin said with a sigh.

'Look at Georgy! Isn't he an angel!' Amelia whispered, looking down at her son. 'He's asleep. Don't make a noise as you go out, William. You mustn't wake him.'

12

Living Well on Nothing a Year

Rawdon and Becky lived happily in Paris for nearly three years. By that time, all their money had gone. Rawdon left the army and spent his afternoons and evenings gambling. He was very successful. In fact, the colonel was such a successful gambler, that very few people wanted to play with him.

Becky continued to wear the most fashionable clothes and held dinner parties nearly every night. The Crawleys lived their lives in Vanity Fair, so their debts increased. Soon they owed as much money in Paris as they had owed in London.

Then old Miss Crawley, who had lived in Vanity Fair for so long, died. As everyone in Paris thought that Rawdon would inherit her money, the Crawleys were able to live on credit for a little longer. Rawdon told his friends that he was going to his aunt's funeral in London. But he knew that his debtors were waiting for him there. So, instead, he returned to Brussels and waited for his wife and son, little Rawdy, to join him. The Crawleys paid none of their bills in Paris, and people in the city talked about them and their debts for years.

'We must do something,' Becky said to her husband as they sat together in their hotel in Brussels. 'We can't live on nothing for the rest of our lives. I want to find a good position for you, Rawdon. Perhaps you can be a governor of a colony¹ somewhere. Jos Sedley was a government official in India and became rich. Perhaps you can do this too. But first we must go back to London. We need to meet important people who can help us.'

'I don't want to live in a colony, far away,' Rawdon replied. 'I want to go back to England and stay there. And I don't care about important people. I'd be happy with you and Rawdy in a little house in London.'

'Even little houses cost money, you foolish man,' Becky replied with a laugh. 'I'd like to live in London too, but you owe too much money there.' She thought for a minute. 'I think I may have an idea,' she said. 'Let me make the arrangements.'

'I always have, my dear!' Rawdon laughed.

So clever little Becky sold her jewellery and crossed the English Channel for the first time in several years. She went to London and met each of Rawdon's creditors, and then spoke to their lawyers.

'I'll be truthful,' Becky said. 'My husband will never get any money from his family, or anywhere else. But I'll give you a shilling for every pound that he owes you. If I do this, you must leave him alone when he returns to England. If you don't agree to this arrangement, Colonel Crawley will never come back and you'll get no money at all.'

The lawyers were so surprised to hear these words from this elegant woman with light-red hair and green eyes, that they agreed. Becky shook hands with them all, paid them the money, and returned to Belgium. She felt very pleased with herself.

Not long after this, Colonel and Mrs Crawley left Brussels and returned to England with their son. They went to live in a little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair – the most fashionable part of London. However, they now had no money at all. How did they live?

The house in Curzon Street belonged to Mr Raggles. He had been old Miss Crawley's servant when she lived in Park Lane. When Miss Crawley died, Mr Raggles became a shop-keeper. He owned a little shop where he sold vegetables, fruit, eggs and cream. Raggles and his wife worked hard and at last, they were able to buy the house in Curzon Street. They were planning to rent the house to a rich family.

Rawdon arrived in London at the right time. Raggles loved the Crawley family and when Rawdon said that he needed a house, Raggles was delighted. He rented the house to Rawdon and agreed to be the Crawleys' servant when they had guests. And Mrs Raggles agreed to cook the food for their parties, using food from her shop.

And so the penniless Crawleys were able to live in Mayfair and give fashionable dinner-parties. Each month, they gave another reason not to pay Raggles, or any other person.

Becky and Rawdon knew all the important people in London and they were very popular at this time. But Becky was not completely happy. She wanted to enjoy her life in Vanity Fair. She was certainly witty, intelligent and elegant, and she amused the men. But the ladies refused to talk to Becky. They turned away from her.

One day, when Lady Bareacres and her daughter turned their backs to Becky at the theatre, Rawdon became very angry.

'They don't respect you, Becky,' he said one day. 'You are prettier and cleverer than Lady Bareacres's daughter. You dress more elegantly too. But she refuses to speak to you!'

'That's because I refused to sell Lady Bareacres your horses in Brussels,' Becky said with a laugh. 'She'll never forgive me for that. Don't be angry, you silly old thing. Remember that I started life as a governess and you're well-known as a gambler! But who sold your horses for you? Who paid your debts? We must go on smiling and hiding our feelings. Then we'll both get to the top!'

The next day, she told Rawdon to write a friendly letter to his brother, Pitt, at Queen's Crawley.

'Why should I write to Pitt?' Rawdon asked in surprise. 'He inherited all of Aunt Matilda's money and didn't give me anything. He won't help us.'

'Yes, he will,' Becky replied. 'Wait until he comes to live in the family house in London. I'll become friends with Lady Jane. She's a lord's daughter. She'll take me to the best places. Everyone in high society will accept me then.'

Then, late one night, Becky had another idea. As usual, a group of men were sitting in the Crawleys' pretty drawing-room at Curzon Street. Some were playing cards with Rawdon, others were talking to his elegant little wife.

'I must have a sheep-dog,' Becky said suddenly.

'A sheep-dog?' Rawdon said, looking up from his cards. 'You can't have a sheep-dog in London – they're too large!'

'Get a *small* dog, my dear Mrs Crawley,' another man said. 'You can take a small dog anywhere.'

Becky laughed. 'No, I don't mean a *real* dog,' she said. 'I mean a moral sheep-dog⁴. I need a lady companion – someone who will be with me in polite society. I need someone to keep the wolves away from a poor little lamb – me!' she said.

'Every little lamb needs a sheep-dog!' said Lord Steyne.

Lord Steyne, one of the greatest men in Vanity Fair, was standing near Becky's fire and drinking Becky's coffee. The noble lord, who was rather short, had a shining bald head with some red hair round the top of it. His eyebrows were thick and his eyes were small and cruel.

'Dear little lamb!' Lord Steyne said, looking at Becky with an unpleasant smile. As he smiled, his large white teeth were very like a wolf's. 'So the shepherd – Mrs Crawley's husband – is not enough protection,' Lord Steyne said, looking across at Rawdon.

'The shepherd is away from me too often,' Becky replied with a laugh. 'He's always playing cards.'

Becky was looking very pretty that night. The light from the

fire and the candles shone on her light-red hair and white arms. Her elegant pink dress suited her figure and her silk stockings and smart little shoes made her feet look pretty and slim. Her bright green eyes sparkled as she flirted with the noble lord.

'I *do* need a sheep-dog, but it won't bark at *you*,' she said.

At that moment, a child began to cry in a room above them.

'That's my little angel,' Becky said quickly, but she did not get up.

'Please go and take care of him, if you wish, Mrs Crawley,' Lord Steyne said, smiling again.

'He'll cry until he falls asleep – he always does,' Becky said.

Rawdon heard his son's cries too. A few minutes later, he went upstairs, dried the child's tears, and sat with him.

Becky was not a loving mother. She saw Rawdy about twice a week, when she visited the little boy in his bedroom. Whenever Rawdy saw her, Becky was always wearing beautiful new clothes: pretty little boots and gloves, a bonnet covered with flowers or feathers. Sometimes, Becky allowed her son to drive with her in her carriage. Little Rawdon, dressed in his best clothes, sat very straight and stared at his mother. He never spoke to her. When his mother was away, the little boy would go into her room. Then he would look at her jewels and sometimes touch her beautiful dresses.

Colonel Crawley loved his son and was very proud of him. He saw the boy every morning and spent many hours playing with him. Early one morning, Rawdy fell over and hurt himself while he was playing.

As the boy opened his mouth to scream with pain, his father cried, 'For God's sake, Rawdy, don't wake Mamma!'

The little boy closed his eyes and did not make a sound. His father was especially proud of him that day, and grateful too. Rawdon was almost as frightened of Becky's anger as his son.

One morning, Rawdon took little Rawdy into Hyde Park to ride his pony. When he saw a soldier from his old regiment,

Rawdon stopped to speak to him. The soldier was talking to an old man, who had a little boy with him. The little boy was the same age as Rawdy.

'Good morning, Colonel Crawley,' the soldier said. 'I was just showing young Georgy my Waterloo medal, sir.'

The old man smiled at the little boy. 'My grandson's father was at Waterloo too,' he said. 'My son was Captain George Osborne. Perhaps you knew him? He was a brave man.'

'I knew him, sir,' Colonel Crawley replied. 'And I knew his dear little wife, Amelia. How is she?'

'She's my daughter,' the old man said. 'She and Georgy live with me and my wife now.'

Georgy was looking at little Rawdon's pony with the greatest interest.

'Would you like to ride my pony?' Rawdy asked.

Georgy nodded and Colonel Crawley lifted the boy up and put him on the pony behind his own son.

'Hold on tightly, Georgy,' Rawdon said. 'Hold on to Rawdy.'

The two little boys laughed as the pony moved forward.

Rawdon decided not to tell Becky about his meeting with John Osborne and his grandson. She always laughed at Rawdon for loving his own son so much.

Becky thought that her husband was a fool, but she was still fond of him. He always obeyed her orders and never asked any questions. When Becky wanted to go to the opera or theatre with her friends, he dined with his friends. But afterwards, he always came to the theatre and collected her in his carriage.

'I'm not clever enough for her. She doesn't care if I'm not with her,' Rawdon said to himself and he was right.

When Becky's companion came to live at Curzon Street, she saw even less of her husband.

'Don't worry about coming home early,' she would say to him. 'The men who are dining here this evening don't play cards and you would be bored. Stay out as late as you wish. Now that I have my sheep-dog, I'm not afraid at all!'

'Only real ladies have companions in Vanity Fair,' Becky said to herself. 'And my sheep-dog will never bite. What would Miss Crawley have said, if she knew that Miss Briggs is now my very own sheep-dog!'

13

Return to Queen's Crawley

For some time after his sister's death, old Sir Pitt continued to live at Queen's Crawley. The house, and Sir Pitt himself, became dirtier and dirtier. The old baronet became fond of the daughter of one of his servants, and she soon took the place of his dead wife. The Bute Crawleys were horrified, but old Sir Pitt refused to let the Reverend and his wife into the house.

When Mr Pitt Crawley married Lady Jane Sheepshanks, he took his wife to Queen's Crawley to meet his father. He found that the old man was unable to walk and could remember nothing. The Pitt Crawleys stayed until the old man died, a few weeks afterwards.

Rawdon's brother now had the title, Sir Pitt Crawley. Soon after the old baronet's death, a letter with a wide black border¹ arrived at the little house in Curzon Street. Sir Pitt was inviting Becky and Rawdon to attend his father's funeral.

When Becky read the letter, she jumped up and danced round the room. 'Hurray! Hurray!' she shouted. 'At last! Now we have a chance!'

'You're not going to Queen's Crawley, are you Becky?' Rawdon said in surprise. 'Coach tickets will cost us twenty pounds. The old man didn't leave me any money. He gave me some money when I was twenty-one, that was all.'

'Of course I'm going,' said Becky. 'Lady Jane can present me at Court¹ next year. Your brother can help you to become a

Member of Parliament, you dear, silly man. Or Lord Steyne can make you Governor of the West Indies, or somewhere!’

‘Are we taking Rawdy with us?’

‘No, we can’t afford to buy a third ticket for the coach. Rawdy can stay here in London with Briggs. She’ll make him a suit of black clothes to wear.’

Lord Steyne called later that evening, and found Becky and Miss Briggs sewing black clothes for the funeral.

‘So the wicked old fellow is dead at last, is he?’ said Lord Steyne.

‘I could have been that old fellow’s widow,’ Becky said, with a smile. ‘Do you remember when Sir Pitt proposed to me on his knees, Briggs? I was young then!’

So Colonel Rawdon Crawley and his wife went to Hampshire in their black funeral clothes. At the village of Mudbury, they met the Crawley family’s coach, which took them to the house. As they were driven up to the old house, both of them thought about their past lives. Rawdon remembered when he was a boy at Queen’s Crawley and how he used to fight with his brother, Pitt. Becky thought about her father, of the years at Miss Pinkerton’s school, of Jos Sedley and Amelia. Most of all, she thought of her life as governess at Queen’s Crawley, where she had first met her husband.

Colonel and Mrs Crawley walked through the hall and into the room where the new Sir Pitt and his wife were waiting. How would Rawdon and Becky be welcomed? Sir Pitt stepped forward with a smile and shook his brother’s hand. Then he bowed to Becky and held her hand too. Becky was so delighted that her green eyes filled with tears. Then Lady Jane held Becky’s hands and kissed her. When Rawdon saw this, he was so pleased that he kissed Lady Jane and shook his brother’s hand again.

Lady Jane led the Crawleys to their rooms.

‘I hope you’ll be comfortable here,’ she said kindly. ‘Is there anything else I can do for you, Rebecca dear?’

‘I’d love to meet your children,’ Becky replied with a sweet

smile. 'I'm afraid that we couldn't bring little Rawdy with us. I know that I'll miss him.'

In half an hour, Becky and Lady Jane were good friends and later, Lady Jane told Sir Pitt what a charming woman his sister-in-law was.

At dinner, Becky used all her charm to flatter Sir Pitt.

'It's good to know that you are going to look after the old house now!' she said. 'Queen's Crawley will soon be a great house again, full of the most important people in the land! You can do good work for your country, Sir Pitt. And I *know* that the country will be grateful!'

Sir Pitt was easily flattered and decided that his brother's wife was a clever little woman.

'Rawdon seems happy,' Sir Pitt said to himself. 'And their marriage *did* help me to get all of Aunt Matilda's money. Mrs Bute has said terrible things about Rebecca, but I don't believe them.'

'I'm pleased that you got dear Miss Crawley's money,' Becky continued, with a smile. 'You can use it to improve Queen's Crawley. I'm used to being poor. Rawdon and I manage very well and I'm proud and happy to be part of the Crawley family! Remember that I first came here as a governess. How long ago that seems!'

Old Sir Pitt's funeral took place two days later. Everyone was dressed completely in black. Although the old baronet's family and his servants had not liked him, many of them tried to cry as they stood around his grave. But as soon as the funeral ended, Vanity Fair forgot the old man.

