

# Vanity Fair

By William Makepeace Thackeray

## Chapter ONE

### A Departure and a Romantic Adventure

It was the last day of term at Miss Pinkerton's academy. Miss Pinkerton was giving final instructions to her sister, Miss Jemima.

'Is everything ready for Miss Sedley?' she asked grandly. 'She will take the dictionary with her, of course.'

Miss Pinkerton's academy was one of the finest schools for young ladies. The academy had been visited by the great Dr Samuel Johnson. He had also mentioned it in a poem. Miss Pinkerton could never resist mentioning the great man's name, and she gave her pupils a copy of his dictionary when they left the school.

'What about Becky Sharp?' Miss Jemima now asked. 'Shall I give her a copy of the dictionary, too?'

'Becky Sharp!' Miss Pinkerton exclaimed angrily. 'We won't waste the dictionary on her.'

Becky Sharp was an orphan. Her mother, a Frenchwoman, had died some years previously. She had taught Becky French. Her father had been the school's art teacher. He was a talented man, but very fond of wild company and drinking. He had begged Miss Pinkerton to take on Becky as an 'articled pupil' at the school before he died.

Becky Sharp was a good-looking, intelligent girl. She was small and slender, and she had sandy hair. Miss Pinkerton had realised how useful she could be because she knew French and could play music. Becky Sharp despised Miss Pinkerton and the moral atmosphere of the academy.

The relationship between Miss Pinkerton and Becky Sharp grew worse and worse. Both of them were glad when the girl obtained a post as governess to Sir Pitt Crawley.

Amelia Sedley was the daughter of a rich London stockbroker. She was a pretty girl, and she had healthy red cheeks and a warm smile. Everyone loved her

because she was patient and kind. Amelia had asked Becky to stay at her family's house for a week when they left school.

Soon the two girls had said goodbye to the headmistress, and they went out to the carriage. Just as the carriage began to move, Miss Jemima ran up to the window.

'Stop!' she cried out excitedly. She pushed two parcels through the window.

'Some sandwiches, my dears,' she told the two girls. 'And a book for you, Becky,' she went on. 'Johnson's Dictionary, you know. You can't leave without that.'

The good woman went back into the garden. She had defied her sister for once, but she was sure she had done the right thing.

The carriage drove off. Miss Jemima was horrified to see Becky Sharp lean out of the window and throw the precious dictionary back into the garden.

Mr and Mrs Sedley were delighted to have their daughter back home, and they gave a kind welcome to her friend Becky as well. Amelia's older brother, Jos, was also at home. He had recently returned on leave from India, where he had an important and lucrative post in the East India Company's Civil Service.

Jos Sedley had lived a very isolated life in India, and he was terribly shy of women. He was also extremely vain, and dressed in the latest fashion. This made him look rather ridiculous, as he was very overweight.

It did not take long for Becky Sharp to understand Jos, and a certain idea began to take shape in her mind. She hated the prospect of working as a governess.

That night at dinner Becky Sharp paid particular attention to Jos. He was flattered by the looks she gave him, and blushed frequently. Mrs Sedley had had a curry prepared for her son, and Becky was offered some.

'I must try some,' she said. 'I'm sure it's very good if it comes from India.'

Old Mr Sedley smiled quietly. He understood her sudden enthusiasm for India and curry.

'Is it good?' he asked her softly.

'Excellent!' Becky gasped.

'Try a chilli with it,' Jos suggested.

'A chilli?' Becky said faintly. The word 'chilli' sounded so cool that she took a whole one. It was hotter than the curry. In a moment she was red in the face - she could hardly breathe.

'Water!' she cried. 'Water, for heaven's sake!'

Mr Sedley laughed aloud. Even Jos laughed.

Becky was furious, but she took the joke in good spirits.

Mr Sedley took his son aside after dinner, and gave him a little advice.

'That girl's determined to marry you,' he said.

'Nonsense!' Jos replied, but he was very flattered.

Jos began to think about Becky more and more. Soon he was convinced that he was in love with her. His behaviour towards her became stranger and stranger as he struggled against his shyness. Becky thought he was in love. Perhaps he might ask her to marry him. The future looked bright for her.

There were two other frequent visitors to the Sedley household during Becky Sharp's stay there. They were two young army officers, William Dobbin and George Osborne.

One evening all the young people decided to go to Vauxhall Gardens together. Amelia was very excited because she was in love with George Osborne. He was a good-looking young man, and he was Mr Sedley's godson. William Dobbin and George had been to the same school, and they were close friends. Dobbin was not as good-looking as his friend - he was tall and very shy.

George and Amelia had known each other since they were children. Their families expected them to marry.

Becky was sure that Jos wanted to ask her to marry him. She walked by his side, giving him every encouragement she could. Jos himself was sure that he wanted to ask her to marry him, but he did not know how to approach the issue.

At last the party decided to eat something at the restaurant in the Vauxhall Gardens. Jos ordered a magnificent meal and the best champagne. He ate and drank more than anyone else. Then he ordered a bowl of punch. It was the custom at Vauxhall to drink punch.

It was the punch that was responsible for the whole of this story. If Jos Sedley had not ordered it, and then drunk most of it, he would have proposed to Becky Sharp, and that would have been the end of the story. As it was, the more he drank, the more cheerful he became. He began to sing, and this made people laugh.

George Osborne was embarrassed.

'I think we should leave,' he told the girls. They stood up to go.

'Stop, my dearest diddle-diddle-darling!' Jos cried out to Becky. He seized hold of her waist. Becky could not free herself, and Jos held on to her tightly and resumed his song.

