

LANG ANDREW

OLD FRIENDS: ESSAYS IN
EPISTOLARY PARODY

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in Epistolary Parody**

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PREFACE

The studies in this volume originally appeared in the “St. James’s Gazette.” Two, from a friendly hand, have been omitted here by the author of the rest, as *non sua poma*. One was by Mr. Richard Swiveller to a boon companion and brother in the lyric Apollo; the other, though purporting to have been addressed by Messrs. Dombey & Son to Mr. Toots, is believed, on internal evidence, to have been composed by the patron of the Chicken himself. A few prefatory notes, an introductory essay, and two letters have been added.

The portrait in the frontispiece, copied by Mr. T. Hodge from an old painting in the Club at St. Andrews, is believed to represent the Baron Bradwardine addressing himself to his ball.

A. L.

FRIENDS IN FICTION

Every fancy which dwells much with the unborn and immortal characters of Fiction must ask itself, Did the persons in contemporary novels never meet? In so little a world their paths must often have crossed, their orbits must have intersected, though we hear nothing about the adventure from the accredited narrators. In historical fiction authors make their people meet real men and women of history – Louis XI., Lazarus, Mary Queen of Scots, General Webbe, Moses, the Man in the Iron Mask, Marie Antoinette; the list is endless. But novelists, in spite of Mr. Thackeray's advice to Alexandre Dumas, and of his own example in "Rebecca and Rowena," have not introduced each other's characters. Dumas never pursued the fortunes of the Master of Ravenswood after he was picked up by that coasting vessel in the Kelpie's Flow. Sometimes a meeting between characters in novels by different hands looked all but unavoidable. "Pendennis" and "David Copperfield" came out simultaneously in numbers, yet Pen never encountered Steerforth at the University, nor did Warrington, in his life of journalism, jostle against a reporter named David Copperfield. One fears that the Major would have called Steerforth a tiger, that Pen would have been very loftily condescending to the nephew of Betsy Trotwood. But Captain Costigan would scarcely have refused to take a sip of Mr. Micawber's punch, and I doubt, not that Litimer would have conspired darkly with Morgan, the Major's sinister man. Most of those delightful sets of old friends, the Dickens and Thackeray people, might well have met, though they belonged to very different worlds. In older novels, too, it might easily have chanced that Mr. Edward Waverley of Waverley Honour, came into contact with Lieutenant Booth, or, after the Forty-five, with Thomas Jones, or, in Scotland, Balmawhapple might have foregathered with Lieutenant Lismahagow. Might not even Jeanie Deans have crossed the path of Major Lambert of the "Virginians," and been helped on her way by that good man? Assuredly Dugald Dalgetty in his wanderings in search of fights and fortune may have crushed a cup or rattled a dicebox with four gallant gentlemen of the King's Mousquetaires. It is agreeable to wonder what all these very real people would have thought of their companions in the region of Romance, and to guess how their natures would have acted and reacted on each other.

This was the idea which suggested the following little essays in parody. In making them the writer, though an assiduous and veteran novel reader, had to recognise that after all he knew, on really intimate and friendly terms, comparatively few people in the Paradise of Fiction. Setting aside the dramatic poets and their creations, the children of Molière and Shakspeare, the reader of novels will find, may be, that his airy friends are scarce so many as he deemed. We all know Sancho and the Don, by repute at least; we have all our memories of Gil Blas; Manon Lescaut does not fade from the heart, nor her lover, the Chevalier des Grieux, from the remembrance. Our mental picture of Anna Karénine is fresh enough and fair enough, but how few can most of us recall out of the myriad progeny of George Sand! Indiana, Valentine, Lélia, do you quite believe in them, would you know them if you met them in the Paradise of Fiction? Noun one might recognise, but there is a haziness about La Petite Fadette. Consuelo, let it be admitted, is not evanescent, oblivion scatters no poppy over her; but Madame Sand's later ladies, still more her men, are easily lost in the forests of fancy. Even their names with difficulty return to us, and if we read the roll-call, would Horace and Jacques cry *Adsum* like the good Colonel? There are living critics who have all Mr. George Meredith's heroines and heroes and oddities at their finger ends, and yet forget that musical name, like the close of a rich hexameter, Clare Doria Forey. But this is a digression; it is perhaps admitted that George Sand, so great a novelist, gave the world few characters who live in and are dear to memory. We can just fancy one of her dignified later heroines, all self-renunciation and rural sentiment, preaching in vain to that real woman, Emma Bovary. *Her* we know, *her* we remember, as we remember few, comparatively, of Balzac's thronging faces, from La Cousine Bette to Séraphitus Séraphita. Many of those are certain to live and keep their hold, but it is by dint of long and elaborate preparation, description, analysis. A

stranger intermeddled not with them, though we can fancy Lucien de Rubempré let loose in a country neighbourhood of George Sand's, and making sonnets and love to some rural *châtelaine*, while Vautrin might stray among the ruffians of Gaboriau, a giant of crime. Among M. Zola's people, however it may fare with others, I find myself remembering few: the guilty Hippolytus of "La Curée," the poor girl in "La Fortune des Rougon," the Abbé Mouret, the artist in "L'Oeuvre," and the half idiotic girl of the farm house, and Hélène in "Un Page d'Amour." They are not amongst M. Zola's most prominent creations, and it must be some accident that makes them most memorable and recognisable to one of his readers.