Rawdon and Becky stayed in Queen's Crawley for several weeks. Sir Pitt and his younger brother went hunting together. They discussed the problems of Queen's Crawley, and the colonel gave Sir Pitt advice about his horses.

Becky and Lady Jane spent a lot of time together too. Becky helped Violet and Rose Crawley, the daughters of the old baronet, to play the piano. Then she and Lady Jane walked in

the gardens or went into the village, to give food and medicine to the poor people there.

In the evenings, Becky sang religious songs with Sir Pitt and Lady Jane, or she did some sewing.

'It isn't difficult to be a country gentleman's wife,' Becky thought. 'I could be a good woman, if I had five thousand pounds a year. I could do the same things every day and enjoy myself. I could pay all our debts. Well, that will never happen. I'm here because I'm clever, not because I'm rich. People will call me an adventuress⁴, I suppose. But my husband is a gentleman, and his brother is married to the daughter of a lord. How far away my early life seems! I'll never live like that again!'

While his parents were in Hampshire, little Rawdon sent his father a carefully written letter:

Dear Papa,

I hope you're very well. I hope Mamma is very well. I'm very well. I go riding in Hyde Park every day.

I met that little boy again. He rode on my pony with me. The pony went quite fast and the little boy cried. I didn't cry.

From your loving son,

Rawdon

Rawdon was very proud of this letter and he showed it to his brother and Lady Jane.

When Rawdon and Becky left Queens' Crawley, Lady Jane gave Becky some money for her son.

'We look forward to seeing you in London soon,' Lady Jane said. 'Sir Pitt is going to open the Crawleys' London house again.'

'I'm sure I can help you with that,' Becky replied. 'I'll enjoy helping you to choose pretty things for the house.'

How Becky and Amelia Spent Christmas

In November, about a month after Rawdon and Becky had returned home, Sir Pitt Crawley came to London. He was going to meet his lawyers and look at his London house. At first he stayed at a hotel, but then Becky invited him to stay at her house in Curzon Street. Sir Pitt did not stay in his house in Great Gaunt Street because the house needed to be cleaned and repaired.

'You *must* stay with us,' Becky said, holding Pitt's hand in hers. 'Rawdon will be so happy, and I am too. There's a room ready for you and I've lit the fire myself. I'm sure that you'll be comfortable.'

In fact, the room was where Miss Briggs slept. Miss Briggs had been sent to sleep in the same room as little Rawdy.

Becky sent Rawdon out to dine two or three times during the week when Sir Pitt was in London.

On the first evening, she went down into the kitchen and prepared a delicious meal for her brother-in-law. The meat and the wine had come from Lord Steyne's house, but Sir Pitt did not know that. After dinner, Sir Pitt and Becky sat by the fire in the little drawing-room. Becky was sewing a shirt that she was making for little Rawdy. When Becky wanted everyone to believe that she was a good wife and mother, she always sewed this shirt. But Rawdy never wore the shirt. Becky never finished her work, and the boy grew too tall.

Every night for a week, Rebecca listened to Sir Pitt, talked to him, sang to him and charmed him. He could not wait to leave his lawyer's dull office, and return to the pretty little house and pretty little Becky.

Before he left London, Sir Pitt made arrangements for his

house in Great Gaunt Street to be decorated in the spring. Becky was going to help him choose the furniture, decorations and colours of the paint. Sir Pitt also invited Colonel and Mrs Crawley to stay at Queen's Crawley for Christmas.

Becky held a handkerchief to her bright green eyes as she watched Sir Pitt drive away.

'I wish that you'd got some money from him, Becky,' Rawdon said sadly. 'We owe Raggles a large amount. I'd like to pay him something.'

'Then pay Raggles with this,' Becky said, giving her husband some money that Sir Pitt had left for little Rawdy. 'Tell Raggles there'll be more money later. That will keep him happy.'

Becky had tried, very carefully, to suggest that Sir Pitt could give his brother some money. But Pitt was very nervous about this.

'I'll do something for Rawdon, but not now. I'll think about it later, perhaps at Christmas,' Pitt said to himself as he drove home.

A day or two before Christmas, Becky and Rawdon got ready for their visit to Queen's Crawley. Lady Jane had begged them to bring little Rawdy and Rawdon wanted his son to make the visit too.

'He's the finest boy in England and you don't care for him at all, Becky,' Rawdon said angrily. 'He won't give you trouble on the journey. He can sit on the outside of the coach with me.'

'You like sitting on the outside seats because you want to smoke your awful cigars,' Becky said with a laugh.

'You used to like the smell of my cigars,' Rawdon replied.

Becky laughed again. 'Well, all right,' she said. 'Sit on the outside of the coach with Rawdy. Give him a cigar too, if you like!'

Little Rawdon Crawley was a good-looking little boy, with blue eyes and fair hair. He was tall and strong and had a pleasant nature. But his mother disliked him. She thought he was boring.

One evening, some months before, Rawdy had heard his mother singing to Lord Steyne. The boy had come downstairs quietly and listened at the half-open door. His mother had looked up and seen the little boy. She was so angry that she had hit him twice on the face, very hard. Lord Steyne was very amused to see Becky's anger and he had laughed loudly and unpleasantly.

The little boy had run down to the kitchen, weeping. The servants had comforted him and dried his tears.

'Why can't I listen to Mamma singing?' he had cried. 'She's always singing to that bald man with the big teeth. Why doesn't she sing to me?'

The servants had looked at each other and shook their heads. From that moment, they had no respect for Becky at all.

Lord Steyne and the boy disliked each other very much. Whenever they met, they stared at each other with hatred in their eyes. Sometimes the noble lord spoke to the child unkindly, with words that the little boy did not forget.

Little Rawdon was asleep when he arrived at Queen's Crawley with his mother and father. Rawdon carried his son from the coach into the warm and comfortable house. Sir Pitt and Lady Jane were waiting to welcome their guests.

At dinner, Little Rawdon sat next to his aunt at the long dining-table.

'I like dining here,' he said to Lady Jane at the end of the meal.

'Why?' Lady Jane asked with a smile.

'I eat my dinner in the kitchen at home, or sometimes with Briggs,' the boy replied. 'I never eat my dinner with Mamma.'

Becky was at the other end of the table, flattering Sir Pitt. And she did not hear her son's words or see Lady Jane's look of surprise.

After dinner, all the servants came into the room to pray. Little Rawdon was surprised. No one prayed at his parents' house in Curzon Street.

On Christmas Day, there was a family party at Queen's Crawley and the Bute Crawleys came from the rectory. Becky, who was always witty and charming in company, was kind and polite to everyone. She treated Mrs Bute as her friend and soon that lady was polite to her too.

Becky's flattery had changed Sir Pitt. He was now thinking of becoming a politician.

'My dear Sir Pitt, your powerful mind will take you to the very top,' Becky said. 'I showed the last paper you wrote to Lord Steyne. He said you write well. You're a fine speaker too and the Government is expecting you to do well in Parliament. I know one or two important people and they would be interested to meet you. I'm part of your family now. I want you to succeed.'

Sir Pitt was delighted by these words and they made him more confident. 'Little Becky understands me very well,' he thought. 'She should have married *me*, not that fool Rawdon. We could have done so much together!'

All the children of the Crawley family became good friends and young Rawdy was soon the leader in all their games. Rawdy loved Queen's Crawley and he especially enjoyed going into the stables with his father to see the horses. Rawdy was also very fond of Lady Jane, who was very kind to him.

One evening, Becky saw Lady Jane put her arm around Rawdy when she spoke to him. Immediately, his mother bent down and kissed her son. Little Rawdy looked at his mother in surprise and his face went very red.

'You never kiss me at home, Mamma,' he said quietly.

The room became silent. Becky's green eyes suddenly shone with anger. Then she laughed and turned away, but she said nothing.

Christmas was soon over and before Rawdon left Queen's Crawley, his brother gave him one hundred pounds. Rawdon had hoped for much more, but Sir Pitt thought that he had been very generous.



'You never kiss me at home, Mamma,' he said quietly.

Rawdon and his son were very sorry to leave Queen's Crawley, but Becky was happy to go. Lady Jane was not as friendly to her as before. And Becky herself had become tired of Lady Jane's gentle goodness.

When she was back in London, Becky spent a great deal of time at Sir Pitt's house in Great Gaunt Street. Every morning, she drove to the big house with Miss Briggs and Rawdy. After many days, everything was ready for Sir Pitt and Lady Crawley.

Just before Sir Pitt was going to speak in Parliament for the first time, he and Lady Jane came to Great Gaunt Street.

Lord Steyne, who was their neighbour, called at the house. And a few nights later, Sir Pitt met the noble lord at Becky's house. He tried to show Lord Steyne that he was intelligent and knew about politics. But when Sir Pitt had left, Becky imitated⁴ him in a cruel and witty way that made Lord Steyne shout with laughter.

As time passed, Rawdon spent more and more time in Great Gaunt Street. He was happy to sit quietly in his brother's house with his son, Lady Jane, and her children. Meanwhile, Sir Pitt was spending many hours in Rawdon and Becky's house in Curzon Street. He practised his speeches and enjoyed Becky's flattery.

'What a good politician's wife Rebecca would make!' Pitt said to himself. 'With her by my side, I could become Prime Minister! She really understands me. I married the wrong woman.'

Clever little Becky was moving to the very highest levels of society and enjoying the pleasures of Vanity Fair. But Amelia was very unhappy. The young widow and her son lived with her parents in the little house in Fulham Road. They did not have a happy Christmas.

After George died, Amelia received a small amount of money each year from the army. She gave most of this money to her mother and father. Jos Sedley also sent his family money

from India, but it was used to pay his father's debts and did not help the family at all. Jos did not know this.

Georgy now went to a little school near his home. It was not a very good school, but his mother could not pay more. The boy always needed new clothes or books.

Amelia had promised her son new clothes for Christmas but when Mrs Sedley heard about it, she was very angry.

'You think of no one but that boy!' she cried. 'You give him too much, Amelia! You spoil him! And you're very selfish, too. We need more food and coal for the fire. Your father can't pay the bills and you've promised Georgy new clothes!'

Amelia ran from the room crying and Georgy began to shout.

'I must have new clothes! All the other boys in my school are getting new clothes for Christmas!'

Amelia suddenly had an idea. The poor woman remembered the beautiful Cashmere shawls that Jos had given her, many years before. She would sell them! The shawls were very fine and Amelia got twenty guineas for them. With this money, she was able to buy Georgy new clothes and some books too.

'Books!' old Mrs Sedley cried when she saw them. 'You buy *books* when there isn't enough bread to eat! Amelia, you're a bad daughter and a foolish mother!'

'It's my own money,' Amelia replied. 'I sold my shawls. I didn't spend all of the money. Here, take the rest of it.'

A few days later, Georgy came back from the park with an interesting story to tell.

'I met an old lady in the park,' he said. 'She stopped her carriage when she saw me and asked me my name. Then she said, "So you're called George too. You're so like your father! I'm your Aunt Maria. Your father was my brother, my dear."

'Then the lady began to cry,' Georgy went on. 'She wasn't very pretty, but she had a big carriage and looked very rich. She wanted to know where I lived. Why don't you go and see her, Mamma? I'm sure she'd give you some money.'

Amelia did not know what to do. Old Mr Osborne had never forgiven her for marrying his son, and he had never seen his grandson. Poor Amelia was too proud to ask Mr Osborne, or Maria Osborne, for any money. Now she was worried.

'If Mr Osborne sees Georgy, he'll love him,' she thought. 'Perhaps he'll want to take him away from me. Could he do that? How could I live, if I didn't see my dear child every day?'

15

A New Life for Georgy

Miss Maria Osborne lived with her father in the Osbornes' house in Russell Square. Mrs Osborne had died and Maria's sister, Jane, had married and left home.

Old John Osborne grew more unhappy and more angry every day. His behaviour made his unmarried daughter unhappy too. The death of his son had made the old man very bitter. He had never forgiven George for marrying Amelia Sedley. And he had always refused to see his dead son's widow.

One evening, at dinner, Maria looked more unhappy than usual.

'What's the matter with you?' Maria's father asked. 'Has something or somebody upset you? Not me, I hope!'

Maria began to cry. 'Oh sir!' she said. 'I've seen little George – your grandson. He's as beautiful as an angel and *very* like his father!'

Mr Osborne's face went red with anger, but he said nothing.

A few days later, little Georgy had something else to tell his mother.

'I met Aunt Maria again in the park yesterday,' he said. 'She was in her carriage and there was an old, white-haired man with her. The old man had thick eyebrows and he frowned at me. But

the lady smiled and called me George. The old man gave me a sovereign – look, Mamma,’ said Georgy, holding up the gold coin. ‘When I bowed and thanked him, he smiled too.’

Then Amelia knew that Georgy had seen his grandfather and she was very afraid. A letter from John Osborne arrived a few days later.

Dear Madam,

I’ve spoken to my lawyer and legal documents have been prepared. I want my grandson, George Osborne, to live in my house in Russell Square. I’ll change my will and make him my heir. When I die, the money his father would have inherited will be young George’s. My daughter and I will look after the boy and he will be sent to a good school. My grandson will be educated as a gentleman, so he can take his place in society.

For as long as you are a widow, I’ll give you some money each year. When you marry again, you will not get another penny. George will be allowed to visit you in your home sometimes.

Please send your reply to my lawyer.