Dobbin succeeded in freeing the unfortunate Becky. He took Jos back to his lodgings, and George Osborne took the girls back home.

Becky and Amelia were sure that the moment had come for Jos to propose to Becky, after his behaviour the night before!

Jos, meanwhile, woke with a terrible headache. He did not remember everything that had happened the night before, but he was terribly ashamed of himself. He did not have the courage to see Becky again. He wrote a note to Amelia saying that he was leaving London, and asking her to apologise to Becky for his behaviour.

It was the end of Becky's hopes of marriage. She knew now that she had to take up the post of governess with Sir Pitt Crawley and his family.

## Chapter Two

### The Crawley Family

Becky's new employer was Sir Pitt Crawley. Sir Pitt Crawley had been married twice, and he had two grown-up sons from his first marriage - Pitt and Rawdon Crawley. After the death of his first wife Sir Pitt had married again, this time choosing an ironmonger's daughter. They had two daughters. Sir Pitt had advertised for a governess to help in the education of these two children.

Becky Sharp was young enough to have a romantic idea of what a baronet's establishment might be like. She was very shocked, therefore, to discover that Sir Pitt Crawley seemed hardly a gentleman at all. He was an elderly man who dressed badly and drank too much. He was also mean about money, and preferred to spend his time eating and drinking with the butler, rather than entertaining ladies and gentlemen.

Sir Pitt Crawley's country residence, Queen's Crawley, was a large house, but it was in poor condition.

Becky soon realised that the most important person in the house, after Sir Pitt Crawley himself, was the baronet's older son, Pitt. Unlike his father, he was rather a severe man with very strong religious opinions. It was clear that the father and son did not get along well.

It was also clear that Sir Pitt's wife, the ironmonger's daughter, wielded no power in the house at all. Lady Crawley had been a lovely young girl before she married Sir Pitt Crawley. She had given up a decent young man who loved her for the happiness of becoming Lady Crawley. Vanity Fair, indeed! Her beauty faded, and Sir Pitt became bored with her. The poor woman was despised by all. The only person who showed the slightest respect for her was the baronet's older son, Pitt. He behaved with a cold, formal correctness to her at all times.

Sir Pitt Crawley's brother, Bute, was the local parson. He and his family lived in the village rectory. The relationship between the two brothers was not particularly good. They had quarrelled about money in the past, and they continued to plot against each other. Their plots centred around Sir Pitt's unmarried half-sister, Miss Crawley.

Miss Crawley was a very rich, selfish old woman. She did not like Pitt Crawley because of his piety. She wanted to leave half of her money to Bute Crawley, and the other half to Sir Pitt's second son, Rawdon.

Becky rapidly decided on the most useful strategy to follow at Queen's Crawley. She wanted to keep everyone happy with least effort to herself. She won over the two daughters by letting them educate themselves rather than giving them difficult lessons to follow.

Sir Pitt Crawley was involved in a large number of lawsuits with different people, and Becky soon learned all the details of these. She ordered his papers for him, and helped prepare his accounts. She also helped him with the management of the estate, and was very useful in every way.

With his older son, Pitt, Becky took a different approach. She listened to his religious opinions very seriously, and encouraged his political ambitions as well.

The wealthy Miss Crawley soon arrived at Queen's Crawley, where everyone made a great fuss of her. Becky wrote to Amelia, describing how Sir Pitt provided the finest food and wines for her, and how the family at the rectory also did their best to entertain the selfish old lady. Sir Pitt's younger son,

Rawdon Crawley, also came to stay at Queen's Crawley to be near his aunt. Becky told Amelia that the young army officer was very good-looking and had even asked her to dance with him at a country ball.

Miss Crawley knew perfectly well that her relatives were waiting for her to die so that they could inherit her fortune. She was a shallow, pleasure-loving woman, and she only had time for the dashing young army officer, Rawdon Crawley. She regarded Pitt Crawley as a bore, and was frightened of his religion and morality. She thought Bute and his wife were dull as well.

It was not long before Becky Sharp had become a favourite with the old lady. Becky amused her by imitating the guests who were invited to dine at Queen's Crawley. Miss Crawley insisted that the governess sit beside her and Rawdon at dinner.

'I don't care about birth and social position,' she said to Becky. 'Look at my brother Pitt, look at Bute at the parsonage. None of them have got your intelligence, my dear. They're not even the equals of my poor old companion Briggs. No, what I care for is wit and breeding - and you've got both!'

She even confided in Becky about her hopes for Rawdon.

'I admired Nelson because he didn't care what people thought. He ran away with a beautiful woman. I hope some great man runs away with you, my dear!' she went on. 'I hope Rawdon runs away with a girl,' she added dreamily.

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

'A rich one, of course,' Miss Crawley replied with a smile. 'Poor Rawdon hasn't got any money except what I give him.'

'Is he terribly clever?' Becky asked.

'Clever!' the old lady laughed. 'Rawdon hasn't got an idea in his head. But I want him to succeed - he's so delightfully wicked!'

Although Becky told Amelia in her letter that Rawdon had danced with her, she did not tell her friend everything about the young army officer's behaviour towards her. One evening, when Becky was playing the piano, Rawdon stood close to her, bending over the music. He had even written her a note while she was singing after dinner once, and hidden it in her music book. Becky picked up the note and dropped it into the fire.

'What's that, my dear?' Miss Crawley asked sleepily.

'A false note,' Becky replied with a little smile.

Rawdon blushed furiously.

### Chapter Three Young Lovers

He must now leave the good people enjoying themselves at Queen's Crawley, and return to London to find out what is happening to Amelia.