Probably we all notice that the characters of fiction who remain our intimates, whose words come to our lips often, whose conduct in this or that situation we could easily forecast, are the characters whom we met when we were young. We may be wrong in thinking them the best, the most true and living of the unborn; perhaps they only seem so real because they came fresh to fresh hearts and unworn memories. This at least we must allow for, when we are tempted to say about novelists, "The old are better." It was we who, long ago, were young and better, better fitted to enjoy and retain the pleasure of making new visionary acquaintances. If this be so, what an argument it is in favour of reading the best books first and earliest in youth! Do the ladies who now find Scott slow, and Miss Austen dull, and Dickens vulgar, and Thackeray prosy, and Fielding and Richardson impossible, come to this belief because they began early with the volumes of the circulating library? Are their memories happily stored with the words and deeds of modern fictitious romps, and passionate governesses, and tremendous guardsmen with huge cigars? Are the people of – well, why mention names of living authors? – of whom you will – are those as much to the young readers of 1890 as Quentin Durward, and Colonel Newcome, and Sam Weller, and Becky Sharp, and Anne Elliot, and Elizabeth Bennett, and Jane Eyre were to young readers of 1860? It may very well be so, and we seniors will not regret our choice, and the young men and maids will be pleased enough with theirs. Yet it is not impossible that the old really are better, and do not gain all their life and permanent charm merely from the unjaded memories and affections with which we came to them long ago.

We shall never be certain, for even if we tried the experiment of comparing, we are no longer good judges, our hearts are with our old friends, whom we think deathless; their birth is far enough off in time, but they will serve us for ours.

These friends, it has been said, are not such a very numerous company after all. Most of them are children of our own soil, their spirits were made in England, or at least in Great Britain, or, perhaps, came of English stock across the seas, like our dear old Leather Stocking and Madam Hester Prynne. Probably most of us are insular enough to confess this limitation; even if we be so unpatriotic to read far more new French than new English novels. One may study M. Daudet, and not remember his Sidonie as we remember Becky, nor his Petit Chose or his Jack as we remember David Copperfield. In the Paradise of Fiction are folk of all nations and tongues; but the English (as Swedenborg saw them doing in his vision of Heaven) keep very much to themselves. The American visitors, or some of them, disdain our old acquaintances, and associate with Russian, Spanish, Lithuanian, Armenian heroes and heroines, conversing, probably, in some sort of French. Few of us "poor islanders" are so cosmopolitan; we read foreign novels, and yet among all the brilliant persons met there we remember but a few. Most of my own foreign friends in fiction wear love-locks and large boots, have rapiers at their side which they are very ready to draw, are great trenchermen, mighty fine drinkers, and somewhat gallant in their conduct to the sex. There is also a citizen or two from Furetière's "Roman Bourgeois," there is Manon, aforesaid, and a company of picaroons, and an archbishop, and a lady styled Marianne, and a newly ennobled Count of mysterious wealth, and two grisettes, named Mimi and Musette, with their student-lovers. M. Balzac has introduced us to mystics, and murderers, and old maids, and doctors, and adventurers, and poets, and a girl with golden eyes, and malefactors, and bankrupts, and mad old collectors, peasants, *curés*, critics, dreamers, debauchees; but all these are somewhat distant acquaintances, many of them undesirable

acquaintances. In the great “Comédie Humaine” have you a single real friend? Some of Charles de Bernard’s folk are more akin to us, such as “La Femme de Quarante Ans,” and the owner of the hound Justinian, and that drunken artist in “Gerfaut.” But an Englishman is rather friendless, rather an alien and an outcast, in the society of French fiction. Monsieur de Camors is not of our *monde*, nor is the *Enfant du Siècle*; indeed, perhaps good Monsieur Sylvestre Bonnard is as sympathetic as anyone in that populous country of modern French romance. Or do you know Fifi Vollard?