Yours faithfully,

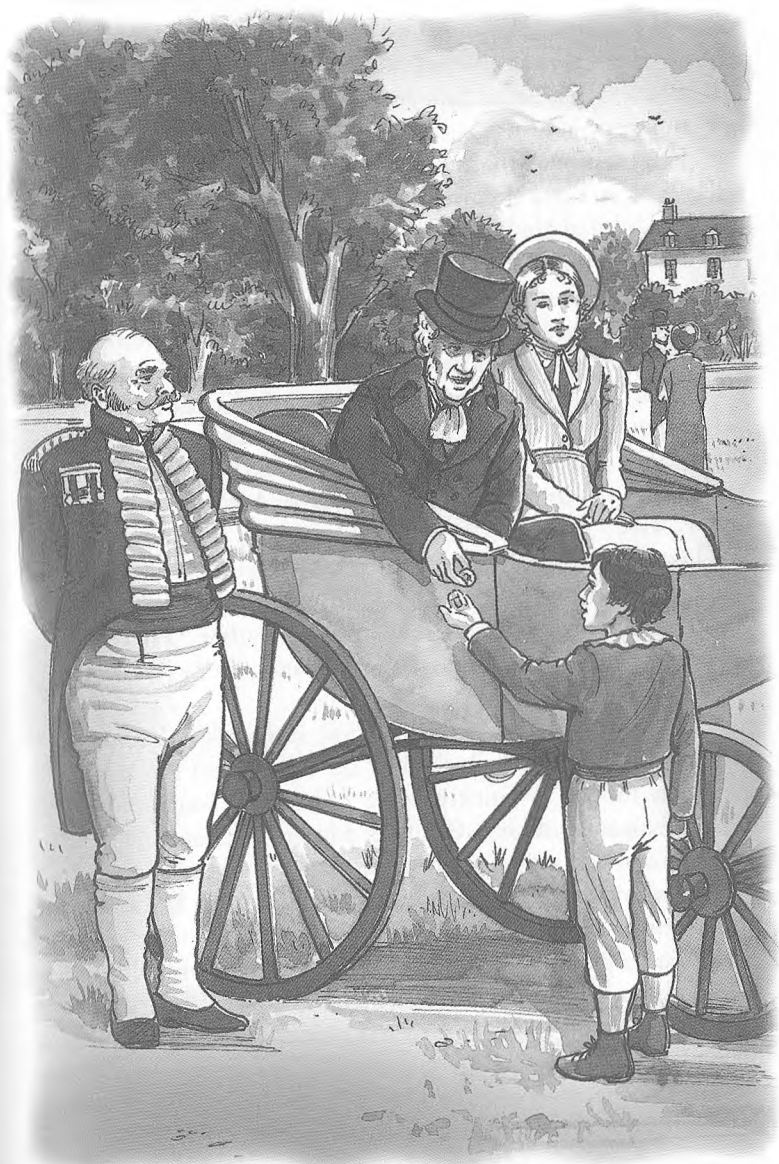
John Osborne

Amelia’s face went white and her body began to tremble. The letter fell to the floor and the poor girl covered her face with her hands. She wept for a long time. When she read the letter again, she became very angry.

‘Mr Osborne has never wanted to know his grandson. And now he wants to buy him from me!’ she cried. ‘He thinks that I’ll give him my darling boy! He’s telling me to marry again! No! Mr Osborne *can’t* make me do this! George Osborne is still my dear husband and he always will be.’

Then Amelia began to think more calmly. Was her love for her son making her selfish? There would never be enough money to give him everything he wanted.

‘I can’t talk to Mother and Father about this,’ Amelia said



'The old man gave me a sovereign...'

sadly. 'I wish that William Dobbin was in England. He'd know what to do and he'd give me advice. But he's far away in India. His sisters tell me that he's getting married there. I may never see him again!'

That evening, Mrs Sedley showed her daughter some more bills. 'We can't pay them, Amelia. Soon we'll have no money to buy food,' the old lady said. 'What are we going to do?'

Amelia said nothing but she went to her room and wrote a letter to Mr Osborne's lawyer. She agreed to everything that Mr Osborne had suggested.

Mr Osborne laughed loudly when he read Amelia's letter.

'Good,' he said. 'I knew that she'd agree. I've got money and old Sedley hasn't. Money always wins. You can take care of the boy, Maria, it will give you something to do with your time. You're too old to get married and have children of your own now.'

'Take this key,' he went on. 'It's for the room above mine. Get it ready for the boy.'

Maria Osborne took the key from her father. 'That was my brother's room,' she said quietly, with tears in her eyes. 'It's been locked for years.'

'And why shouldn't young George have his father's room?' Mr Osborne asked. 'He looks like his father, and I'm sure he'll spend my money as quickly as his father did. You should send that woman some money. Send her a hundred pounds.'

'And can I go and see her?' Maria Osborne asked.

'Do what you wish,' her father replied. 'But I don't want her here.'

Maria called on Amelia the next day. Georgy had not gone to school so he could talk to his aunt too. The meeting went well. After Maria Osborne had left, Amelia told Georgy about his new life. The boy was very excited.

'I'll be able to have new clothes whenever I like!' he said happily. 'And I'll have my own pony, like Rawdy Crawley! I'll go to a better school and have plenty of money to spend. Don't

worry, Mamma. I'll come to see you when I can. I'll use my grandfather's carriage.'

So Amelia hid her sadness and tried to be happy. But it was very difficult. Her son had been the most important person in her life for many years. Without him, the days would pass very slowly.

Georgy did not forget his mother and sometimes the Osbornes' carriage drove up to the Sedleys' house. The handsome boy would jump down, and tell his mother all about his fine new school and his rich friends. He was always dressed in the latest fashion.

'He's just like his father,' Amelia thought sadly.

Some afternoons, Amelia would walk all the way from Fulham Road to Russell Square. She would stand outside the Osbornes' house and look up at the window of Georgy's room. She would think of him doing his school-work there. Then, with a sigh, the unhappy mother would walk slowly home again.

16

Becky in High Society

And what was Becky, our little adventuress, doing now? She had worked very hard to reach the top of society in Vanity Fair. She had flattered Sir Pitt Crawley and lied to Lady Jane. She had spent hours entertaining Lord Steyne and she had allowed him to buy her expensive gifts. She had ignored⁴ her husband, and he had got into debt. She had ignored her own child so that he no longer loved her. And why? So that she could be presented at Court, like any other fine lady.

Yes, the day came when little Becky Crawley stepped proudly into the Crawleys' carriage with her husband, Lady Jane and Sir Pitt. They were driven slowly through the streets of London –

down Piccadilly and along St James's Street, to St James's Palace where they were going to meet the king.

Becky looked beautiful in her elegant white dress. She had a white shawl around her white shoulders and fine white feathers in her hair. Her beautiful diamonds – where had they come from? – sparkled as she walked into the palace like a queen.

Becky had reached the highest place in society. If a lady was presented at Court, she would be accepted everywhere. Everyone would think that she was a good woman. But Vanity Fair can be a very cruel place. Would Lady Steyne, Lady Bareacres, and their noble friends accept Becky or turn their backs on her? That was the last test and Lord Steyne had helped Becky to take it. He had helped her to get an invitation to the king's court.

A few days after Becky was presented at Court, Lord Steyne spoke to his wife. They were eating breakfast in their home, Gaunt House.

'Lady Steyne,' he said in a cold cruel voice. 'You are giving a dinner-party here next Friday. I want you to invite Colonel and Mrs Crawley. Write invitations for them, please.'

'Lady Gaunt writes the invitations for our parties,' Lady Steyne said quickly, looking at her daughter-in-law.

'I certainly will *not* invite that woman and her husband here,' Lady Gaunt said.

'Madam,' Lord Steyne said, smiling unpleasantly, 'you live very comfortably here in my house. You have no money and no intelligence. My son married you so that he would have children but you've had none. My son is tired of you, and your marriage is finished. You can leave this house at any time. But *while* you are here, you'll obey me. Do you understand?'

Angry tears came into Lady Gaunt's eyes. 'Mrs Crawley should *not* have a place in society,' she said.

'I don't agree,' Lord Steyne replied. 'She's both intelligent and beautiful. You're neither of these things, madam. Mrs Crawley and her husband will dine here next Friday. Write the

invitation. If I say that Colonel and Mrs Crawley are to be accepted by society, then they will be!

Later that day, Lord Steyne called at the Crawleys' house in Curzon Street. As he waited for Becky in the hall, he saw a card on a table. His wife and Lady Gaunt had left an invitation for the Crawleys. Lord Steyne smiled.

'Your ladies called here and left an invitation,' Becky said as she came into the room. 'You must have spoken to them, my lord. Thank you. I'm sorry I wasn't here to greet you. I was ... I was in the kitchen, cooking. I had to wash my hands.'

'That's a lie, Becky!' Lord Steyne said, laughing. 'You were in your room, putting makeup on your cheeks, I expect. I heard the bedroom door open and then you came downstairs.'

'I always want to look my best when you visit me,' Becky said. 'Me, wear makeup? No! Look!' She rubbed her face with her handkerchief. 'I'm not wearing any makeup at all!'

Lord Steyne picked up his wife's invitation card. 'You've got what you wished for,' he said. 'You're in society now, Becky, but you'll not like it. You've got no money and you're not well-bred. The women will find out that you were a governess and they'll be cruel to you. They'll turn their backs on you and ignore you.'

When she heard these words, Miss Briggs, who was sitting in the room, gave a loud sigh. Lord Steyne looked at Becky's companion angrily.

'Get rid of that sheep-dog of yours, or I'll get rid of her myself!' he said.

'Very well,' Becky replied. She turned to her companion and gave her an order. 'Briggs, the weather's fine. Take Rawdy for a walk in the park.'

When she was alone with Lord Steyne, Becky's eyes filled with tears. 'It's very difficult,' she said. 'I can't send Briggs away for ever because —'

'— because you owe her money?' Steyne said.

'It's worse than that. I've ruined her. Last year, when we had nothing, she gave me all her savings. She gave me all the money

she had. I can't send her away, until I can repay her.'

'How much did she give you?' Lord Steyne asked.

Becky thought for a moment and then she said an amount that was twice what Briggs had given her.

Lord Steyne swore at her. 'Damn you, Becky!' he cried. 'That was a stupid thing to do! What does Crawley think?'

Becky began to cry. 'My husband doesn't know,' she said. 'He would kill me, if he did know. No one knows about this. Oh, what can I do? I'm so very unhappy!'

Lord Steyne said nothing, but he looked very angry. Then he left the room, banging the door behind him. A few seconds later, Becky heard his carriage drive away.

Becky stopped crying at once. She stood up and laughed. Her green eyes sparkled wickedly. She sat down at the piano and played splendidly for a few minutes. Then she jumped up and danced around the room.

'Thank God, Lord Steyne believed me!' she said to herself. 'Of course Rawdon knows about the money from Briggs. But if I'd told Lord Steyne the truth, he would never pay me!'

That night, a note arrived for Becky from Gaunt House. Written on a grey piece of paper was an order from Lord Steyne to his bank. He ordered his bankers to pay Mrs Rawdon Crawley a very large sum of money. At the bottom of this order was Lord Steyne's signature and the address of his bankers. Rawdon heard his wife singing that evening and she seemed very happy.

In the morning, Colonel Crawley went to meet his friends. Becky went out too. She went immediately to Lord Steyne's bankers. They gave her one hundred and fifty pounds in small banknotes and the rest of the money in one large banknote.

Next, Becky bought Miss Briggs a very expensive black silk dress, which delighted her companion very much. Mr Raggles was given fifty pounds and so was the man who rented his carriages to the Crawleys.

Lastly, Becky went quietly upstairs to her own room. She put the biggest banknote into a leather wallet⁴. Then she put the

wallet into her little desk, which she always kept locked.

Friday came – the day of the dinner party at Gaunt House. Rawdon did not like dinner parties and he sat in silence for most of the evening.

Before the meal, Lord Steyne introduced Becky to his wife, Lady Steyne, and the other women in his family.

‘I’m delighted to meet you at last, Lady Steyne,’ she said, making a deep curtsy. ‘Your husband helped my father, when he was alive, and he bought many of my father’s paintings. I was a little girl then, of course.’

Becky then turned to Lady Bareacres, another of the guests, and smiled sweetly. ‘I believe our last meeting was in Brussels,’ Becky said. ‘We were at the Duchess of Richmond’s ball together. I remember that you and your daughter needed horses, but I was unable to help you.’

Lady Bareacres had not forgotten what had happened in Belgium and she looked very angry.

‘I don’t think that I’ll have any trouble from her,’ Becky said to herself.

At dinner, Becky was witty and amusing. She sat next to two foreign diplomats and spoke to them in perfect French.

Becky’s troubles began at the end of the dinner. The ladies went to the drawing-room and the men stayed in the dining-room. Becky went over to the fireplace where the ladies were standing, and they all walked away. When Becky joined them at a table covered with interesting drawings, the ladies moved away again. She tried to speak to one of the children, but his mamma called him away at once.

Lady Steyne, who had a good heart, felt sorry for Becky. ‘My husband tells me that you sing and play beautifully, Mrs Crawley,’ she said. ‘Please will you sing for me?’

‘I’ll do anything that gives you, or Lord Steyne, pleasure,’ Becky said quietly and she sat down at the piano and began to sing.

When the men came into the drawing-room, Lord Steyne immediately saw what was happening, and he smiled.

Becky's troubles were over now. All the men stood around the piano to listen to Mrs Crawley. The rest of the evening went very well for Becky and the other ladies were left completely alone.

After Lord and Lady Steyne's dinner party, Becky had many more successes in society. From that evening, she was seen in all the best places and at all the best parties in London. Lord Steyne was always with her, admiring his pretty little friend and praising her.

The Crawleys invited guests to their house in Curzon Street too. Their food and wine were always the very best. How they did they pay for it? No one knew. But perhaps Lord Steyne helped with these things too.

Lord Steyne called at the little house in Curzon Street every day. At about this time, he found Miss Briggs a new place in a house in the country, so Becky no longer had her sheep-dog. Sir Pitt and Lady Jane became very worried.

'Dear Rebecca, you must think about your reputation – and the reputation of your family,' said Sir Pitt. 'Lord Steyne is always at your house now and Rawdon spends his time here, or with his friends. People will begin to talk about you.'

Becky laughed. 'People have always talked about me,' she said. 'And Lord Steyne doesn't care what people think about *him*.'

'It's time that your son was sent to a good school,' Lord Steyne said to Colonel Crawley one evening. 'He's too old to be taught by a governess. The boy should be learning Latin and Greek. And he needs to meet people who will help him as he gets older.'

'That will never happen,' Rawdon replied sadly. 'Good schools are too expensive. We couldn't afford one.'

'I think I can help you,' Lord Steyne replied. 'I'm a governor

of Charterhouse School here in London. Rawdon's a clever boy and he'll be a good pupil, I'm sure. I'll make the arrangements.'

'I'll miss the boy if he goes away,' Rawdon said sadly, when he was alone with his wife. 'And I think that he'll miss me too.'