The ladies in Amelia's social circle agreed that she was very good-natured but dull. The Misses Osbornes and Dobbins patronised the poor girl terribly, and Amelia was very shy in their company. 'What does George see in her?' they asked each other in wonder.

George Osborne himself became used to the idea that he was making an enormous sacrifice in marrying Amelia. He continued to visit the Sedley household, of course, but days went by when he ignored Amelia. She suffered, but she told no one about her suffering. Only George's friend Dobbin realised that the girl was unhappy.

Meanwhile great events were taking place in Europe. Napoleon's army was defeated by the allies, and the emperor was forced to abdicate and take up residence on the island of Elba. The financial markets of the world were disturbed. Mr Sedley suffered heavy losses in his investments on the stock exchange.

One day George Osborne visited Amelia, and invited her to dine with his family at Russell Square that evening. Amelia was delighted, and accepted happily.

Amelia arrived early at the house, and was talking with George's sisters when Mr Osborne came home. Mr Osborne seemed surprised to see her there.

'George is home today, Papa,' one of the sisters explained. 'He'll be coming in to dinner soon.'

'Will he indeed?' Mr Osborne said crossly. 'He'd better come in on time. I won't hold dinner for him.'

Mr Osborne sat down gloomily. When the clock struck the usual time for dinner, he rang for the butler.

'Dinner!' he ordered angrily.

'Mr George isn't in yet,' the man replied.

'Damn Mr George, sir. I'm the master here!' Mr Osborne commented angrily. 'Dinner, I say!'



The ladies looked at each other in fright.

Dinner was a silent affair. Mr Osborne said nothing, and no one else knew how to make conversation. George arrived halfway through the meal, and did not seem to notice his father's bad humour. He talked amusingly to Amelia and his sisters.

At last the ladies retired to the drawing room, leaving Mr Osborne and George to their wine. The older man was still bad-tempered. George did his best to cheer him up. The real reason for his visit was that he had run out of money. He was hoping for some money from his father. At last his father spoke.

'How are you and Amelia getting on?' he asked.

'Anyone can see that she loves me, sir,' George replied proudly.

'And you?' his father asked sharply, 'What about you, my boy?'

George laughed easily.

'Didn't you tell me to marry Amelia, sir?' he joked. 'You and Mr Sedley arranged it all years ago!'

'Hmm,' commented his father. 'Haven't I heard about you and your wild amusements with Captain Crawley and that set? You should be careful, sir.'

Mr Osborne was secretly delighted that his son was mixing in such aristocratic company. He was very ambitious for George.

'Well, well,' he went on. 'I suppose young men will be young men. I'm glad you live in the best society of England.'

'One can't live in that kind of society for nothing, you know,' George said quietly.

'Don't worry about money, my boy,' Mr Osborne interrupted him. 'My money's as good as theirs. Call on Mr Chopper in the City tomorrow - he'll have something for you.'

'Thank you, sir.'

'You could marry higher than Amelia, you know,' Mr Osborne told him. 'I don't like the look of Sedley's affairs. There are rumours about his losses. If I don't see Amelia's ten thousand pounds you won't marry her. I won't have any lame ducks in my family.'

George was very attentive to Amelia when he went to join the ladies after his talk with his father. She remembered long afterwards the pleasure of that evening with him.

George hurried off to the City the next morning, and obtained a document from Mr Chopper. Then he hurried to the bank. He noticed that Mr Sedley was also in the bank, but he was too excited to notice the grim look on the older man's face.

Meanwhile Miss Crawley had returned to London from her visit to Queen's Crawley, bringing Becky Sharp with her. The old lady had eaten and drunk far too much, and was feeling unwell. She retired immediately to bed, and summoned her doctor.

Captain Crawley was one of the first people to arrive at her house to ask after her. He received gloomy reports from the maid and from Miss Briggs her companion. Captain Crawley was unable to see the patient, but he did manage to have a few minutes of private conversation with Becky. He left the house looking very cheerful.

Miss Briggs tried to gain admission to the sick lady's bedroom, but was refused. The poor lady had been a loyal and faithful companion for many years and was wounded by Miss Crawley's behaviour.

'But why won't she see me?' she asked Becky. 'I always look after her when she's ill.'

'Don't be so upset,' Becky advised her. 'She won't see you because she prefers my nursing to yours, that's all. Sick people are like that sometimes. She'll be well again in a few weeks, and then I'll go back to Queen's Crawley.'

'Never, never,' Miss Briggs said sadly.

'She'll never be well, or I'll never go?' Becky asked with a little smile.

Captain Crawley called every day to receive the latest news from Becky. Every day the news was better, and soon Miss Crawley allowed the faithful Briggs to spend time with her once more. Becky used to mimic the good woman to her face for the amusement of the old lady.

Once Miss Crawley was well again, she agreed to accompany Becky to Russell Square so that the girl could be reunited with her old school friend, Amelia.

The visit was a short one, but Amelia made a good impression on the rich old lady. She talked enthusiastically about Becky's friend, and mentioned her to Captain Crawley. Becky was quick to explain that Amelia had a fiance - a certain Lieutenant George Osborne.

'What regiment is he in?' Rawdon asked.

'I don't recall,' Becky replied, 'but his Captain's name is Dobbin.'

'I know Dobbin,' Rawdon told her. 'And I know Osborne too, now that I think of it. Osborne's a fool,' he commented happily. 'He wants to be seen in the company of a lord. He pays for their dinners, and they invite the guests.'

'Pretty guests,' Becky suggested with a smile.

'Quite right, Miss Sharp,' Rawdon laughed. 'Very pretty guests indeed.'