Something must be allowed for strange manners, for exotic ideas, and ways not our own. More perhaps is due to what, as Englishmen think, is the lack of *humour* in the most brilliant and witty of races. We have friends many in Molière, in Dumas, in Rabelais; but it is far more difficult to be familiar, at ease, and happy in the circles to which Madame Sand, M. Daudet, M. Flaubert, or M. Paul Bourget introduce us. M. Bourget’s old professor, in “Le Disciple,” we understand, but he does not interest himself much in us, and to us he is rather a curiosity, a “character,” than an intimate. We are driven to the belief that humour, with its loving and smiling observation, is necessary to the author who would make his persons real and congenial, and, above all, friendly. Now humour is the quality which Dumas, Molière, and Rabelais possess conspicuously among Frenchmen. Montaigne has it too, and makes himself dear to us, as the humorous novelists make their fancied people dear. Without humour an author may draw characters distinct and clear, and entertaining, and even real; but they want atmosphere, and with them we are never intimate. Mr. Alfred Austin says that “we know the hero or the heroine in prose romance far more familiarly than we know the hero or heroine in the poem or the drama.” “Which of the serious characters in Shakspeare’s plays are not indefinite and shadowy compared with Harry Esmond or Maggie Tulliver?” The *serious* characters – they are seldom very familiar or definite to us in any kind of literature. One might say, to be sure, that he knows Hotspur a good deal more intimately than he knows Mr. Henry Esmond, and that he has a pretty definite idea of Iago, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, as definite as he has (to follow Mr. Austin) of Tito Melema. But we cannot reckon Othello, or Macbeth, or King Lear as *friends*; nay, we would rather drink with the honest ancient. All heroes and the heroines are usually too august, and also too young, to be friendly with us; to be handled humorously by their creators. We know Cuddie Headrigg a great deal better than Henry Morton, and Le Balafré better than Quentin Durward, and Dugald Dalgetty better than anybody. Humour it is that gives flesh and blood to the persons of romance; makes Mr. Lenville real, while Nicholas Nickleby is only a “walking gentleman.” You cannot know Oliver Twist as you know the Dodger and Charlie Bates. If you met Edward Waverley you could scarce tell him from another young officer of his time; but there would be no chance of mistake about the Dugald creature, or Bailie Nicol Jarvie, or the Baron Bradwardine, or Balmawhapple.

These ideas might be pushed too far; it might be said that only the persons in “character parts” – more or less caricatures – are really vivid in the recollection. But Colonel Newcome is as real as Captain Costigan, and George Warrington as the Chevalier Strong. The hero is commonly too much of a *beau ténébreux* to be actual; Scott knew it well, and in one of his unpublished letters frankly admits that his heroes are wooden, and no favourites of his own. He had to make them, as most authors make their heroes, romantic, amorous, and serious; few of them have the life of Roland Graeme, or even of Quentin Durward. Ivanhoe might put on the cloak of the Master of Ravenswood, the Master might wear the armour of the Disinherited Knight, and the disguise would deceive the keenest. Nay, Mr. Henry Esmond might pass for either, if arrayed in appropriate costume.

To treat a hero with humour is difficult in romance, all but impossible. Hence the heroes are rarely our friends, except in Fielding, or, now and then, in Thackeray. No book is so full of friends as the novel that has no hero, but has Rawdon Crawley, Becky, Lady Jane, Mr. Jim Crawley, MacMurdo, Mrs. Major O’Dowd, and the rest. Even Dobbin is too much the hero to be admitted among our most kindly acquaintances. So unlucky are heroes that we know Squire Western and the Philosopher Square and Parson Adams far better than even that unheroic hero, Tom Jones, or Joseph Andrews. The humour of Fielding and his tenderness make Amelia and Sophia far more sure of our hearts than,

let us say, Rowena, or the Fair Maid of Perth, or Flora MacIvor, or Rose Bradwardine. It is humour that makes Mr. Collins immortal, and Mrs. Bennett, and Emma; while a multitude of nice girls in fiction, good girls too, are as dead as Queen Tiah.

Perhaps, after all, this theory explains why it is so very hard to recall with vividness the persons of our later fiction. Humour is not the strong point of novelists to-day. There may be amateurs who know Mr. Howells's characters as their elders know Sophia and Amelia and Catherine Seyton – there may be. To the old reader of romance, however earnestly he keeps up with modern fiction, the salt of life seems often lacking in its puppets or its persons. Among the creations of living men and women I, for one, feel that I have two friends at least across the sea, Master Thomas Sawyer and his companion, Huckleberry Finn. If these are not real boys, then Dr. Farrar's Eric *is* a real boy; I cannot put it stronger. There is a lady on those distant shores (for she never died of Roman fever) who I may venture to believe is not unfriendly – Miss Annie P. Miller – and there is a daughter of Mr. Silas Lapham whom one cannot readily forget, and there is a beery journalist in a "Modern Instance," an acquaintance, a distant professional acquaintance, not a friend. The rest of the fictitious white population of the States are shadowy to myself; I have often followed their fortunes with interest, but the details slip my aging memory, which recalls Topsy and Uncle Remus.