'Do what you like,' Becky said quickly. 'You and Lord Steyne must decide about Rawdy. I can't take care of the boy, now that Briggs has gone. I have to spend my time taking care of *you*.'

So Rawdy went to Charterhouse School and his father visited him whenever he could. He was proud of the boy and always gave him two or three sovereigns. The money made Rawdy a popular boy at the school.

17

'I am Innocent⁴!'

Becky was now at the centre of London society. She was invited to all the best parties and she wore the prettiest and most fashionable dresses. At first Becky's success excited her. Then her feelings changed.

'I see the same people every day, wherever I go,' she said to Lord Steyne. 'They talk about the same things too: themselves, their friends, and where they're going tomorrow or next week. They're called the best people in London. But they are boring!'

Lord Steyne laughed loudly. Becky always amused him.

'This is what you wanted,' he said. 'You begged me to help you to enter society. You can't complain about it now.'

'Why can't I complain?' Becky replied. 'I'd rather be the wife of a soldier, or live in the country like Mrs Bute. People in high society are so DULL!'

'My mother was an opera-dancer,' Becky went on, 'but she had more fun than me. I'd be happier on the stage, dancing and singing like her!'

'And you'd do it very well, my dear Becky,' Lord Steyne said with another loud laugh.

Rawdon was not happy either, but for a different reason. He now realized that Lord Steyne spent too much time with his wife. They were often alone together in the house in Curzon Street. Whenever the Crawleys went to a party, Lord Steyne was by Becky's side. The colonel began to stay at home more. He began to watch his wife and Lord Steyne together. But it was too late. The great Lord Steyne gave Becky everything she wanted. Everyone knew that she spent his money and wore the jewels he gave her. Everyone knew, except her husband.

One evening, there was a grand party at Gaunt House. As usual, everyone listened to Becky and watched her. When the party ended, Rawdon took Becky to their carriage, but he did not return home with her. He wanted to smoke a cigar and walk to Curzon Street alone.

Suddenly, three men came up behind him.

'Excuse me, Colonel Crawley, but you must come with us,' one of the men said.

Rawdon recognised the man at once. He was a bailiff³.

'Colonel, we are arresting⁴ you for debt,' the bailiff said politely. 'Come with us, please. We have a cab waiting.'

The men took Rawdon to the house of a debt-collector called Mr Moss. This was not the first time that Colonel Rawdon Crawley had met Mr Moss. Rawdon had to find the money and pay his debts, or he would have to go to a debtors' prison.

Early the next morning, Rawdon wrote his wife a letter.

Dear Becky,

I hope you slept well. I'm sorry I didn't bring you your coffee this morning, but I was arrested last night. I'm now at Mr Moss's house in Cursitor Street.

I've been arrested because of a debt of a hundred and seventy pounds. There's seventy pounds in my desk and you can sell my

watch, if you have to. I must have the money tonight.

Come quickly. God bless you,

R.C.

Hours passed and Becky did not come. Then, in the evening, Rawdon was given a letter, which was written on pink paper.

Dear Rawdon,

What a dear, silly man you are! You know that I've no valuable things to sell. I have a headache because I worried about you all day.

Lord Steyne came this evening. He told me that he enjoyed my singing at the party last night. He laughed when I told him about you. He didn't seem surprised at this news! I begged him to lend me two hundred pounds. He'll send it to me in the morning, if he can. I'll bring it to Mr Moss's house myself.

I'm writing this note in bed. Oh, my head aches, and my heart too! I'm so upset! How could you be so foolish!

Becky

When Rawdon read the letter, he became very angry. Becky did not love him at all! And why had Lord Steyne laughed? Rawdon had been arrested outside Gaunt House. Had Lord Steyne planned everything?

'That man has taken my wife, but I won't take his money,' Rawdon said to himself. Then he wrote a note to Sir Pitt and Lady Jane.

Dear Brother and Sister,

I'm begging you to help me! I must have a hundred pounds tonight or I'll be in prison tomorrow. You are my only hope.

Rawdon

An hour later, Rawdon had a visitor. But it was not Becky, it was Lady Jane.

'Pitt is not at home, so I came myself,' she said. 'I've paid the

money. You can leave this awful place at once.'

Rawdon held Lady Jane's hand and thanked her with tears in his eyes. She smiled, then left him. Rawdon walked home alone.

It was now nine o'clock. Rawdon hurried through the dark streets until he arrived at his own house. He had expected the house to be dark, but he was surprised to see that bright lights were shining from the drawing-room windows. He crossed the road slowly and opened the door with his key. He heard music and laughter from the room above him, but everywhere else was quiet. All the servants had been sent away.

Rawdon walked slowly up the stairs. Now he could hear Becky singing and then he heard Lord Steyne's loud laugh. Rawdon opened the drawing-room door and went in.

There were dirty plates and glasses on a little table. Becky lay on the sofa, wearing her newest dress. Her arms, hands and neck were covered with sparkling jewels. Lord Steyne was leaning over the back of the sofa, kissing Becky's hand. Becky saw her husband first, and she gave a little scream when she saw his white, angry face.

Lord Steyne stood up, frowning angrily. Then he laughed and held out his hand.

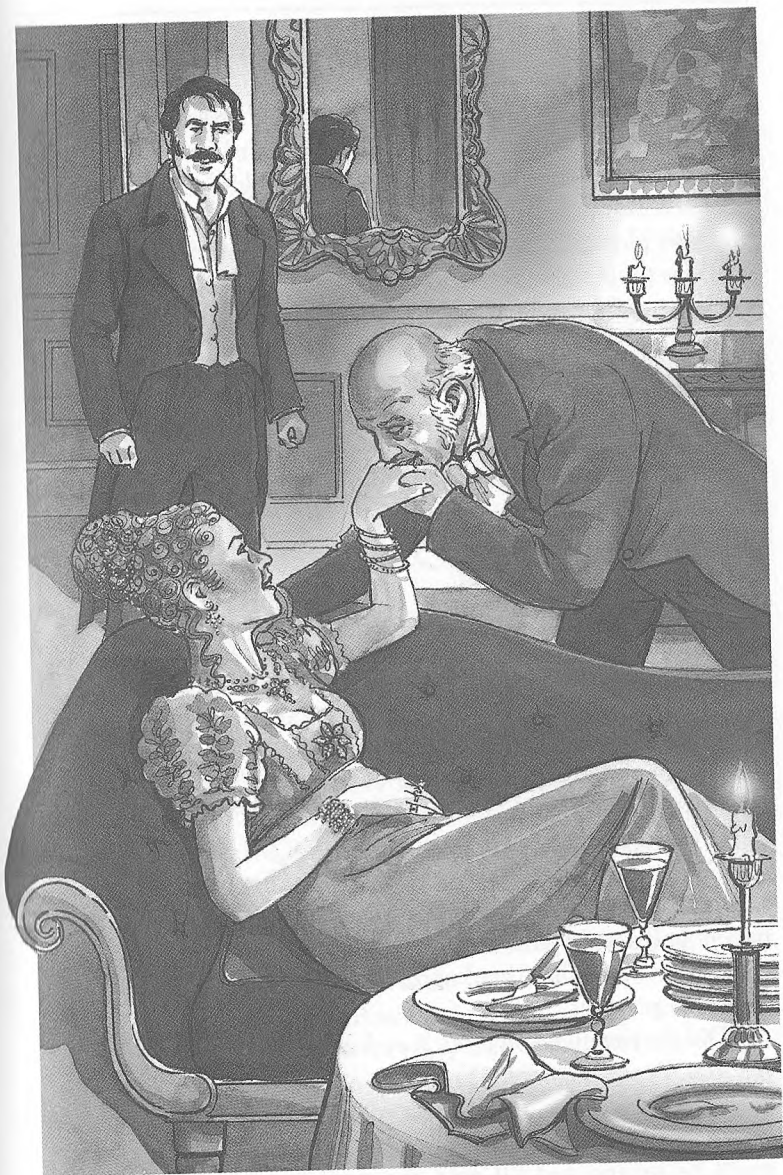
'Crawley, you're back already!' he said, with an awful smile. 'I did not expect you so soon. How are you?'

Becky ran towards her husband and fell on her knees. 'I'm innocent, Rawdon! I've done nothing wrong!' she cried. 'Tell him I'm innocent,' she cried, looking towards Lord Steyne.

Lord Steyne thought that the Crawleys had tricked him and he was furious with them.

'You're not innocent!' he screamed at Becky. 'Every jewel you're wearing, everything you own, comes from me. I've given you thousands of pounds which your husband has spent. He has sold you to me! I *own* you! Your mother wasn't innocent, your husband isn't innocent, and neither are you!

'You may have frightened other men,' he shouted at Rawdon, 'but you won't frighten me! Get out of my way!'



Lord Steyne was leaning over the back of the sofa, kissing Becky's hand.

Lord Steyne tried to push past, but Rawdon put his hands around the old man's throat.

'You're lying!' he cried. 'You're a wicked, wicked man!'

As he said these words, Rawdon hit Lord Steyne twice on the face and the noble lord fell to the ground.

Then Rawdon turned to his wife and she smiled up at him. She was pleased and surprised to see her husband fighting for her. Her smile made Rawdon even more angry.

'Get up!' he said. 'Take off all those jewels. Throw them down!'

Rawdon pulled the diamond star from Becky's dress and threw it hard at Lord Steyne. The jewel cut Lord Steyne's head and he had a scar there until the day he died.

As Steyne walked out of the house for the last time, Rawdon turned back to his wife. All the jewels were on the floor and her face was white with fear.

'Come upstairs,' he said.

'Don't kill me, Rawdon!' Becky cried.

Rawdon laughed. 'Kill you? No. I want to see what you've taken from that man. Has he given you money?'

'No, that is I - I ...' Becky began.

'Give me your keys,' Rawdon said.

He opened every drawer and cupboard in Becky's room and threw everything onto the floor. Then he found the little desk, but it was locked.

'Give me the key for this,' Rawdon said quietly. Becky gave him the key without saying a word. Rawdon looked at all the papers and letters and threw them down. Then he found the wallet that was full of banknotes. One of them was a note for a thousand pounds.

'Did Steyne give you this?' Rawdon asked.

'Yes,' Becky answered.

'I'll send it back to him,' Rawdon said. 'Then I'll pay poor Briggs and some of the other creditors. Let me know where you'll be staying and I'll send the rest to you there. You could

have given me a hundred pounds from all this, Becky. I always shared everything with you.'

'I'm innocent,' Becky said. But Rawdon left her without saying another word.

Becky heard the door shut behind him and she knew that her husband had gone forever.

She sat on the bed for hours, but she did not cry. Her hair covered her face and her dress was torn. She sat there, thinking of her past life, and of everything she had ever said or done. All those lies, all that selfishness had left her with nothing. She was not the first person who had lost everything in Vanity Fair.

18

The Governor of Coventry Island

It was Sunday. When Rawdon left Curzon Street, he hurried to his brother's house in Great Gaunt Street. He was wearing the evening-clothes he had put on two days earlier.

'Good God, Rawdon!' his brother said, when he came into his study. 'What's the matter with you? Why are you here so early? Why aren't you at home?'

'Home!' repeated Rawdon with a laugh. 'What home? Don't worry, Pitt. I'm not drunk. Shut the door. I want to speak to you.'

Sir Pitt sat down at his desk and looked at his brother.

'I'm finished, Pitt,' Rawdon said. 'It's all over.'

'I can't pay your debts, Rawdon,' Sir Pitt said quickly. 'I told you to be careful, but you went on spending. I can't help you.'

'I don't want money,' Rawdon said bitterly. 'I don't care what happens to me.'

'What do you want then?' Pitt asked.

'It's my boy,' Rawdon replied. 'I want you and Jane to look

after him. Rawdy's more fond of his aunt than his ...' Rawdon's eyes filled with tears. 'But I've been a fool. I always expected to get Aunt Matilda's money, you know that.'

'I didn't tell the old lady to change her will,' Sir Pitt said. 'You married Becky Sharp, that was your biggest mistake.'

'My marriage is finished,' Rawdon said, looking down at the floor. 'Pitt, I found her with Steyne, and she was covered in his diamonds. I shall have to fight him, of course. And if he kills me, I want you and Jane to look after Rawdy.'

'Of course we will, of course,' Sir Pitt said quietly.

Rawdon took the wallet he had found in Rebecca's desk out of his pocket. He counted the banknotes. 'Here are six hundred pounds,' he said. 'I want you to give this money to Briggs. We took all her savings and I know that was wicked and wrong. I'll keep a few pounds for myself, and Becky can have the rest.'

As Rawdon gave Pitt the money, his hand shook and the thousand-pound banknote fell out of the wallet, onto the floor.

'I'll return this to the man who gave it to her – the man I hope to kill,' Rawdon said quietly.

Rawdon thanked his brother, then hurried away to meet one of his friends who was in the army. Colonel Crawley knew what he had to do – he must fight a duel with Lord Steyne.

In the afternoon, Becky called for her maid. But the girl had left the house several hours earlier and she had taken many of her mistress's things with her. Becky screamed out the girl's name, but there was no answer.

A noise was coming from the drawing-room, which was below Becky's. She decided to see what was happening. She put on a simple dress, went downstairs, and opened the drawing-room door.

Mr Raggles and Mrs Raggles, the cook, were sitting on the sofa, drinking the Crawleys' wine. Other servants were sitting at a table, laughing and talking. Mr Raggles looked very unhappy.

'What are you all doing in this room?' Rebecca shouted.

'Where's my maid? Why did no one answer me when I called? And why are you sitting on my sofa, Cook?'

'Your sofa!' Mrs Raggles replied. 'It's my husband's sofa. Everything in the house belongs to him. I'll sit on it as long as I like!'

'She's drunk! Throw her out of the house!' Becky shouted at one of the men.

'Throw her out yourself!' the man replied with a laugh. 'Pay us and you can throw us all out.'

'No one speaks to me like that!' Becky screamed. 'When Colonel Crawley comes back —'

There was a loud shout of laughter from everyone except Mr Raggles. 'The colonel's not coming back,' he said. 'Someone took away his things, hours ago. He's cheated us. You both cheated us. We want the money you owe us!'

'Raggles, please stop speaking to me like that,' Becky said.