'Don't be so naughty, Rawdon!' the old lady laughed excitedly. Her nephew's cynicism delighted her enormously.

'Why don't we have him here?' Rawdon suggested.

Lieutenant Osborne and Amelia were invited for dinner at Miss Crawley's house.

The meeting between Becky and George Osborne was not an easy one. Becky suspected that it was George who had discouraged Jos Sedley from proposing to her after the dinner at Vauxhall Gardens. She greeted him very coolly. For his part, Osborne thought her vain and ambitious.

Amelia saw immediately that there was a friendship between Becky and Rawdon. Before leaving the house she went up to her friend.

'I see it all,' she said quietly.

Becky kissed her.

One day Sir Pitt Crawley came to London. His wife had just died, and the baronet was desperate to have Becky back at the house.

'You must come,' he told her.

'I'll come as soon as I can,' Becky replied.

'Everything's in a mess without you,' Sir Pitt complained. 'Dear Becky, do come!'

Becky looked at him closely.

'Come as what?' she asked quietly.

'Come as Lady Crawley, if you like,' the old man cried impatiently. 'Come back and be my wife. There! Does that satisfy you?'

'Oh Sir Pitt!' Becky cried.

'Say yes,' Sir Pitt begged her. 'I'm an old man, Becky, but I'll make you happy, you see if I don't.' The old man got down on his knees before her.

Becky jumped back. For once she did not know what to say.

'Oh, Sir Pitt!' she cried again. 'Oh - sir - I'm married already!'

## Chapter four

### A Family Bankruptcy

Miss Briggs happened to be passing the room where the interview between Becky and Sir Pitt was taking place. She heard both his offer of marriage, and Becky's refusal of it. She did not stay long enough, however, to hear the reason for the refusal - that Becky was already married.

Miss Briggs carried the exciting news to Miss Crawley.

Miss Crawley was impressed that Becky had refused the baronet, and secretly relieved. She talked the matter over with Briggs, and the two women agreed that Becky must be in love with someone else.

'Find out who it is,' Miss Crawley ordered her companion.

Becky admitted to Miss Briggs that she was in love with someone else, but she refused to tell Briggs who the man was. She did not tell Miss Crawley either when the old lady interrogated her.

'You will know soon enough, my dear,' she said.

That evening, when she was alone in her bedroom, she wrote a letter.

"Dear friend,

"Half of our secret is known, and I'm sure that the time has come to tell everything. It's risky, I know, but I'm sure we'll win in the end. Miss Crawley is very sympathetic and generous. I think everything will be all right!

She addressed the letter to 'Miss Elizabeth Styles'. The reader will not perhaps be surprised that Miss Elizabeth Styles, who wore a military uniform, was none other than Captain Rawdon Crawley.

The next morning Becky's bedroom was empty. She had left a note for Briggs, explaining the mystery of her marriage and asking her to break the news to Miss Crawley.

It was bad luck for Becky that Mrs Bute Crawley arrived at the house that morning. Briggs told her the whole story, and they went to Miss Crawley together.

The old lady was horrified at the news, and had another attack of illness.

'I'll never forgive them!' she said. 'And I'll never give Rawdon another penny of my money.'

Sir Pitt also came to the house that morning. He wanted to see Becky.

'She's got to come back to Queen's Crawley with me,' he told Briggs. 'I can't manage without her.'

'But don't you know she's married?' Briggs replied in astonishment.

'What do I care about that?' the baronet said angrily. 'I know she's married.'

'She left the house this morning, sir,' Briggs explained. 'Miss Crawley is very upset by the news of her marriage to Captain Rawdon.'

When Sir Pitt heard that Becky was married to his own son, he broke into a furious rage. Then he left the house very noisily.

'But what if she doesn't forgive me?' Rawdon asked his wife that night, as they sat together in their modest little apartment.

'Don't worry about that,' Becky said sweetly. 'I'll make your fortune for you.'

'You can do anything,' he replied tenderly.

There is one event in Vanity Fair that attracts both sentiment and satire, and that is the auction of a bankrupt person's household goods. People who attend these auctions remember how things were different in the past, how the person who is penniless now, used to offer his guests the finest wines and food.

An auction was taking place at the Sedley household. Old Sedley was now a ruined man.

Captain Dobbin was at the auction. He was very interested in a little piano that had belonged to Amelia. His agent began to bid for the instrument, as did Becky's agent on her behalf. The bidding was fast, and the price rose high. At last Becky's agent ceased to bid, and the piano became the property of Captain Dobbin.

The piano arrived that evening at a modest little house off the Fulham Road, where the Sedleys were now living.

'He was a kind man, Mr Sedley,' Becky commented dreamily to Rawdon. She was remembering her stay at the house. 'I'm sorry it's all gone wrong for him.'

'Oh, these stockbrokers,' Rawdon said carelessly, 'they're used to this sort of thing, you know. I'm sorry for your little friend Amelia, though. I suppose young Osborne will think twice before he marries her now!'

Rawdon's guess was not far wrong. Amelia had received a letter from George Osborne's father immediately the news of the bankruptcy became public knowledge. Mr Osborne told her that her father had behaved very badly, and that it was no longer possible for the two families to know each other. She showed the letter to her father, who was very angry. He ordered her to return every letter and present that she had received from George, and to forget about him. Amelia sent back the few presents that George had given her, but she kept his letters. They were her most precious possessions.

There was more exciting news from Europe. Napoleon had escaped from Elba and returned to France. Everyone knew that war was coming.

One day Dobbin found his friend George Osborne in his room at the barracks. He looked very upset.