To speak of new friends at home is a more delicate matter. A man may have an undue partiality for the airy children of his friends' fancy. Mr. Meredith has introduced me to an amiable Countess, to a strange country girl named Rhoda, to a wonderful old Æschylean nurse, to some genuine boys, to a wise Youth, – but that society grows as numerous as brilliant. Mr. Besant has made us friends with twins of literary and artistic genius, with a very highly-cultured Fellow of Lothian, with a Son of Vulcan, with a bevy of fair but rather indistinguishable damsels, like a group of agreeable-looking girls at a dance. But they are too busy with their partners to be friendly. We admire them, but they are unconcerned with us. In Mr. Black's large family the Whaup seems most congenial to some strangers; the name of one of Mr. Payn's friendly lads is Legion, and Miss Broughton's dogs, with *their* friend Sara, and Mrs. Moberley, welcome the casual visitor with hospitable care. Among the kindly children of a later generation one may number a sailor man with a wooden leg; a Highland gentleman, who, though landless, bears a king's name; an Irish chevalier who was out in the '45; a Zulu chief who plied the axe well; a private named Mulvaney in Her Majesty's Indian army; an elderly sportsman of agile imagination or unparalleled experience in remote adventure.¹ All these a person who had once encountered them would recognise, perhaps, when he was fortunate enough to find himself in their company.

There are children, too, of a dead author, an author seldom lauded by critics, who, possibly, have as many living friends as any modern characters can claim. A very large company of Christian people are fond of Lord Welter, Charles Ravenshoe, Flora and Gus, Lady Ascot, the boy who played fives with a brass button, and a dozen others of Henry Kingsley's men, women, and children, whom we have laughed with often, and very nearly cried with. For Henry Kingsley had humour, and his children are dear to us; while which of Charles Kingsley's far more famous offspring would be welcome – unless it were Salvation Yeo – if we met them all in the Paradise of Fiction?

It is not very safe, in literature as in life, to speak well of our friends or of their families. Other readers, other people, have theirs, whom we may not care much for, whom we may even chance never to have met. In the following Letters from Old Friends (mainly reprinted from the "St. James's Gazette"), a few of the writers may, to some who glance at the sketches, be unfamiliar. When Dugald Dalgetty's epistle on his duel with Aramis was written, a man of letters proposed to write a reply from Aramis in a certain journal. But his Editor had never heard of any of the gentlemen concerned in that affair of honour; had never heard of Dugald, of Athos, Porthos, Aramis, nor D'Artagnan. He had not been introduced to them. This little book will be fortunate far beyond its deserts if it tempts a

¹ Who knows what may happen? I may die before he sees the light; so I will add among my friends Skalagrim Lamb's-tail.

few readers to extend the circle of their visionary acquaintances, of friends who, like Brahma, know not birth, nor decay, “sleep, waking, nor trance.”

A theme more delicate and intimate than that of our Friends in fiction awaits a more passionate writer than the present parodist. Our *Loves* in fiction are probably numerous, and our choice depends on age and temperament. In romance, if not in life, we can be in love with a number of ladies at once. It is probable that Beatrix Esmond has not fewer knights than Marie Antoinette or Mary Stuart. These ladies have been the marks of scandal. Unkind things are said of all three, but our hearts do not believe the evil reports. Sir Walter Scott refused to write a life of Mary Stuart because his opinion was not on the popular side, nor on the side of his feelings. The reasoning and judicial faculties may be convinced that Beatrix was “other than a guid ane,” but reason does not touch the affections; we see her with the eyes of Harry Esmond, and, like him, “remember a paragon.” With similar lack of logic we believe that Mrs. Wenham really had one of her headaches, and that Becky was guiltless on a notorious occasion. Bad or not so bad, what lady would we so gladly meet as Mrs. Rawdon Crawley, whose kindness was so great that she even condescended to be amusing to her own husband? For a more serious and life-long affection there are few heroines so satisfactory as Sophia Western and Amelia Booth (*née* Harris). Never before nor since did a man’s ideal put on flesh and blood – out of poetry, that is, – and apart from the ladies of Shakspeare. Fielding’s women have a manly honour, tolerance, greatness, in addition to their tenderness and kindness. Literature has not their peers, and life has never had many to compare with them. They are not “superior” like Romola, nor flighty and destitute of taste like Maggie Tulliver; among Fielding’s crowd of fribbles and sots and oafs they carry that pure moly of the Lady in “Comus.” It is curious, indeed, that men have drawn women more true and charming than women themselves have invented, and the heroines of George Eliot, of George Sand (except Consuelo), and even of Miss Austen, do not subdue us like Di Vernon, nor win our sympathies like Rebecca of York. They may please and charm for their hour, but they have not the immortality of the first heroines of all – of Helen, or of that Alcmena who makes even comedy grave when she enters, and even Plautus chivalrous. Poetry, rather than prose fiction, is the proper home of our spiritual mistresses; they dwell where Rosalind and Imogen are, with women perhaps as unreal or as ideal as themselves, men’s lost loves and unforgotten, in a Paradise apart.