Raggles shook his head sadly. 'Oh, ma'am,' he said. 'I've known the Crawleys all my life and they've always been good to me — up to now. But you and the colonel have ruined me and my family. You've lived in my house for four years. You've used my things and eaten my food. Can you pay me now?'

'I can't pay you today,' Becky said. 'Come back tomorrow. I thought that my husband had paid you. He'll be here tomorrow. He has the money. I'm going out to find him now.'

And before anyone could stop her, Becky had got her bonnet and shawl and left the house.

By now, it was four o'clock in the afternoon. Becky went quickly to the Pitt Crawleys' house in Great Gaunt Street. Lady Jane was at church, but Sir Pitt was in his study, reading a newspaper.

He looked up in horror as Becky came into the room.

'Dear Pitt, please don't look at me like that,' Becky said quickly. 'Whatever you have heard, I'm not guilty. No one understands me, not even my husband! Good luck was coming our way at last! But now everything has gone wrong.'

'Are the stories in the newspaper about Rawdon true?' Pitt asked. 'Is he going to be the new Governor of Coventry Island?'

'Yes, yes, it's true and we must thank Lord Steyne for it,' Becky said. 'Lord Steyne's a powerful man, as you know. I knew that he liked me,' she said, looking down at the floor, 'so I begged him to help my dear husband. Everything that I've done, has been done for Rawdon. And that's the truth.'

As she spoke, Becky looked up at Pitt with a sweet smile. She was delighted to see that he believed every word she said.

'Then Rawdon —' Pitt began.

'Rawdon misunderstood everything,' Becky said quickly. 'Whatever he may have told you about me and Lord Steyne is wrong. The Governor of Coventry Island died on Friday and Lord Steyne made sure that Rawdon would take his place. It was to be a surprise for him. But then Rawdon saw Lord Steyne and me together and Rawdon hit him!'

As she spoke, Becky fell onto her knees and began to cry.

'Oh, my dear Pitt!' she begged. 'Please help me! Help me to get my husband back!'

At that moment, Lady Jane came into the room. She was furious. 'Mrs Crawley, I'm surprised to see you in the home of an honest family,' she said. 'Please leave at once.'

'Please tell her!' Becky cried, holding Pitt's hand tightly. 'I've done nothing wrong! I'm innocent!'

'You're wrong, my dear,' Pitt said to his wife. 'I believe Rebecca is —'

'Is what? A wicked woman, a cruel mother and a false wife? That's what she is and she's not welcome in my house!' said Lady Jane. She knew much more about Becky than her husband. That morning, she had sent her maid to Curzon Street and found out the truth from Becky's servants.

'But my dear Jane —' Pitt began.

'If that woman comes here again, I'll leave this house for ever!' Lady Jane replied. 'Her wicked heart is full of vanity and greed. Choose between her and me!'

Lady Jane left the room and Becky smiled and stood up.

'I think she's jealous of our friendship, Pitt,' she said quietly. 'Please speak to Rawdon for me. Only you can help us now.'

Rawdon's friend stopped the colonel fighting a duel with Lord Steyne. But soon everyone knew the story of Mrs Crawley and the noble lord. And they knew about the Crawleys' debts.

Rawdon decided that he had to leave the country and so he became Governor of Coventry Island. It was a dangerous job. The island was a bad place to live – people died of disease and the weather was terrible. But Colonel Rawdon no longer cared about his health or happiness. He only cared about his son. He often wrote to young Rawdy, who was very proud of his father, the new Governor of Coventry Island.

Rawdon sent Becky a little money every year. She did not try to see her son again. When he was not at school, Rawdy lived with his aunt and uncle – Lady Jane and Sir Pitt.

Lord Steyne went to live abroad. He was furious that he had helped Rawdon Crawley, the man who had become his enemy. The story of the noble lord's relationship with Mrs Crawley was the talk of Vanity Fair for some time and then it was forgotten.

And where was Mrs Crawley herself? No one knew. Some people thought that she had gone abroad too, but she was certainly not with Lord Steyne.

19

Dobbin Comes Home

While young Georgy Osborne was enjoying his new life with his grandfather, his mother Amelia was living in poverty³. Then old Mrs Sedley became ill and died. Georgy did not cry for her but he had new black clothes for the funeral.

A short time later, Georgy was called out of his class at school. Two visitors had come to see him. One of the men was very fat and the other tall and thin.

'Can you guess who we are?' the tall man said.

'I don't know the other gentleman, but I think that you must be Major Dobbin, sir,' Georgy replied with a smile.

'You're right, Georgy,' the tall man said. 'And this is your uncle – Joseph Sedley.'

'Has your mother spoken to you about me?' Jos asked.

'Oh, yes, many times,' Georgy replied. 'She'll be so pleased to see you.'

Dobbin and Jos had met on a ship which was sailing from India. Dobbin's regiment was returning to England and Jos had left India because he was unwell.

On their long journey home, Dobbin and Jos had become friends. They had spent much of their time talking about Amelia and her son.

'And how is your mother?' Dobbin asked Georgy. 'My sisters told me that she's getting married. Is that true?'

'Oh, no, sir,' the boy replied. 'She's too busy looking after my Grandfather Sedley. He's not very well. Have you been to Fulham Road? I live in Russell Square now, but I could take you to Grandfather Sedley's house in the Osbornes' carriage.'

And so after many years, Dobbin and Amelia met again. Dobbin thought that Amelia had not changed at all. Her face was too pale, but her blue eyes were kind and honest. As Major Dobbin held her hands, he knew that he loved Amelia more than ever.

Old Mr Sedley was delighted to see Jos, who was horrified to hear how hard life had been for his family.

'I'm back now, Father,' Jos told the old man. 'I plan to find a big comfortable house in the centre of London where you and Amelia can live. We'll all be together again.'

Jos Sedley was now a very rich man and the society of Vanity Fair welcomed him home. His new house was big, and full of

expensive furniture and beautiful Indian carpets. Soon Amelia's things arrived from Fulham Road, including the little piano that she loved so much.

'I love my piano more than anything else in the world,' Amelia told Dobbin.

The major's heart was full of joy. 'Do you, Amelia?' he said quietly.

Amelia smiled sadly. 'I love it because *he* gave it to me,' she said. Then she looked up at Dobbin's face and at last she realized the truth.

'It was *you!*' she said. '*You* bought the piano for me, not George! I didn't understand. Thank you, William, thank you!'

As Amelia smiled at him, William could no longer hide his feelings.

'Emmy, I bought the piano for you because I loved you,' he said quickly. 'I loved you all those years ago and I love you now. I've loved you since the day we all went to Vauxhall, do you remember? I've thought of you every day for twelve years. I wanted to tell you before I went to India. But you didn't care if I stayed or went.'

'I've been very ungrateful,' Amelia said quietly, 'but my love for George will never change. I'll always think of him as my husband. But I need a friend, William, and so does my son. Will you be that friend?'

'Always, dearest Emmy,' Dobbin replied, putting his arms around her. 'But let me stay near you and see you often.'

'Yes, often,' Amelia said. 'Georgy and I will always need you, William. Thank you, thank you so much.'

Not long after this, old John Sedley became very ill and died. Sadness and poverty had weakened him and he was soon buried next to his dead wife.

'When your Grandfather Sedley died, he was a poor man,' old Mr Osborne said to Georgy. 'He once had much more money than me, but he died in poverty. Can you believe that?' And the old man laughed.



'I bought the piano for you because I loved you...'

William Dobbin was Georgy's godfather but he was also the boy's guardian⁴. So he met Mr Osborne to discuss the boy's future. Major Dobbin of Waterloo was a different person from the young captain who had made Mr Osborne angry all those years before. Dobbin now had a good deal of money and Mr Osborne could never be rude to a rich man.

'Your son was the best and bravest fellow in the regiment,' Dobbin said. 'I was proud to be George's friend.'

'And Georgy is so like his father,' Mr Osborne replied. 'But the boy is part of the Sedley family too. Dobbin, bring Jos Sedley to dinner, tomorrow. I should like to see him again.'

When the three men were together, Dobbin began to speak about Amelia.

'She's had a hard life, sir,' Dobbin said to Mr Osborne. 'She took your son away from you, but she gave her *own* son to you. It was very difficult for her. She was very poor, you know – the whole family was poor. I helped Amelia as much as I could, but it wasn't enough. She never knew that I had sent her the money, of course. I do hope that you'll agree to meet her.'

'You're a good fellow,' Mr Osborne said. 'I'll think about it.'

But very soon afterwards, Mr Osborne became ill and died a few days later. Before he died, the old man had time to make a new will. He left half of his money and property to Georgy. The other half was going to Mr Osborne's two daughters – Maria and Jane. The will also said: 'I leave five hundred pounds a year to my son's wife, Amelia Osborne. I also leave some money to Major William Dobbin. I thank him for the friendship he gave my son, George, and the help he gave to George's widow, Amelia.'

Society was ready to welcome Amelia Osborne again. She now had money of her own, and was a very different person from the poor widow of Fulham. She did not like old John Osborne's house in Russell Square, and Miss Maria Osborne did not want to live there alone. So the house was shut up and Maria went to live in Cheltenham.

Amelia and William met often at this time and they were happy together, but Amelia never forgot her dead husband.

20

Our Friends Abroad

In the summer, Amelia and William decided to leave England and have a holiday in Europe. They took Georgy with them and Jos Sedley came too. After a very pleasant trip on the River Rhine, our friends stayed for a few weeks in the fashionable little town of Baden-Baden.

There was a small casino³ in the town, and one night, Georgy Osborne went in there alone. He was now a tall, handsome and charming young man.

A woman with light-red hair, was sitting at one of the roulette-tables³. She was wearing a white but not very clean, evening-dress and a black mask¹. She was playing roulette and losing money on the red and the black numbers.

When she saw Georgy, the woman looked carefully at him with her sparkling green eyes and said to him in French, 'Aren't playing, sir?'

'No, madam,' Georgy replied.

The woman smiled and then spoke in English. 'Have you never played roulette? No? Then please play this for me.'

She took her last gold coin out of her purse and gave it to Georgy. 'Play this for me,' she repeated. 'Put it on any number you like.'

Georgy laughed. He placed the coin on a number and that number won.

'Thank you,' the woman said and put the money in her purse. 'What's your name?'

'My name's Osborne.'

The woman smiled again, nodded, and turned back to play.

At that moment, William Dobbin and Jos Sedley came into the room and walked towards Georgy.

'Come along, Georgy, you shouldn't be here,' Dobbin said, putting his arm round the boy's shoulder. 'Come back to the house with Jos and me.'

'I think I'll stay here and watch,' Jos said as Dobbin and Georgy walked away.

Jos stood behind the woman in the mask, took a coin out of his pocket, and put it on the roulette-table. The number won and the woman said, very quietly, in her soft voice, 'Sit down and bring me luck, sir.'

'Well, perhaps, just for a moment.'

Jos put another gold coin on the table, without looking at the number.

'I see that you don't play to win, sir. You play to forget – like me. But I can't forget the past, my dear sir. Your nephew is exactly like his father. You look the same as you did in Brussels. But are you the same? Everyone changes, everyone forgets.'

'Good God, who *are* you?' Jos asked.

The little woman took off her mask. 'You have forgotten me, Joseph Sedley,' she said sadly.

'Good Heavens! Mrs Crawley!' Jos cried.

'Becky,' she said, putting her hand on his. 'I'm staying at the Elephant Hotel, Joseph,' she said. 'When you call on me there – as I hope you will – ask for Madame De Raudon.'

'I saw dear Amelia today,' she went on. 'How pretty she looked and how happy! You look happy too, Joseph Sedley. But I'm unhappy, very unhappy.'

As Becky spoke, she held a handkerchief to her eyes.

'Look, you've lost your money,' she said. 'I'm unlucky too. I cannot play any more today. Let's go into the gardens and walk around a little. We're old friends, Mr Sedley, aren't we, and old friends help each other.'

Two years had passed since Becky had left England. It had been a time of great unhappiness for her, a time when she almost lost hope. Becky had not seen her son again before crossing the Channel, but she wrote him a short letter from Boulogne. She had told Rawdy that she was going to travel in Europe.

A year passed before Becky wrote to Rawdy again. The second letter was full of a mother's love for her dear son. In that year, Sir Pitt and Lady Jane's only son had died. And because the Pitt Crawleys loved young Rawdon as if he were their own son, he had become the heir of Queen's Crawley.

'Oh, Aunt Jane, *you're* my mother, not her!' young Rawdon had said when he read Becky's letter. But he was a kind boy and he had written a polite reply.

Becky stayed in Boulogne until a traveller from London told everyone the story of Lord Steyne and Mrs Crawley. Then Becky had to move on. Everywhere she went, Becky's bad reputation followed her. She had very little money and no friends.

She went to Paris, but she owed many debts there and had to leave suddenly. From Paris, Becky returned to Brussels – a place where she had once been very happy. She visited the battlefield of Waterloo, and saw George Osborne's grave.

'Poor George was very much in love with me,' she said to herself. 'What a fool he was! I wonder if Emmy and her fat brother are alive?'

Wherever Becky went, she made friends – but only for a short time. She flattered the women and flirted with the men. Young men enjoyed her company. She rode with them in the parks and went to the theatre and concerts. But the women turned away from her. No one respected her.

Then Becky began to gamble and, as time went on, she lost all her money. She borrowed³ more money so that she could gamble. Very soon she had many debts. When she could not pay for her hotel room, she moved on to another town. Poor Becky was no longer accepted by society. Now all her friends were gamblers, debtors and people who had run away from all kinds of

trouble. She had no money for new clothes and she was no longer pretty.

Once, at the opera in Rome, she had seen Lord Steyne. The scar on his head, where Rawdon had cut him with the jewel, had showed very clearly. Lord Steyne had sent a servant with a message to Becky's room the next day. For a moment, she hoped that they would become friends again, but the message was very clear.

'Lord Steyne is spending the winter in Rome and he wishes you to leave the city at once. If you don't —'

'If I don't ... will Lord Steyne pay someone to murder poor little me?' Becky asked with a laugh.

'Nothing is impossible in Rome,' the servant replied. 'My master never forgets an insult⁴ and he has not yet had his revenge. Leave now.'