'She's sent me back all the presents I gave her,' George told his friend. 'It's all over. Look, read this.' He passed Dobbin a letter from Amelia.

Dobbin had visited Mr Sedley and the family in their new house off the Fulham Road. He knew that Amelia was very ill.

'She's dying, George,' he said quietly.

A few hours later George Osborne paid a visit to the Sedley household.

Mrs Bute Crawley established herself at Miss Crawley's house in London to nurse the old lady. She made sure that letters from Rawdon Crawley were intercepted. She read Miss Crawley religious stories, and encouraged her to consider serious matters. It was her hope that Miss Crawley was planning to write a new will, leaving some of her money to Bute Crawley.

Mrs Bute Crawley was very successful in her arrangements. Perhaps she was too successful. She frightened and depressed Miss Crawley instead of amusing her. Even her doctors thought that the effect of Mrs Bute Crawley's influence was dangerous. One of them tried to talk to her.

'You have done a lot for our poor patient,' he told her. 'But she is not as ill as she was. Indeed, she needs fresh air now. If you keep her in the house, she may really die!'

At last an expedition to the park was organised. Miss Crawley's carriage was soon spotted by Becky and Rawdon, who were also out driving. Rawdon drove past his aunt, and saluted her gravely. His aunt ignored him.

'That's it, then,' he commented to Becky. 'She won't acknowledge me.'



## Chapter five

### A Wedding and a Disinheritance

Captain Dobbin now found himself in a very painful and difficult position. He could see that George was less and less keen to marry Amelia, and he realised that he himself was falling in love with her.

'She will die if George does not marry her,' he thought. He determined to make sure that the wedding went ahead.

George and his father, meanwhile, had quarrelled bitterly. Mr Osborne wanted his son to marry a rich girl. George, however, who had been influenced by Dobbin's account of Amelia's sufferings, promised to be true to his word.

'I'll have no beggars in my family, sir!' his father roared. 'Marry Amelia and you leave this house for ever - you leave it a penniless man, I tell you!'

'I've done it, Dobbin,' George told his friend afterwards.

'Done what?' Dobbin asked.

'I've told my father,' George informed him. 'I'll marry her tomorrow - I love her more and more each day!'

One morning a quiet wedding took place in London. Amelia was the bride and George the bridegroom. The best man was the faithful Dobbin. Jos Sedley was also in attendance, as was Mrs Sedley. Mr Sedley did not attend the ceremony.

George and Amelia went to Brighton for their honeymoon. They were accompanied by Jos Sedley. Here they met up with Captain Crawley and his wife. Jos was now wearing military-style clothing in honour of the coming war, and George and Captain Crawley teased him about it.

The two couples spent most of their time together. The gentlemen had their own amusements after dinner. They usually played billiards or cards, and this allowed Captain Crawley to acquire some much-needed ready money.

One day Dobbin came down to Brighton to see his friends. He greeted them in a friendly way, but his face was serious.

'What's the news?' George asked eagerly. 'What does my father say?'

'I'll tell you everything later,' Dobbin said quietly. 'The really important thing is

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'Come on, tell us!' George cried excitedly.

'The campaign's started. We're going to Belgium, old boy. O'Dowd's in command. We leave next week.'

It was true that Dobbin had been to see Mr Osborne, to break the news of his son's marriage to Amelia. The interview had not been a success. Mr Osborne was furious at his son's disobedience, and furious with poor Dobbin as well for having encouraged the match.

When he returned home that evening, Mr Osborne sat for many hours in his study. He adored his son, but he was a very proud man, and George's marriage had disappointed him bitterly. Mr Osborne took down the family Bible, where the names of all his children were inscribed. He eliminated George's name. Then he wrote a letter to the bank, instructing the cashier not to pay further funds to his son.

Another visitor who was staying at Brighton was Miss Crawley. Becky made Rawdon write the old lady a note. Then Becky took the note to Briggs and begged her to deliver it. Miss Crawley laughed when she read it.

'Don't you see,' she cried, 'Rawdon never wrote a word of it! His letters are always about money, and they're full of spelling mistakes and bad grammar. It's that little governess of his who told him what to say!' In her heart she felt sad and bitter. She knew that everyone wanted her dead; they wanted her money.

'You may tell Captain Crawley,' she informed Briggs, 'that he can call on my lawyer in London. There will be something for him there.'

Rawdon and Becky were delighted at the news from Miss Crawley. They hurried as fast as they could to London. Rawdon then made his way to the lawyer's office. He looked gloomy when he joined Becky.

'It's a rotten trick, Becky,' he told her. 'The old lady's only given me twenty pounds!'

The joke was too good for Becky to resist. She looked at Rawdon's serious face, and burst out laughing.

## Chapter six

### Preparations for War

The Osbornes and Dobbin now made their way to Chatham, from where the regiment was to embark for Europe. Amelia was presented to Peggy O'Dowd, the commanding officer's wife. Peggy O'Dowd was a friendly Irishwoman, and she made Amelia very welcome.

'We're all good friends here,' she explained cheerfully. 'There isn't a happier regiment in the whole army.'

Jos had agreed to accompany Amelia to Europe, and everyone noticed that his appearance became more and more military every day.

At last they arrived in Brussels where the regiment was quartered. Everyone was delighted with the city, and all the Vanity Fair booths were laid out before them with their usual attractions. There was gambling for those who liked it, there was a theatre, and above all, there was a huge throng of lords, ladies and gentlemen.

George was enthusiastic about the social life of Brussels. One evening he danced with one of Lady Bareacre's daughters. He even invited the Bareacres to a grand dinner. They accepted the invitation, but they refused to speak to poor Amelia, whom they considered their social inferior. She passed a very miserable evening in their company.