I

From Mr. Clive Newcome to Mr. Arthur Pendennis

Mr. Newcome, a married man and an exile at Boulogne, sends Mr. Arthur Pendennis a poem on his undying affection for his cousin, Miss Ethel Newcome. He desires that it may be published in a journal with which Mr. Pendennis is connected. He adds a few remarks on his pictures for the Academy.

Boulogne, March 28.

Dear Pen, – I have finished *Belisarius*, and he has gone to face the Academicians. There is another little thing I sent – “Blondel” I call it – a troubadour playing under a castle wall. They have not much chance; but there is always the little print-shop in Long Acre. My sketches of mail-coaches continue to please the public; they have raised the price to a guinea.

Here we are not happier than when you visited us. My poor wife is no better. It is something to have put my father out of hearing of her mother’s tongue: that cannot cross the Channel. Perhaps I am as well here as in town. There I always hope, I always fear to meet *her*.. my cousin, you know. I think I see her face under every bonnet. God knows I don’t go where she is likely to be met. Oh, Pen, *hæret lethalis arundo*; it is always right – the Latin *Delectus*! Everything I see is full of her, everything I do is done for her. “Perhaps she’ll see it and know the hand, and remember,” I think, even when I do the mail-coaches and the milestones. I used to draw for her at Brighton when she was a child. My sketches, my pictures, are always making that silent piteous appeal to her, *Won’t you look at us? won’t you remember?* I dare say she has quite forgotten. Here I send you a little set of rhymes; my picture of Blondel and this old story brought them into my mind. They are *gazés*, as the drunk painter says in “*Gerfaut*,” they are veiled, a mystery. I know she’s not in a castle or a tower or a cloistered cell anywhere; she is in Park Lane. Don’t I read it in the “*Morning Post*?” But I can’t, I won’t, go and sing at the area-gate, you know. Try if F. B. will put the rhymes into the paper. Do they take it in in Park Lane? See whether you can get me a guinea for these tears of mine: “*Mes Larmes*,” Pen, do you remember? – Yours ever,

C. N.

The verses are enclosed.

THE NEW BLONDEL

O ma Reine!

Although the Minstrel’s lost you long,
Although for bread the Minstrel sings,
Ah, still for you he pipes the song,
And thrums upon the crazy strings!

As Blondel sang by cot and hall,
Through town and stream and forest passed,
And found, at length, the dungeon wall,

And freed the Lion-heart at last —

So must your hapless minstrel fare,
By hill and hollow violing;
He flings a ditty on the air,
He wonders if you hear him sing!

For in some castle you must dwell
Of this wide land he wanders through —
In palace, tower, or cloistered cell —
He knows not; but he sings to *you*!

The wind may blow it to your ear,
And you, perchance, may understand;
But from your lattice, though you hear,
He knows you will not wave a hand.

Your eyes upon the page may fall,
More like the page will miss your eyes;
You may be listening after all,
So goes he singing till he dies.

II

From the Hon. Cecil Bertie to the Lady Guinevere

Mr. Cecil Tremayne, who served “Under Two Flags,” an officer in her Majesty’s Guards, describes to the Lady Guinevere the circumstances of his encounter with Miss Annie P. (or Daisy) Miller. The incident has been omitted by Ouida and Mr. Henry James.

You ask me, Camarada, what I think of the little American *donzella*, Daisy Miller? *Hesterna Rosa*, I may cry with the blind old bard of Tusculum; or shall we say, *Hesterna Margarita*? Yesterday’s Daisy, yesterday’s Rose, were it of Pæstum, who values it to-day? *Mais où sont les neiges d’automne*? However, yesterday – the day before yesterday, rather – Miss Annie P. Miller was well enough.