So Rebecca had left the city and she had kept moving ever since. Now she was in the little town of Baden-Baden and her old friends Jos, Dobbin and Amelia, had decided to stay there too.

'Well, they used to be my friends,' Becky thought. 'I'm sure that I can get them to like me again. They seem to have money and I have none. That fat old Jos was in love with me once. Perhaps I'll keep him forever, this time! If I'm lucky, he'll call on me tomorrow. Jos and his sister have always believed my stories. They'll believe me now.'

The next day, Jos dressed in his best clothes and walked to the Elephant Hotel. He did not tell Amelia he was going there. When he reached the hotel he asked for 'Madame De Raudon' in room number ninety-two, as Becky had told him to.

Jos was sent up to the very top of the hotel. Here, the rooms were very small. As Jos slowly climbed up the stairs he saw and heard many strange people: students, artists, gamblers, actors, singers and shop-keepers. They were all smoking, drinking and making a great deal of noise.

At last, Jos found room number ninety-two and knocked on the door. It opened immediately and Becky looked out, her green eyes sparkling with happiness.

'I've been waiting for you,' she said. 'Wait just a minute and then you can come in.'

Becky looked round the little room quickly. She picked up a pot of makeup, a bottle of brandy and a plate of half-eaten food and pushed them under the bed. Then she tied the belt of her dressing-gown^t more tightly, touched her red hair, and opened the door.

'Welcome to my little home,' she said, holding Jos's hand and leading him into the room. 'Sit down there, on the chair – it's the only one, I'm afraid. I'll sit on the bed.'

Becky looked at her visitor with a charming smile. 'You haven't changed at all. I would have known you anywhere,' she said.

Jos was looking around the room with surprise. There were two dresses hanging on one hook and a bonnet on another. A pair of little boots were under the chair.

'A woman never forgets the first man she loves,' Becky said quietly. 'How young I was when I left Chiswick with your sister! How is that dear girl now? The poor thing was jealous of me, but I did nothing wrong. I would never have looked at George Osborne when there was somebody ...'

Becky took a torn handkerchief from a pocket and held it to her eyes. 'But I can't talk of old times,' she went on. 'That makes me feel so sad.'

Jos sighed and looked at the floor, which was not very clean.

'Life has been cruel to me, Joseph. I was a good wife, but my husband left me. I had a child – and they took him away from me! Since then, I've moved from one place to another. And I never met an honest man in all that time!'

Becky turned, hid her face on the bed for a moment and cried.

The kind-hearted Jos was very upset by Becky's story. At last,

he kissed her hand and left the room. As he walked back to the house where he was staying with Amelia, he thought of Becky's future.

'She's been treated very badly,' he said to himself. 'She must leave that awful little room. So many years have passed and she's never forgotten me. She needs my help now and she'll have it!'

21

Meetings

When Jos left the Elephant Hotel, he went to find Major Dobbin. He told him about his conversation with Becky that morning. But he did not tell him about their meeting at the casino the night before.

Dobbin was not sorry for Becky at all. 'So that little devil is back!' he said. 'Becky Rawdon brings trouble wherever she goes. Why is she living abroad alone? Why has she left her husband? An honest woman has friends and stays with her family.'

'Becky's done nothing wrong!' Jos cried. 'She's been badly treated, anyone can see that. We must help her!'

'Well, I'm not sure,' Dobbin replied. 'Let's ask Amelia. If she thinks we should help Becky, then I'll be happy to do that.'

'Amelia was jealous of Becky in the past,' Dobbin thought. 'And jealous women never forget.'

Jos and Dobbin walked across the road to the house where they were staying. Jos began talking as soon as he saw his sister.

'Amelia, my dear, I've had a strange adventure. An old friend, yes, a very dear friend of yours is staying in Baden-Baden. And I should like you to see her.'

'Her? Who is she?'

'She's a woman I dislike very much,' Dobbin said. 'A woman you have no reason to like either.'

Amelia's face became red. 'It's Becky! You've seen Becky!' she said. 'I won't see her. Don't make me see her!'

Dobbin smiled. 'Jos, I told you that Amelia wouldn't want to meet her,' he said.

'But Emmy, Becky is very unhappy!' Jos cried. 'She's poor and she's all alone. She's been ill and her husband has left her.'

'Oh, dear,' Amelia said quietly.

'She has no friends – except for you, perhaps. She cried when she spoke about you and little Georgy. She has a boy of the same age.'

'Yes, I remember,' Amelia said slowly. 'What happened to the child?'

'He is a beautiful boy, an angel, who loved his mother very much,' Jos said. 'But he was taken from her. She hasn't seen him for many years.'

'Poor Becky! We must go and see her at once!' Amelia cried.

'She's living at the very top of the Elephant Hotel,' Jos said. 'Room number ninety-two. I don't think I can climb those stairs again.'

'Then I'll go with Dobbin,' Amelia said. 'You've done what you could, Jos. Thank you.'

'Who's there?' Becky called when she heard the knock on her door. She gave a little scream when she saw Amelia and Dobbin.

Amelia ran forward to kiss Becky and put her arms around her.

'So they took your child from you!' said Amelia. 'Oh Becky, my poor friend! I had to give my child to the Osbornes for a time. I know how you feel!'

'Oh, yes! My child!' Becky said quickly. 'It was terrible. I became very ill. The doctors thought that I would die, but at last I got better. So here I am, penniless and friendless. And my child is far away.'

'How old is he?' Emmy asked.



'So here I am, penniless and friendless.'

'Eleven.'

'Eleven? But he was born the same year as Georgy and he's —'

'I know, I know!' Becky cried. 'I mean that he was eleven when they took him away from me. My sorrow has made me forget some things. But I'll never forget Rawdy's dear, dear face! I made a little drawing of him in happier days. But I think that it's in my luggage, which has not arrived here yet.'

And so Becky told more and more lies. She told her story so well that kind-hearted Amelia believed every word.

Dobbin moved away from the door and began to think about the past. He had seen George Osborne dancing with Becky before the Battle of Waterloo. He had seen them whispering together. He had also guessed his friend's secret.

'Becky was a false friend then and she's a false friend now,' Dobbin said to himself. 'But Emmy will never think that Becky is dishonest. Emmy is too good and that red-haired devil is too clever. Becky Crawley brings trouble wherever she goes.'

When Amelia left Becky's room, she was smiling happily. 'Come along, William, we must tell Jos everything,' she said. And they hurried back to Jos, who was waiting anxiously.

'Well?' said Jos said.

'The poor girl has been very unhappy!' Amelia said. 'But she's found her friends again now.'

'Yes, yes, of course,' Jos said. 'We must help her.'

'Becky mustn't stay in that awful hotel any longer,' Amelia went on. 'She can stay here.'

'Are you going to invite her to stay *here*?' Dobbin cried.

'Yes,' Amelia replied. 'She's had terrible trouble in her life.'

'Quite right, Emmy, quite right,' Jos said, nodding his head.

'My dear Amelia!' Dobbin cried. 'I beg you. Don't invite that woman here!'

'Please don't shout,' said Amelia. 'Becky is my oldest friend.'

'She wasn't always your friend,' Dobbin said quietly. 'She and your husband ...'

Amelia's face became extremely pale. 'I will *not* listen to lies, Major Dobbin!' she said and she walked angrily out of the room.

In her bedroom, Amelia looked at the portrait of her dead husband that she kept with her always.

'I was jealous of her for a time,' she whispered. 'But you told me that you'd done nothing wrong. And I knew that was the truth. You never lied to me, my dearest George. You would want me to help her now. I'm sure of that!'

Soon everything was arranged and Becky arrived with her bag. Dobbin was very angry. He refused to eat dinner with Becky, and left. At dinner-time, Georgy came into the dining-room and his mother introduced him to Mrs Rawdon Crawley, her oldest friend. Georgy looked at Becky in surprise, but said nothing.

Later, when they were alone for a minute, Georgy whispered. 'You were the lady in the mask, playing in the casino!'

'Don't tell your mother,' Becky said with a laugh. 'Your uncle was there too and your mother mustn't know. It's our secret, isn't it, Georgy?'

'Oh, yes, of course,' the boy said.

When Dobbin left Amelia, Jos and Becky, he decided to visit a friend who had recently arrived from London. The man was a diplomat and he had lived in the best society for several years.

'Have you ever heard of a Mrs Rawdon Crawley?' Dobbin asked his friend. 'You may have met her in London a few years ago, or you may know her story. I was in India and never heard the truth.'

Dobbin's friend laughed. 'Oh, I know all about *that* little lady,' he said. '*She* doesn't know much about *truth*! She's a dishonest woman with a bad reputation. Everyone in London knew about her *friendship* with Lord Steyne. Steyne's daughter-in-law, Lady Gaunt, is a cousin of mine. So I heard the real story. Dine with me, Dobbin, and I'll tell you all about it!'

When Dobbin heard the government official's story he was horrified. The next morning, he waited in the drawing-room to warn Amelia about Becky. But when Amelia came into the room at last, Jos and Becky were with her. Becky walked up to Dobbin, held out her hand and smiled.

Dobbin shook his head. 'I'm sorry, Mrs Crawley,' he said. 'I'm not your friend. I've been told —'

'Stop, Dobbin! I don't want any trouble!' Jos cried. 'Mrs Crawley is my guest, sir, remember that! I'll not stay to hear anything bad about her!'

'Dear friend,' said Becky very sweetly to Jos, 'do listen to what Dobbin has to say against me.'

'I will *not* listen!' Jos repeated angrily and he turned and left the room.

'Say what you have to say and then go, William,' Amelia said in a cold voice.

'I have to say that this lady isn't a suitable friend for you and your son, Amelia,' Dobbin began. 'There are people in this town who know the truth about you, Mrs Crawley. I've been told things that I can't repeat in front of Mrs Osborne.'

'That's very clever of you, Mr Dobbin,' Becky said. 'You accuse me, but you refuse to say what I did wrong. What am I guilty of? Am I guilty of being poor, unhappy and alone? Yes, all that's true.'

'I'll go, Amelia,' she went on. 'I am upsetting this gentleman's plans for your life —'

'Yes, you are,' Dobbin said quickly, 'and I know that I speak for Mrs Osborne too. She's always followed my advice and I know she will now. I'm an old friend. I think I have the right to speak for her.'

'No, sir. You have no right,' Amelia said. 'And you don't have the right to insult my friend either. Come with me, dear Rebecca.'

And, holding Becky's hand, Amelia moved towards the door of her room.

William Dobbin opened the door for the two women and then spoke again. 'Please stay a minute,' he said to Amelia. 'There's something I must say to you.'

'He wants to take you away from me,' Becky said quickly.

'No, you're wrong,' said Dobbin. 'Please, Emmy ...'

Becky walked on and Dobbin closed the door behind her. Amelia was trembling so much that she had to sit down.

'I was wrong. I have no right to speak for you. I shouldn't have said that,' Dobbin said. 'But before your husband died, he asked me to —'

'Don't talk about my husband,' Amelia said. 'You insulted him yesterday and I'll *never* forgive you for that!'

'You can't mean that, Amelia,' William Dobbin replied. 'I've loved you for many, many years. Since George died, I've tried to take care of you and protect you. And yes, I wanted to marry you. But you had no love left in your heart for me. I've been a useful friend to you, but that's all. It's not enough and now I'm tired of it.'

'Do you mean that you're leaving me, William?' Amelia said, very quietly. She looked up at him and her blue eyes filled with tears.

Dobbin laughed. 'We're too old for games now, Amelia,' he said. 'I left you once before and I came back. I've wasted my life⁴ loving you. I'm not going to follow you any more. I'm going back to England to rejoin my regiment. Goodbye.'

Becky smiled as she stood listening behind the bedroom door. 'That man behaves like a fool, but he is clever and he has a good heart too!' she said to herself. 'He could have been a good husband for me. He shouldn't have spent his life loving silly Emmy! But perhaps they are right for each other. I'll write him a note. I'll tell him that I'll help him, if he stays.'

Dinner was a silent meal in Amelia's house that night.

'Where's Dobbin?' Georgy asked, but no one answered him.

After dinner the boy sat looking out of the window.

'The servants are getting Dobbin's carriage ready,' Georgy

said in surprise. 'And another servant is bringing out his luggage. Where's Dobbin going?'

'He's going on a journey,' his mother said quietly.

'Is he going without us? When is he coming back?'

'He's not coming back,' Amelia replied.

Georgy ran to the door. 'I'll stop him!' he cried.

'Stay here, George!' Jos shouted.

Georgy ran back to the window and looked out again. 'I must go!' he cried.

'Then give him this,' Becky said and gave the boy a note.

William Dobbin was already in his carriage when Georgy reached him. The boy shouted questions through the window and then remembered the note. He gave it to Dobbin, who took it and read it quickly.

Dobbin frowned, tore the note into two pieces and threw them out of the carriage window. He did not look up as the carriage drove away.

Georgy ran into the house again and cried all night. Perhaps his mother cried too. Who knows? But we can be sure that Becky had no tears in *her* eyes.

22

Endings

Becky had lived in Vanity Fair for many years. She was used to its pleasures and its cruelties. But even *she* was surprised by the good luck she had now. Instead of a dirty room in a crowded hotel, she now had a large, pleasant room in her friend's house. She did not have to pay for anything.

Becky no longer spent time with artists, gamblers, actors and singers, she was now welcomed by the polite society of Baden-Baden. After only a week, Jos Sedley was completely in Becky's

power. The fat fellow did everything to please her. He took her for drives in his carriage. He invited the best people to parties at the house. Even the diplomat who had told Dobbin about Becky's past life, was happy to be a guest.

Amelia was very quiet at these parties, but Becky was charming and witty. She sang, played the piano, laughed, and talked to the guests in two or three languages. Jos ate and drank a great deal and enjoyed the company. Amelia paid all the bills.

Becky did her best to make Amelia feel happy. She talked to her about Dobbin, praising him often.

'What a fine man William Dobbin is!' Becky cried. 'He's the most honest man I've ever known! He told you the truth, Emmy – even though it hurt him and you too.'

'He didn't speak the truth about my dearest George,' Amelia said. 'George was an angel and the only husband I'll ever have. I told Dobbin my feelings and he decided to leave.'

Amelia often made Georgy write to Dobbin and he sent his mother's love every time.