One day Captain Crawley and Becky arrived in the city. They were travelling with General Tufto, and they mixed in the very highest military circles. George was quite proud to know the Crawleys, and to be seen around the city with them.

Becky was in the very best of humours. She teased poor Jos about their old romance, and she flirted with George. Amelia was uncomfortable in her presence. She felt that Becky's influence on her husband was not a good one.

Dobbin was more forthright still.

'What a humbug that woman is!' he commented to George.

A grand ball was planned, and everyone was desperate to have a ticket to the social event of the year. Jos and Mrs O'Dowd were unlucky, but the Bareacres obtained tickets for Captain Osborne and his wife. Dobbin was given a ticket by a general he knew.

George bought new clothes for Amelia, and drove her to the ball. She did not know anyone there, and sat by herself while her husband went off to look for his friends. Amelia was unhappy, and the only person who came to talk to her was honest Dobbin.

Becky, meanwhile, had made a splendid entrance. She immediately joined the most select group of people at the ball, and was soon the centre of attention with the men there. She spoke French perfectly, and everyone wanted to dance with her. Then she spotted Amelia, and came over to join her on the bench. She criticised her clothes, commented happily on the ball, and then gave her friend a lot of advice that humiliated poor Amelia even more.

When George saw that Becky had joined his wife, he too hurried over to the bench. He asked Becky to dance, and she agreed. They danced together two or three times. Amelia was very unhappy. Tears came into her eyes.

Then George ran back to collect Becky's shawl and flowers. Becky was leaving the ball. George carried her bouquet to her, but when he gave it to her she saw that there was a note lying among the flowers. Becky had received many such notes in her life. She smiled at George, and turned towards her husband.

Amelia was watching the scene between George and Becky. She turned very pale.

'William,' she said quietly, 'I don't feel very well. Please take me home.'

Dobbin escorted her away from the ball.

George, meanwhile, was in a very elated mood. He did not notice that his wife had left the ball. He gambled at the tables, winning repeatedly. Then he began drinking heavily. Dobbin found him in a very excitable mood when he returned from Amelia's hotel.

'Come out, George,' Dobbin said quietly.

'Nonsense!' George cried. 'Come and drink with me, my old friend!'

Dobbin came close to him.

'The enemy is advancing,' he whispered. 'We're leaving in three hours.'

There was little sleep for anyone that night. Everyone was busy preparing for the sudden departure for the battlefield.

George made his way quickly to the hotel, where Amelia was already in bed. He thought about the short weeks of his marriage and blushed with shame when he thought about the note he had given to Becky Sharp.

'What will happen to Amelia if I die?' he asked himself.

He wrote a letter to his father, asking him to look after his wife if he was killed, and thanking him for his past kindness.

He was very kind to her the next morning before he went away. Amelia was very upset to see him go.

The O'Dowds were also making their preparations for the departure.

'Call me at half-past one, my dear,' the Major said quietly to his wife. 'And have my things ready for me.' This was his way of indicating that the regiment was marching the next morning.

Rawdon spent the last hours with Becky reckoning up what he could leave behind for Becky if anything happened to him.

'Look,' he said, 'I've been lucky recently at cards - here's two hundred and fifty pounds in cash. Then there are my horses.'

Captain Crawley, who cheated his friends at cards, and who never paid his debts, had tears in his eyes when he lifted Becky up to kiss her goodbye. Becky had wisely decided not to give in to her emotions.

Captain Dobbin called on Jos very early in the morning. Jos was not pleased to be woken up and he greeted Dobbin without enthusiasm.

'What can I do for you?' he enquired coldly.

'George and I are marching in an hour,' Dobbin explained. 'I want you to look after your sister. If something happens to the army, take her back to England. You're the only person she's got!'

Soon after they all marched out of the city.

## Chapter Seven

### The Battle of Waterloo

There was great excitement in Brussels after the British army had marched out to meet Napoleon's troops.

Jos, meanwhile, was surprised to receive a visit from Becky Sharp that morning. He had not been invited to any of the grand social events in which she had played such a brilliant part, and he was offended at her neglect. Becky, who was not sure of a British victory, decided to become friends with her old admirer again.

'I'm sure you're getting ready to join the army,' she told him. 'Soon there'll be nobody left in Brussels to protect us poor women!'

Jos was delighted at the idea that she thought he was joining the army.

'I should like to see the battle,' he replied grandly, 'but I have my sister to protect.'

'What a good brother you are!' Becky exclaimed. She put her handkerchief to her eyes. 'Your heart is true to your sister,' she went on, 'but I remember a time when it was false to me!'

Jos blushed furiously. He did not know what to say to her.

'I've avoided you here in Brussels,' Becky went on. 'What else could I do? Do you think my husband could bear to speak to you? You're the only man he's ever been jealous of, you know!'

Poor Jos was delighted at this speech. He forgot his doubts and suspicions of Becky.

Becky observed him closely.

'At least he'll give me a place in his carriage if the army is defeated,' she thought.

Becky then went into Amelia's room to greet her. She found her ill because she was worried about George. Amelia regarded her as an enemy now, and the interview was a painful one for the two women.

'You tried to do me wrong,' Amelia complained. 'You tried to take my husband from me, Rebecca. But he came back to me, you see - he came back to me!' She burst into tears.

Becky left Amelia's room. For once she was silent. Her friend's tears had moved her. She happened to encounter Mrs Peggy O'Dowd in the street outside, and she told her that Amelia was very upset. The good lady hurried to the house.