We were smoking at the club windows on the Ponte Vecchio; Marmalada, Giovanelli of the Bersaglieri, young Ponto of the K.O.B.’s, and myself – men who never give a thought save to the gold embroidery of their *pantoufles* or the exquisite ebon laquer of their Russia leather cricket-shoes. Suddenly we heard a clatter in the streets. The riderless chargers of the Bersaglieri were racing down the Santo Croce, and just turning, with a swing and shriek of clattering spurs, into the Maremma. In the midst of the street, under our very window, was a little thing like a butterfly, with *yeux de pervenche*. You remember, Camarada, Voltaire’s love of the *pervenche*; we have plucked it, have we not? in his garden of Les Charmettes. *Nous n’irons plus aux bois! Basta!*

But to return. There she stood, terror-stricken, petrified, like her who of old turned her back on Zoar and beheld the incandescent hurricane of hail smite the City of the Plain! She was dressed in white muslin, *joli comme un cœur*, with a myriad frills and flounces and knots of pale-coloured ribbon. Open-eyed, open-mouthed, she stared at the tide of foaming steeds, like a maiden martyr gazing at the on-rushing waves of ocean! “Caramba!” said Marmalada, “voilà une jeune fille pas trop bien gardée!” Giovanelli turned pale, and, muttering *Corpo di Bacco*, quaffed a *carafon* of green Chartreuse, holding at least a quart, which stood by him in its native pewter. Young Ponto merely muttered, “Egad!” I leaped through the open window and landed at her feet.

The racing steeds were within ten yards of us. Calmly I cast my eye over their points. Far the fleetest, though he did not hold the lead, was Marmalada’s charger, the Atys gelding, by Celerima out of Sac de Nuit. With one wave of my arm I had placed her on his crupper, and, with the same action, swung myself into the saddle. Then, in a flash and thunder of flying horses, we swept like tawny lightning down the Pincian. The last words I heard from the club window, through the heliotrope-scented air, were “Thirty to one on Atys, half only if declared.” They were wagering on our lives; the slang of the paddock was on their lips.

Onward, downward, we sped, the fair stranger lifeless in my arms. Past scarlet cardinals in mufti, past brilliant ἐταῖροὶ like those who swayed the City of the Violet Crown; past *pifferari* dancing in front of many an *albergo*; through the Ghetto with its marmarine palaces, over the Fountain of Trevi, across the Cascine, down the streets of the Vatican we flew among yells of “Owner’s up,” “The gelding wins, hard held,” from the excited *bourgeoisie*. Heaven and earth swam before my eyes as we reached the Pons Sublicia, and heard the tawny waters of Tiber swaying to the sea.

The Pons Sublicia was up!

With an oath of despair, for life is sweet, I rammed my persuaders into Atys, caught him by the head, and sent him straight at the flooded Tiber!

“*Va-t-en donc, espèce de type!*” said the girl on my saddle-bow, finding her tongue at last. Fear, or girlish modesty, had hitherto kept her silent.

Then Atys rose on his fetlocks! Despite his double burden, the good steed meant to have it. He deemed, perchance, he was with the Quorn or the Baron's. He rose; he sprang. The deep yellow water, cold in the moon's rays, with the farthest bank but a chill grey line in the mist, lay beneath us! A moment that seemed an eternity! Then we landed on the far-off further bank, and for the first time I could take a pull at his head. I turned him on the river's brim, and leaped him back again.

The runaway was now as tame as a driven deer in Richmond Park.

Well, Camarada, the adventure is over. She was grateful, of course. These *pervenche* eyes were suffused with a dewy radiance.

"You can't call," she said, "for you haven't been introduced, and Mrs. Walker says we must be more exclusive. I'm dying to be exclusive; but I'm very much obliged to you, and so will mother be. Let's see. I'll be at the Colosseum to-morrow night, about ten. I'm bound to see the Colosseum, by moonlight. Good-bye;" and she shook her pale parasol at me, and fluttered away.

Ah, Camarada, shall I be there? *Que scais-je?* Well, 'tis time to go to the dance at the Holy Father's. Adieu, Carissima. – Tout à vous,

Cis.

III

Mr. Redmond Barry (better known as Barry Lyndon) tells his uncle the story of a singular encounter at Berlin with Mr. Alan Stuart, called Alan Breck, and well known as the companion of Mr. David Balfour in many adventures. Mr. Barry, at this time, was in the pay of Herr Potzdorff, of his Prussian Majesty's Police, and was the associate of the Chevalier, his kinsman, in the pursuit of fortune.

Berlin, April 1, 1748.

Uncle Barry, – I dictate to Pippi, my right hand being wounded, and that by no common accident. Going down the Linden Strasse yesterday, I encountered a mob; and, being curious in Potzdorff's interest, penetrated to the kernel of it. There I found two men of my old regiment – Kurz and another – at words with a small, dark, nimble fellow, who carried bright and dancing eyes in a pock-marked face. He had his iron drawn, a heavy box-handled cut-and-thrust blade, and seemed ready to fall at once on the pair that had been jeering him for his strange speech.

“Who is this, lads?” I asked.

“Ein Engländer,” answered they.