As time passed, Amelia became more unhappy. She looked pale and ill. In the evenings, when they had no guests, she sang William's favourite songs. Then she would run into her bedroom, look at her picture of George, and weep.

In the summer evenings, when there were guests in the house, Amelia liked to walk with her son. At these times, she always spoke about Dobbin. She praised him so much that the boy had to smile.

'William Dobbin was your dear father's best friend,' Amelia said. 'They were friends at school. William helped your father, who was much younger, of course. They fought together at Waterloo where —'

Here Amelia had to stop as she remembered that sad time.

'Did Dobbin kill the French soldier who killed Papa?' Georgy asked. 'I'm sure he did. I hate the French and I'll kill them all, when I'm in the army!'

Becky's case arrived at last. The lock was broken and there were no pretty dresses in it, only a box of papers and one or two other things. Perhaps the dresses had been stolen. Amelia believed this, so she was happy to buy several new dresses for her dear friend.

There was a picture in the box and Becky took it out with a happy laugh and showed it to Jos. It was a drawing of a large young man riding an elephant. Jos recognised the picture at once.

'My goodness! It's my portrait!' Jos cried. 'It was painted in 1804. It used to hang on the drawing-room wall in Russell Square!'

'Yes, I bought the picture when everything from your father's house was sold at auction. I've always kept it,' Becky said.

'Really?' Jos cried. 'Did you buy the picture so that you would remember me?'

'You know that I did,' Becky said. 'But why look back at those times? It's too late now.'

That evening, no guests were invited to dinner. Amelia felt ill and tired, so she went to bed early. After they had dined, Jos and Becky talked together happily. Becky sang him all the old songs they remembered from 1815. Jos also remembered his love for Becky, and this feeling returned, stronger than ever. He went to bed very happy.

Jos always read the English newspaper at breakfast and he was always interested in any army news.

'Emmy,' he said one morning, 'Dobbin's regiment has come back from India. He's now a colonel. Did you know?'

'Major – er – Colonel Dobbin has not written to me for some time,' Amelia said. 'I'm afraid he's forgotten his old friends.'

William had not forgotten them, but his feelings for Amelia had changed. He had loved her and she had rejected him.

'I must forget the past,' William thought. 'I'm a soldier again and will stay with the regiment for the rest of my life.'

It was the end of June. At this time every year, the people of

high society in Baden-Baden went to the coast to breathe the clean air and bathe in the sea.

Jos was now very fat and his health was not good. Each day, he visited his doctor to ask for medicine. When the doctor told Jos that he was going to stay in Ostend during the summer, Jos decided to go too. Amelia did not care where she lived and Georgy was excited when he heard of the visit. And so, our friends drove together to Ostend, in Jos's fine new carriage.

Becky had lived in Ostend before and she knew that she had enemies there. But she did not care if they spoke about her.

'Emmy won't realize if the English ladies ignore me,' Becky said to herself. 'And Jos will be too busy talking to his doctor. He'll never listen to people's unkind stories about me.'

There were two soldiers living in Ostend who remembered Mrs Crawley very well. They soon met Jos and called at his house every day. They laughed at him, ate his food and drank his wine. They spent time with Amelia and frightened her when they were drunk. Both men decided that marriage to Mrs Osborne would make them rich.

'Please, Jos, take me back to England,' Amelia said to her brother one day. 'I'm tired of living abroad and Georgy should be at school.'

'My dear Emmy, I can't leave Ostend,' Jos replied. 'My doctor is the only person who understands my illness. I can't return to England now!'

The other person that Jos did not want to leave was Becky. And she did not want to return to England either. She felt much safer living abroad.

Amelia realised that she must do something for herself. She wrote a letter to a friend in England without telling the others. That night, she ate nothing and she went to bed early.

Becky had made a decision too. 'Emmy can't stay here,' she thought. 'She needs someone to take care of her. She must stop thinking of her dead husband and marry again. Yes, she must marry Dobbin. I'll arrange it at once.'

In the afternoon, Becky took her friend a cup of tea.

'Listen to me, Amelia,' Becky said. 'You must get away from those two soldiers. They're bad men and they're only after your money. Jos can't take care of you – he can't take care of himself. You need a husband, Amelia. William has asked you to marry him many times. You were a fool to let him go.'

Amelia began to cry. 'I tried to love William, but I could never forget *him*,' she replied, looking at her picture of George Osborne.'

'George Osborne! That flirt, that dandy! He was tired of you before you married him. Dobbin made him marry you. George told me so himself. He laughed at you and wanted to make love to me.'

'That is not true!' Amelia cried.

'It is,' Becky said. 'Read this. I've kept it for many years – since 15th June 1815.' She gave Amelia George's note. 'George begged me to run away with him when we were at the Duchess of Richmond's ball,' she said. 'A few days later he died at the Battle of Waterloo.'

Amelia looked at the note, but she did not cry as much as Becky expected. Becky kissed her friend and held her hand for a moment.

'Write to Dobbin,' she said. 'Tell him you love him. Tell him he must come back.'

'I – I wrote to him this morning,' Amelia said, and smiled.

Becky stared at her friend for a moment and then she laughed loudly.

Two mornings later, Amelia walked alone to the port of Ostend and watched an English ship arrive. William Dobbin was standing on that ship and he saw her waiting. He was the first person off the ship when it stopped. In a minute, he was holding Amelia in his arms.

'You sent for me at last, Emmy!' he said.

'You'll never go again, William?'

'Never,' he replied.

A few weeks later, William and Amelia were married. Jos and Georgy were there, but Becky had left Ostend. She had had to go to Bruges, on business. She stayed there until Colonel and Mrs Dobbin and Georgy had returned to England.

Jos decided not to return to England and his friend Mrs Crawley was happy to stay with him. Wherever Mr Joseph Sedley went, Mrs Rawdon Crawley was by his side. Jos could not return to India because his health was too poor. So he went to live in Brussels, in the same hotel as Becky Crawley.

William and Amelia rented a house in Hampshire, near Queen's Crawley. Amelia and Lady Jane Crawley became close friends and when Amelia and William Dobbin had a little daughter, they named her Jane. Georgy Osborne and young Rawdon Crawley, became good friends.

Some time later, Colonel Dobbin's lawyers told him that Jos had arranged a very large life insurance³. Dobbin realized that Jos probably needed money to pay for his debts.

'You must go to Brussels and find out the truth about Jos,' Amelia told her husband. 'And find out if he's still with – with that woman.'

Colonel Dobbin went to Belgium to see Jos. He found Amelia's brother very ill and very afraid of Becky.

'She's taken care of me as if she was my daughter,' Jos cried, 'But I'm afraid of her, Dobbin. I don't know what she would do, if she knew that you were here!'

'Then you must be strong. Leave her!' Dobbin told the unhappy man. 'Go back to India or come back to your family in England. Are you in debt? Has that woman taken all your money?'

'No, no. I'm not in debt. Becky takes care of my money now. The life insurance was a little present for her. She has helped me a lot, you know.'

'Jos, you must get away,' Dobbin said. 'Come away with me tomorrow. Don't tell that woman, just leave!'

Jos shook his head weakly and begged Dobbin to leave before Becky came back.

The two men never met again. Jos died three months later. Becky received half the money from Jos's life insurance. Amelia inherited the rest.

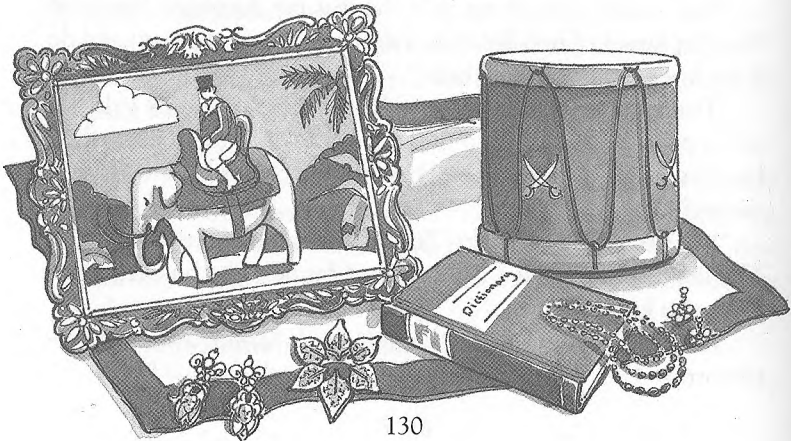
Colonel Rawdon Crawley died of fever on Coventry Island, six weeks before the death of his brother, Pitt.

Becky never became Lady Crawley, although she used that name for the rest of her life. Her son became Sir Rawdon Crawley. He refused to see his mother, but sent her a large sum of money instead.

'Lady' Rebecca Crawley, who seemed to be very rich, returned to England. She gave money to poor people and went to church every Sunday.

The Dobbins – William, Amelia, young George, and baby Jane – saw Lady Crawley only once more. Becky attended an auction where things were being sold to help the poor. When she saw William and Amelia, she smiled sweetly but they did not speak to her. They hurried away quickly.

Vanity Fair! Were our friends ever happy there? And will Vanity Fair give *us* what we want? And when we have got what we want, which of us will find happiness?



Points for Understanding

1

Why does Becky Sharp want revenge on Miss Pinkerton?

2

Describe Amelia Sedley and her brother.

3

Why are these things important in this chapter: *shawls, a letter to Amelia, a mirror, Vauxhall punch?*

4

Identify these people: (a) 'speaks roughly, with a strong Hampshire accent' (b) 'reads his sermons and other religious books every night' (c) is 'always gambling and fighting duels' (d) has 'a fat dog and a thin companion' (e) 'never smiles ... unkind, sharp black eyes' (f) 'father was a shop-keeper'.

5

Why is Dobbin angry with two young officers in his regiment? What is the reason for George's behaviour when he hears about this?

6

Who could be described with these words, and why? *proud, jealous, sly, charming, shocked, in love, angry, sad, grateful.*

7

What discoveries are made in this chapter, and by whom?

8

(a) How does George's marriage to Amelia affect his relationship with his father? (b) How does Rawdon's marriage to Becky affect his relationship with his aunt?

9

How have the relationships between 'our friends' changed in this chapter? Why?

10

Explain the importance of these things: *a soldier's coat, a bouquet, a pair of horses.*

11

Many changes are described in this chapter. Find ten examples.

12

How does Becky and her husband live after Rawdon is disinherited?

13

How are Becky's relationships now, with: Rawdon, Lady Jane, Sir Pitt, her son?

14

How does Becky use these people: Lord Steyne, Raggles, Miss Briggs, Rawdy?

15

Explain why Amelia has to make a terrible decision.

16

Who is the *moral sheep-dog* and who else, or what, has helped Becky succeed in society?

17

What is your opinion about Becky after reading this chapter. Is she innocent?

18

What happens between these people in this chapter: Rawdon, Becky, Sir Pitt, Lady Jane?

19

Dobbin and Jos return from India. (a) What have they been doing there? (b) What do they find out about Amelia and her family?

20

This chapter is about meetings in Baden-Baden. Who meets whom and where?

21

Amelia has meetings with two old friends. How does she feel about these people (a) at first? (b) later?

22

What is your opinion about these characters now: Becky, Georgy, Jos, Amelia, Colonel Rawdon Crawley, Lord Steyne, Sir Rawdon Crawley?

Glossary

SECTION 1

Life and high society in the nineteenth century

baronet (page 15)

a British nobleman. (See *titles*, below.)

bathing-machines (page 53)

small buildings on wheels, where people changed their clothes before swimming in the sea. People believed that sea-water was good for their health. Towns beside the sea, e.g. Brighton in southern England, were very fashionable places to visit.

border – *wide black border* (page 76)

a wide line of black ink around the edge of envelopes and letters. This decoration was used by the family of a person who had died. People also wore *black clothes* to show their respect for the dead person.

bowed (page 15)

bend your head and the top part of your body towards someone when you meet them. *Bowing* was the polite way that people, especially men, greeted each other. Women made a *curtsey* as a formal greeting. They bent their knees with one leg behind the other when they *curtsied*.

colony – *governor of a colony* (page 71)

a country which is controlled by another country is a *colony*. The country's government sends a *governor* to rule over – *govern* – an area of the country.

Company – *East India Company* (page 4)

a British company which bought goods from India and traded them to merchants in Britain from 1612 to 1857. The British traded in the eastern Indian states and the French traded in central and southern states. The Indian rulers of the eastern states paid taxes to the *East India Company*, which had its own army. In 1757, the army won a battle against the French and the Indian ruler of the state of Bengal. When the East India Company began to rule Bengal, the company and its merchants became very rich.

Court – *present me at Court* (page 76)

when someone is introduced to someone else, they are *presented*. At the time of this story, ladies and gentlemen from society went to the king's Court and were introduced to the king. They were introduced by noblemen and noblewomen. Becky knows that if she is *presented at Court*, she will be accepted by all members of society.

dandy (page 18)

a man who cares a lot about his appearance and always wears fashionable clothes is a *dandy*.

Dictionary – Dr Johnson’s Dictionary (page 13)

Doctor Samuel Johnson (1709–84) was an English writer who published the first dictionary of English in 1755. *The Dictionary of the English Language* contained more than 40,000 words.

dowry (page 33)

money and property that a woman’s family gave to her husband when they got married.

duels – fight duels (page 33)

a fight between two men with guns or swords is a *duel*. Men fought duels because they thought they had been insulted. For example, a man would fight his wife’s lover in a duel.

Gardens – Vauxhall Gardens (page 20)

a park to the south of London that was made in the seventeenth century. Musicians, dancers, singers and actors performed in the beautiful gardens. It became a popular place in the nineteenth century for young people, who visited in the evenings. They bought tickets for *supper-boxes* – small rooms where they could dine.

mask – black mask (page 112)

something that a person wears over their eyes so people do not recognize them.

milliner (page 38)

a person who makes hats. In the 1800s, *milliners* were often poor, uneducated women from the lower classes.

model – artists’ model (page 51)

a woman who sits while artists make pictures of her. When Becky was a child she spent time with her father and his friends. She probably drank alcohol and *modelled* for artists herself, and maybe she met women who danced in theatres. This was unsuitable behaviour for a young woman from polite society.

opera-dancer (page 14)

a woman who dances in a performance of an *opera*. In the nineteenth century, *opera-dancers* were never members of polite society.

punch-bowl (page 25)

a container which holds several alcohol drinks that are then mixed together. *Vauxhall punch* was an especially strong drink which was sold in Vauxhall Gardens. (See above.)

reputation – bad reputation (page 7)

someone who is unpleasant, dishonest, or behaves badly has a *bad reputation*.

society – *high society* (page 5)
see the Note on pages 7 and 8.