Brussels was full of rumours about the great battle. Jos grew increasingly nervous. He was not a brave man, and what he heard from his servants frightened him. He began to think about leaving the city. He told Amelia that he thought it was best to prepare to leave, but she refused to listen to him.

That night Jos's fears increased to panic. Some Belgian soldiers had retreated into the city, and one of these took refuge with the maid in Jos's house. The young soldier was tired and hungry, and he told terrible stories about the defeat of the British army.

'The Duke of Wellington is a prisoner,' he insisted, 'and the whole army is in flight. Napoleon has won.'

Jos had come into the kitchen to hear the soldier's account, and he was now wild with terror. He changed out of his military-style clothes as quickly as he could, and ordered his servant to prepare the carriage.

'There are no horses left in Brussels, sir,' the servant told him.

Jos dashed into the street. He ran to all the hotels in a desperate search for horses. In one hotel he saw Lady Bareacres and her daughters sitting in a carriage. They, too, were waiting for horses.

Lady Bareacres was also desperate to abandon the city. This proud lady, who had refused to acknowledge Becky when they passed on the stairs, now came to ask her to sell Captain Crawley's horses.

'I won't sell you my horses, my Lady,' Becky told her proudly, 'not for the two largest diamonds you wore at the ball.'

Just then Becky caught sight of Jos entering the hotel. The frightened expression on his face told her everything.

'He will buy my horses,' she decided.

Jos and Becky were soon in earnest conversation together. The price she asked for the horses was a huge one, but Jos was so terrified that he agreed to pay.

Jos now told his servant to prepare the horses. He had decided to ride out of the city as soon as he could. He went back once more to Amelia to persuade her to come with him.

'Emmy, I'm leaving today,' he told her, 'and you must come with me. There's no time to lose!'

'You're a coward, Mr Sedley,' Peggy O'Dowd told him quietly.

'Never mind her!' cried Jos. 'Are you coming with me or not, Emmy?'

Amelia was too ill to move.

'Without my husband, Jos?' Amelia replied.

Jos saw that it was useless.

'Goodbye, then,' he said in a rage, and left the room. A few minutes later the two ladies saw him riding awkwardly down the street on one of Becky's horses, followed by his servant on the other.

The noise of the great battle could be heard throughout the city all that day. At last the guns grew silent. The English had their victory.

Darkness fell. Amelia was praying for her husband, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.



## Chapter Eight

### Miss Crawley

Miss Crawley was now living in Brighton, and she read the news of the Battle of Waterloo with great interest. Rawdon had been promoted; he was now a Colonel.

'What a pity that fine young man behaved as he did!' said the kind-hearted Briggs. She wanted Miss Crawley to forgive Rawdon and Becky.

'Rawdon's a fool,' the old lady replied angrily. 'He could have married well if he'd had my money behind him. But he won't get any of it now!'

Rawdon and Becky took good care to write regularly to Miss Crawley, and the old lady was amused by their letters, although she knew perfectly well that it was Becky who wrote them and not her nephew.

Miss Crawley's attitude to the family at the rectory was not so warm. She had been frightened by Mrs Bute Crawley during her illness in London. Worse than that, she had been bored by the rector's wife. Still, presents of farm produce arrived regularly at Miss Crawley's house in Brighton, with tender notes of affection from the family at the rectory.

Rawdon's brother, Pitt, was also attentive to his aunt. He came frequently to Brighton to visit his fiancée, Lady Jane Sheepshanks, who lived in the town with her sisters and mother, the formidable and religious-minded Countess Southdown.

Pitt hinted to Lady Southdown that it might be beneficial for her family to make a friendship with his aunt. He told her that Miss Crawley was now all alone in the world.

'I'll certainly visit the poor lady,' the Countess responded enthusiastically. 'I'll leave her some religious literature as well.'

'No, my dear lady,' said the artful Pitt. 'She has been seriously ill, and she has not been accustomed to think of spiritual matters. We must proceed slowly. Besides,' he added quietly, 'we don't want to frighten the poor lady. She has seventy thousand pounds. Think of that.'

Countess Southdown nodded her head in agreement.

The next day the Southdown carriage pulled up outside Miss Crawley's house.

The visit was a great success, and Miss Crawley took particular to Pitt's fiancée Lady Jane. Pitt was in high spirits, and spent his time daydreaming about the old lady's seventy thousand pounds.

News of the friendship between Pitt Crawley and his aunt soon reached the rectory, and Mrs Bute Crawley decided to make one further effort to win the old lady's fortune for her family. She sent her son James to visit Miss Crawley.

James was a student. He was a simple young fellow, more interested in sport and beer than in his studies. He was no match for Pitt Crawley. The older man encouraged him to drink too much wine, and led him on to entertain the ladies with some exciting sporting stories. James swayed drunkenly up the stairs to his bedroom. When he arrived there he opened the window and lit his pipe. He stared happily out at the sea, smoking contentedly. He had forgotten, however, to close the bedroom door behind him - and the smell of pipe tobacco spread through the house.

The following morning he received a note from Briggs.

"Dear Sir,

"Miss Crawley has spent a sleepless night because of the smell of pipe tobacco throughout the house. She is too unwell to see you before you leave the house.

And so ended the rectory family's hopes of receiving Miss Crawley's fortune.

Rawdon and Becky, meanwhile, were enjoying themselves in Paris, where they had enough money to live in luxury thanks to the huge price Jos had paid for the horses.

Becky gave birth to a son during their stay in Paris. Miss Crawley was furious at the news, and immediately ordered Pitt and Lady Jane to marry. She promised to leave them the bulk of her fortune after her death.