“No Englishman,” says he, in a curious accent not unlike our brogue, “but a plain gentleman, though he bears a king's name and hath Alan Breck to his by-name.”

“Come, come,” says I in German, “let the gentleman go his way; he is my own countryman.” This was true enough for them; and you should have seen the Highlander's eyes flash, and grow dim again.

I took his arm, for Potzdorff will expect me to know all about the stranger, and marched him down to the *Drei Könige*.

“I am your host, sir; what do you call for, Mr. Stuart of – ?” said I, knowing there is never a Scot but has the name of his kailyard tacked to his own.

“A King's name is good enough for me; I bear it plain. Mr. – ?” said he, reddening.

“They call me the Chevalier Barry, of Ballybarry.”

“I am in the better company, sir,” quoth he, with a grand bow.

When a bowl of punch was brought he takes off his hat, and drinks, very solemnly, “To the King!”

“Over the water?” I asked.

“Nay, sir, on *this* side,” he said; and I smoked the Jacobite. But to shorten the story, which amuses my tedium but may beget it in you, I asked him if he knew the cards.

“I'm just daft when I get to the cartes,” he answered in his brogue, and we fell to piquet. Now my Scot wore a very fine coat, and on the same very large smooth silver buttons, well burnished. Therefore, perceiving such an advantage as a skilled player may enjoy, I let him win a little to whet his appetite, but presently used his buttons as a mirror, wherein I readily detected the strength of the cards he held. Before attempting this artifice, I had solemnly turned my chair round thrice.

“You have changed the luck, sir,” says Mr. Breck, or Stuart, presently; and, rising with a mighty grave air, he turned his coat and put it on inside out.

“Sir,” says I, “what am I to understand by this conduct?”

“What for should not I turn my coat, for luck, if you turn your chair?” says he. “But if you are not precesely satisfied, I will be proud to step outside with you.”

I answered that we were not in a Highland wilderness, and that if no malice were meant no affront was taken. We continued at the game till, though deprived of my mirror, I had won some 500 Fredericks. On this he rose, saying, “Sir, in this purse you will find the exact sum that I am owing you,

and I will call for my empty sporrán the morn. It was Rob Roy's before it was mine." Therewith he laid on the table a sort of goatskin pouch, such as Highlanders gird about their loins, and marched forth.

I set to work at opening his pouch, that was fastened by a spring and button, seeming easy enough of access. But I had scarce pressed the button when lo! a flash, a pistol shot, and my right hand is grazed with a bullet that flew out of the bag. This Highlander of the Devil had some mechanism in his purse that discharged a small steel pistol when unwarily opened. My hand is but slightly wounded, yet I cannot hold my sword, nor hath my search brought me any news of Alan Breck. He has vanished like an emissary of the Devil or the Pretender, as I doubt not he is. But I will have his blood, if he is not one of their Scotch fairies. – Your loving Nephew,

Redmond Barry, of Ballybarry.

P.S. – The Fredericks were in the bag, all told.

IV

From Mrs. Gamp to Mrs. Prig

Mrs. Gamp nurses an old friend who is under a singular delusion.

Todgers's.

My precious Betsy, – Which when last we parted it was not as I could wish, but bearing malice in our hearts. But, as often and often Mrs. Harris have said it before me, with the tears in her angel eyes – one of them having a slight cast from an accident with the moderator lamp, Harris being quick in his temper – often and often have she said to me: “Ah, Sairey, the quarrels of friends is affection’s best restorer.” And good reason to know it she have, with a husband as was ever true, and never gave her no cause to form the wish to pizen them as has good looks, but, for I will not deceive you, ready with his hands.

And so, between you and me may it be, Betsy Prig, as was constant partners afore them Chuzzlewidges, and Nadgetts, and Lewsomses, and Tiggses, and Chuffeys got that mixed and that aggerawating that to remember who of them poisoned which or for why in a slime draught, it makes my poor head go round, nor could such be soothing to the temper. So let bygones be bygones between us. For, wanting of my Betsy, I am now in a nice state of confusion, with a patient as was well beknown to me in younger days, when there wasn’t so much of a shadder on this mortal vial, ² meaning Mr. Pecksniff. Which you will not forget of him, by reason of his daughter as married that Jonadge, and his collars as mints of money must have gone to the getting them up; but is now at Todgers’s, and confused in his poor mind, thinking hisself Somebody else high in Parliament. And wonder at it I do not, them Chuzzlewidges and Chuffeys being that distracting, and ever proving to be some other pusson in disguise, as would confuge a kalkilating boy.