Soho (page 51)

a district in the centre of London. In the 1800s, foreigners, artists and theatre performers lived there.

titles (page 7)

words that are used in front of people's names to show their position in high society. The highest *title* is king or queen. The order is then: prince/princess, duke/duchess, marquess/marchioness, earl/countess, viscount/viscountess, baron/baroness, baronet/lady. Reverend is the title given to some clergymen.

well-bred (page 30)

someone who is *well-bred* is often a high-class member of society. They have good manners and have had a good education.

Wollah – *Collector of Bogley Wollah* (page 18)

Thackeray has invented a place in Bengal, India which he has named *Bogley Wollah*. Joseph Sedley is an official who has to *collect* the taxes in this area.

SECTION 2

War and politics in the nineteenth century

abdicate (page 9)

if a ruler *abdicates*, he or she gives up their power to rule a country.

armies – *allied armies* (page 9)

countries that fight together against an enemy are *allies*. The *allied armies* who fought against Napoleon at Waterloo were Britain, Prussia, Holland, Belgium and Germany.

barracks – *army barracks* (page 48)

buildings where soldiers live and work.

Bonaparte – *Vive la France! Vive Bonaparte!* (page 16)

Britain and France were enemies and all English people hated Napoleon. The words mean 'Long life to France! Long life to Bonaparte!' so Amelia is shocked when she hears Becky say them.

defeated (page 8)

lose a fight, or a war. An army that wins a battle *defeats* its enemy.

executed (page 8)

be killed because you have broken an important law.

exiled (page 9)

be made to live in another country because you have broken a law and

cannot live in your own country. People might be *exiled* because they spoke against the politics of their own country.

Foot – *His Majesty's Regiment of Foot* (page 26)

soldiers who marched to battles and fought 'on foot'. Foot regiments were called *infantry*.

glory (page 26)

praise that a soldier gets because he has done something brave. George and his friends enjoy talking about the battles the army have won.

Guards – *Life Guards* (page 33)

soldiers who protect, or guard, the life of a king or queen. The *Life Guards* was a *cavalry* regiment – a group of soldiers who fought on horses.

Cavalrymen thought they were better than members of the infantry.

invade (page 8)

take or send an army into another country in order to get control of it. An *invasion* is when one country's army goes into another country and takes control of it. The soldiers who enter the country are *invaders*.

lieutenant (page 8)

an army officer of the second level – or rank – is a *lieutenant*. The ranks are: Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier, Major-General, Lieutenant-General, General, Field-Marshal.

medal – *Waterloo medal* (page 75)

a small flat piece of metal which was given to a soldier who had fought bravely at the Battle of Waterloo.

officer – *commanding officer* (page 8)

the officer in an army who is in charge, or control of many soldiers. The officer gives *commands* – orders – to the other soldiers.

Parliament – *Member of Parliament* (page 6)

Parliament is the place where members of the British government make laws and discuss things which are important for the British people.

Members of Parliament work in either the House of Commons, or the House of Lords. *Politicians* in the House of Commons are chosen by the people. The House of Lords is where nobles discuss the work of the House of Commons and decide if the laws should become fixed. At this time, there were only two political parties. Each new Member of Parliament has to make a speech.

promoted (page 8)

be given a job at a higher level. When someone gets a *promotion*, they are given more important work and more money.

pipes – *sound of bugles, drums and pipes* (page 60)

these were all musical instruments that were used by armies to give instructions to soldiers. *Bugles* are made of metal and different bugle tunes

were used to give orders to soldiers. The loud sound of *drums* were used to keep soldiers marching together. *Pipes* are simple musical instruments that you blow through. They were played to make the soldiers feel brave as they marched into battle.

regiment – *infantry regiment* (page 21)

armies are divided into different groups of soldiers. The biggest group is a *regiment*. (See also *commanding officer* and *lieutenant*.)

supporters (page 8)

people who help someone because they believe that person's ideas. They *support* that person.

treason – *accused of treason* (page 8)

someone who makes trouble for their own country is called a *traitor*. A traitor's crime is called *treason*. If someone tells another person that they are a traitor, they are *accusing that person of treason*.

XVI – *King Louis XVI* (page 8)

Roman numbers which are the symbols for the number 'sixteen'. X = 10, V = 5, I = 1. Louis XVI was the 'sixteenth' king of France with the name Louis.

SECTION 3

Terms to do with money and business

At this time, British money was *pounds* (£), *shillings* (s) and *pence* (d). There were 12 pennies (pence) in 1 shilling and 20 shillings (s) in one pound (£). A **guinea** (see page 5) was a gold coin that was worth 21 shillings. (£1.05p in today's money.) A **sovereign** was worth one pound.

auction – *sold by auction* (page 47)

an occasion when things are sold to the people who offer the most money for them. The Sedleys are now poor and need money, so they are *auctioning* their house and everything in it. The man who is in control of the sale is the *auctioneer*.

bailiff (page 98)

an official whose job is to take away the possessions of someone who has not paid money that they owe.

borrowed – *to borrow* (page 114)

use something that is owned by someone else.

casino (page 112)

a place where people play games to win money. (See *roulette tables*.)

credit – *bought on credit* (page 47)

an arrangement to receive goods or money from a bank and to pay for it

later. Becky and Rawdon have tricked people. They have promised to pay for things later, but will not do this.

debt – *gets into debt* (page 36)

debts are amounts of money that you owe. You *get into debt* if you are not able to repay the money. The people to whom you owe money are *creditors*. You are a *debtor*. At this time, if you were unable to repay money, you were put in a *debtor's prison*.

gambling – *gamble* (page 4)

if you play a game to win money, you are *gambling*. Someone who gambles is a *gambler*.

income (page 4)

money that someone receives each year. They might receive *income* from working, or from a bank because their money has made money.

inherit (page 4)

receive money or property from someone who has died. The money or property that a person receives is their *inheritance*. An *heir* is the person who receives the money. If a person decides not to leave the money to their heir, they *disinherit* them. And they write another *will* and *leave the money* to someone else.

insurance – *life insurance* (page 129)

you can pay for an agreement with an *insurance company* for *life insurance*. This means that when you die, the insurance company will pay money to your relatives.

markets – *investing in French markets* (page 40)

an *investor* is someone who uses their money to buy goods, property, or *shares* in a company (See *stockbroker*), to make more money. Sedley has *invested in French markets*. Now that Britain is at war with France, the two countries are no longer trading. So Sedley has lost all his money.

poverty – *living in poverty* (page 107)

someone who does not have enough money is *living in poverty*.

rented – *to rent* (page 47)

when you pay to live in someone's house, you are *renting* that property. The money that you agree to pay every month, or every week, is the *rent*.

roulette-tables (page 112)

places where the gambling game of *roulette* is played. A ball is dropped onto a spinning wheel which has 37 or 38 black or red sections. Players guess which number and which colour the ball will fall into.

stockbroker (page 14)

shares are parts of a company that you can buy in order to make more money. A *stockbroker* is someone whose job is to buy and sell companies' shares for other people.

SECTION 4 General

accent – *perfect French accent* (page 15)

Becky speaks French extremely well. She sounds like a Frenchwoman when she speaks the language. Your *accent* – the way you speak – may also show people which class of society you come from. People sometimes think that people who speak with the accent of a country area (e.g. Hampshire) are uneducated or unintelligent.

adventuress (page 79)

a woman who behaves dishonestly so that she can become rich or reach high levels of society.

angel (page 16)

people of some religions believe that spirits called *angels* live in Heaven with God. Very good, beautiful people are sometimes called *angels*.

approve – *did not approve* (page 5)

think badly about someone or something and believe they, or it, is unsuitable.

arresting – *arrest* (page 98)

if officers of the law believe that someone has broken a law, they *arrest* that person and take them to a place where they ask the person questions.

artefacts (page 6)

interesting and important objects that were made a long time ago.

asylum (page 5)

a hospital where people live if they have an illness of the mind.

badly – *treated badly* (page 14)

if a person is *treated badly*, someone is unkind to them or makes trouble for them. If a stranger is *treated as one of the family*, they are shown kindness and given the same things as members of the family. If someone is *treated as a servant*, they are given orders to do work.

begged – *beg* (page 14)

ask for something in a way that shows you want it very much.

bouquet (page 13)

a collection of flowers that have been tied together.

charming (page 13)

very attractive and pleasant.

curry (page 18)

Indian food that has been cooked in a sauce using strong spices which give it a hot flavour.

deal – *a great deal* (page page 6)

a large amount of something, e.g. *a great deal* of debt, time, luck, etc.

dressing-gown (page 116)

a kind of long, loose coat that you wear in your house.

displays – *firework displays* (page 4)

fireworks are objects that explode when they burn. They produce coloured lights and loud noises. *Firework displays* are entertainments where people can see many fireworks in the sky at night.

effect – *awful effect* (page 28)

an *effect* is a change which happens to someone or something because of another thing or person. An *awful effect* is a change which makes someone's life much worse.

flattered – *flatter* (page 40)

a way of speaking to someone so that they like you and do what you want.

Flattery is telling someone that they are clever or attractive.

flirting – *flirt* (page 4)

behave towards someone in a way that shows your sexual or romantic interest in them. A person who behaves in this way is a *flirt*.

funeral (page 43)

a ceremony that takes place after someone dies. After a *funeral*, the body of the dead person is *buried* in the ground. The place where the person is buried is a *grave*.

godson (page 21)

a boy who receives a promise from a man – a *godfather* – who will look after them and help them to keep their religion.

grand (page 4)

great, important.

guardian (page 111)

someone who takes care of a person, usually a child whose parents are dead.

hearts – *captured the hearts* (page 37)

Becky has made people love her.

ignore (page 91)

know about something but not do anything about it.

imitated – *imitate* (page 85)

copy someone's words or behaviour so that other people laugh.

insult (page 115)

a comment that is unkind, untruthful, or makes the person angry.

innocent (page 97)

a person who has done nothing wrong is *innocent*. The opposite of innocent is *guilty*.

it – *too proud to admit it* (page 16)

you *admit* you were wrong if you agree about something, even though you

are unhappy, sorry or surprised about it. Someone who is *too proud to admit* something cannot agree because they do not want to look foolish.

jelly – *fruit jelly* (page 22)

a soft, sweet food made from fruit juice, sugar and gelatine. You can see through gelatine and it shakes when you touch it.

life – *ruin her life* (page 65)

if terrible things have happened to someone and they have lost everything, their *life is ruined*.

life – *wasted my life* (page 123)

someone who has not done good things or been successful, has *wasted their life*.

lobster (page 40)

a sea animal with a hard shell. *Lobsters* are cooked and eaten as food.

me – *false to me* (page 63)

Amelia is saying that Becky told lies and was dishonest to her. A *false friend* is kind and friendly, but is really none of these things. A *false wife* has a love affair with another man.

mind – *hope you don't mind* (page 25)

polite words used by a person who wants someone to agree with something they have said or done.

of – *get rid of* (page 16)

make someone or something leave a place.

order – *keep him in order* (page 26)

Mr Sedley knows that Becky will make his weak and foolish son, Jos, behave quietly if they marry.

place (page 14)

place can mean an area, a place, or a job – a position. On page 42, George is trying to make Becky angry. He asks if she enjoyed her life as a governess at Queen's Crawley, because he knows he has a higher position in society than Becky.

postponed – *postpone* (page 21)

decide that something will not be done at the time when it was planned. It will be done at a later time.

propose – *giving himself courage to propose* (page 26)

Jos wants to ask Becky to marry him, but he is frightened to ask her. He is drinking a lot alcohol so that he will become brave.

revenge (page 16)

want to do something bad to someone because they have hurt you, or made you very unhappy.

rumours – *full of frightening rumours* (page 62)

everyone is telling stories that may, or may not, be true.

sash – *blood-red sash* (page 60)

a long piece of cloth that is worn like a belt. The *sash* is part of George's uniform and is the colour of blood. Amelia holds it against her white dress. Thackeray uses the *sash* as a symbol for the bloody battle that the men are going to fight.

shawls – *Cashmere shawls* (page 16)

shawls are coverings made of very soft wool that women wear over their heads or shoulders. This very soft, fine wool comes from goats who live in the mountains, to the north of India.

sheep-dog – *moral sheep-dog* (page 73)

a *sheep-dog* guards sheep against fierce animals, e.g. wolves. The rules for people's correct behaviour are *morals*. If Becky has a companion who is with her all the time, no one will talk about her bad behaviour.

shy (page 17)

quiet people who do not like talking to strangers are *shy*.

sly (page 31)

a clever person who tricks people or secretly does something unfair or dishonest, is *sly*. A person who gives a *sly* smile, look or comment, shows that they know a secret.

swear (page 28)

use strong and impolite words because you are angry or upset.

teasing – *tease* (page 19)

say something to someone which makes them feel uncomfortable or angry. You *tease* someone because you want to have fun.

to – *have the right to* (page 122)

believe that you are allowed to do or say something because your behaviour is better or more correct. Dobbin thinks he can tell Amelia how to live. He believes he understands her feelings better than she does.

veil – *lace veil* (page 50)

a thin cloth that a woman wears over her head and face.

wallet – *leather wallet* (page 94)

a case made of animals' skin which holds banknotes.

wits – *use my wits* (page 33)

use your intelligence to think quickly and live well. A *witty* person uses words in a clever and funny way.

yourself – *making a fool of yourself* (page 27)

behave in a way that makes you look foolish or stupid.

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'Amelia's dowry of ten thousand pounds, her blue eyes and her pretty pink face will bring her a rich husband,' Becky Sharp thought. 'But I'm alone in the world and must look after myself. I'm much cleverer than her and I've a better figure. I must use my wits to find a husband and a house of my own. One day, I'll have a higher place in society than Amelia, and I'll have done it all myself!'

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