So being applied to for to nightly him, there in that very sick room – for why should I deceive you? – I meets the daily nuss; and, Betsy, I was that overcome to have such a pardner propoged to me as I had to ring and ask the young woman immediate for a small glass of their oldest rum, being what I am not accustomed to but having had a turn. For, will you believe it, she was not a widger woman as has experience in the ways of men, but a huzzy in a bragian cap like them the Nuns wear in “Mariar Monk,” as you may have seen it in the small sweet-shops, at a penny. And her hands as white as her papistry cap, and she a turning up of her nose at what I had took, and a presuming to give *me* advice about nussing, as St. Pancradge’s Churchyard wouldn’t hold them I’ve seen comfortable to their long homes, and no complaints made but ever the highest satigefaction. So I ups and gives her a bit of my mind; and Mrs. Todgers coming down, “It’s she goes or me,” says I, “for never will Sairey Gamp nuss, sick or monthly, with a pardner as has not confidence in me, nor I in her, but contrary.” Then *she* says she’ll go and speak to the doctor about it; and out she tramps with her nose in the air, and sneezing most awful, not being accustomed to that which I take, find it strengthening, but as it have been a cause of sorrow and strife let it be nameless between you and me. For to have the name “Snuffey” brought forward it is what the heart can forgive, but never forget in this valley of the shaddock.

I have nussed a many lunacies, Betsy, and in a general way am disposed to humour them rather than set them right up agin the fire when fractious. But this Pecksniff is the tryingest creature; he having got it in his mind as he is Somebody very high, and talking about the House, and Bills, and clauses, and the “sacred cause of Universal Anarchy,” for such was his Bible language, though meaning to me no more than the babe unborn. Whereby Mrs. Harris she have often said to me, “What

² Can Mrs. Gamp mean ‘dial’?

do them blessed infants occupy their little minds with afore they are called into that condition where, unless changed at nuss, Providence have appointed them?” And many a time have I said, “Seek not, Mrs. Harris, to diskiver; for we know not wot’s hidden in our own hearts, and the torters of the Imposition should not make me diwulge it.”

But Pecksniff is that aggravating as I can hardly heed the words I now put on the paper.

“Some of my birds have left me,” says he, “for the stranger’s breast, and one have took wing for the Government benches. ³ But I have ever sacrificed my country’s happiness to my own, and I will not begin to regulate my life by other rules of conduct now. I know the purity of my own motives, and while my Merry, my little Sir William, playful warbler, prattles under this patriarchal wing, and my Cherry, my darling Morley, supports the old man’s tottering walk, I can do without my Goschy, my dears, I can do without him.” And wants to borrer *my* umbreller for them “to rally round,” the bragian idgiot!

A chattering creature he always were, and will be; but, Betsy, I have this wery momink fixed him up with a shoehorn in his mouth, as was lying round providential, and the strings of my bonnet, and the last word as he will say this blessed night was some lunacy about “denouncing the clogeure,” as won’t give much more trouble now.

So having rung for a shilling’s worth of gin-and-water warm, and wishing you was here to take another of the same, I puts my lips to it, and drinks to one as was my frequent pardner in this mortal vale, and am, as in old days, my Betsy’s own

Sairey Gamp.

³ 1887.

V

From Herodotus of Halicarnassus to Sophocles the Athenian

Herodotus describes, in a letter to his friend Sophocles, a curious encounter with a mariner just returned from unknown parts of Africa.

To Sophocles, the Athenian, greeting. Yesterday, as I was going down to the market-place of Naucratis, I met Nicaretê, who of all the *hetairai* in this place is the most beautiful. Now, the *hetairai* of Naucratis are wont somehow to be exceedingly fair, beyond all women whom we know. She had with her a certain Phocæan mariner, who was but now returned from a voyage to those parts of Africa which lie below Arabia; and she saluted me courteously, as knowing that it is my wont to seek out and inquire the tidings of all men who have intelligence concerning the ends of the earth.

“Hail to thee, Nicaretê,” said I; “verily thou art this morning as lovely as the dawn, or as the beautiful Rhodopis that died ere thou wert born to us through the favour of Aphrodite.”⁴

Now this Rhodopis was she who built, they say, the Pyramid of Mycerinus: wherein they speak not truly but falsely, for Rhodopis lived long after the kings who built the Pyramids.

“Rhodopis died not, O Herodotus,” said Nicaretê, “but is yet living, and as fair as ever she was; and he who is now my lover, even this Phanes of Phocæa, hath lately beheld her.”

Then she seemed to me to be jesting, like that scribe who told me of Krôphi and Môphi; for Rhodopis lived in the days of King Amasis and of Sappho the minstrel, and was beloved by Charaxus, the brother of Sappho, wherefore Sappho reviled him in a song. How then could Rhodopis, who flourished more than a hundred years before my time, be living yet?

⁴ In his familiar correspondence, it will be observed, Herodotus does not trouble himself to maintain the dignity of history.

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