The newlyweds settled into Miss Crawley's Brighton home, and they were all ruled over by Lady Southdown from her neighbouring house. Lady Southdown was so terrifying that Miss Crawley lost all her cheerfulness. She even began to treat Briggs kindly as she moved slowly towards death. The old lady died clinging in fear to Lady Jane.

## Chapter Nine

### Life on Nothing a Year

News was continually arriving in England of the terrible casualties of the Battle of Waterloo. The Osborne family learned of George's death. Old Mr Osborne was grief-stricken but he carried on his business as usual. He never mentioned George's name to anyone.

One day Dobbin's father, Sir William Dobbin, called at Mr Osborne's house.

'My son has sent me a letter for you,' he explained.

Mr Osborne looked at the letter, and his heart began to beat quickly. The writing was his son's. It was the letter George had written before leaving Amelia in Brussels.

Mr Osborne suffered greatly in this period. He travelled to Belgium to visit the site of the historic battlefield, and he saw George's burial-place.

One evening, as he was coming back into Brussels, Mr Osborne saw a carriage driving towards him. An officer was riding by the side of it. Mr Osborne was surprised to see that one of the occupants of the carriage was his son's widow Amelia, and that the officer on horseback was his son's friend Dobbin. Amelia was pale and withdrawn, and did not notice her father-in-law. He, however, gazed at her in fury and hatred.

A few minutes later Dobbin rode up to Mr Osborne's carriage. He held out his hand but Mr Osborne refused to take it.

'I have a message for you,' Dobbin said quietly. 'I am the executor of George's will, and am therefore responsible for his widow's welfare. Are you aware how little money he left her?'

Dobbin explained that Amelia was expecting a child. He tried to persuade Mr Osborne that the time for hatred and bitterness was gone, and that Amelia needed his support.

'I have promised to have nothing to do with that woman, sir,' Mr Osborne commented angrily. 'I shall not change my mind.'

Months now passed, and Amelia gave birth to a son. The loyal Major Dobbin was constantly in attendance upon her, and brought her back to her parents' house in England. He became the baby's godfather. The poor girl was so depressed by the death of George that she did not seem to notice the Major's

kindness to her. Dobbin, however, never dared to mention his love to her. He knew that Amelia was loyal to her husband's memory.

One day the Major came to Amelia's house looking particularly serious.

'I'm going away,' he told her. 'I shall be gone a long time. You'll write to me, won't you, my dear?'

'I'll write to you about little Georgy,' Amelia replied with a smile. 'How kind you've been to us, dear William!'

Three or four years after their triumphant stay in Paris, Rawdon Crawley and Becky were living in a fine little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair. They entertained their friends splendidly. Yet there were few of their friends who did not sometimes wonder how Colonel Crawley managed to live so well. He did not seem to have any income at all.

There are many people in Vanity Fair who succeed very well on nothing a year. The Colonel, for example, was an excellent card-player, and excelled at billiards and other games of chance. He spent many evenings playing against his friends, and his winnings provided him and Becky with the small amounts of cash they required. For the rest, the couple lived on credit, as many others in Vanity Fair are obliged to do.

The house in Curzon Street belonged to a Mr Raggles, who had previously been Miss Crawley's butler. After leaving Miss Crawley's service, Mr Raggles and his wife had bought a shop selling foodstuffs. They worked hard and saved their money carefully. After many years Mr Raggles was able to buy the little house in Curzon Street. He intended to rent out the property and was delighted to have a member of the Crawley family as his tenant. The young couple also ordered their food from the Raggles' shop.

One of Becky's first plans when they settled in London was to establish good relations with Rawdon's brother, Pitt. He had inherited most of Miss Crawley's fortune.

Although Rawdon and Becky had their house in Mayfair and gave select little parties there, society ladies did not want anything to do with Becky. They had heard too many unpleasant stories about her from people like Lady Bareacres. Most of the visitors to Curzon Street were gentlemen. Becky found this position humiliating, and she determined to do something about it.

One of the regular visitors to the Crawley household was Lord Steyne, a great and powerful nobleman who occupied a very strong position in London society. Lord Steyne was one of Becky's greatest admirers. Becky thought that Lord Steyne could introduce her to London society.

This was not a happy time for Rawdon himself. He knew that people came to the house to see his brilliant and charming wife, and that they found him a bore. He preferred to spend his time with his little son, Rawdon. He went for long walks with the boy, and he took him to see his old friends at the barracks.

## Chapter Ten

### Misleading Letters

Jos Sedley returned to India after his adventures in Brussels. He sent a small amount of money to his parents to maintain their modest little house in Fulham.

The Sedley household lived in a very small way. Old Mr Sedley tried various little business schemes in an effort to recover his fortune, but all of them came to nothing. Amelia herself had no thoughts for anything except her son.

The family received few visitors now that Dobbin was abroad again, although the local curate at the church where they worshipped called quite often. People said the reason for his calls was Amelia, but she took little notice of the young man.

The years went by, and George grew into a healthy young boy. He was full of energy, and everyone said he looked just like his father.

Old Sir Pitt Crawley died, to the relief of all his family. He had become increasingly eccentric in his final years, and his behaviour had been a scandal throughout the county. His son, Pitt, inherited the property and the title, and as he had already inherited Miss Crawley's fortune, he was now a man of substance and importance. His thoughts turned to a career in politics.

Rawdon and Becky were, of course, invited to attend the old man's funeral at Queen's Crawley. Becky received the invitation with delight.

'Why are you so happy about it?' Rawdon asked in astonishment. 'There's no money coming to me from my father's death. You don't really want to go, do you?'

'Of course we're going!' Becky cried. 'Lady Jane shall present me at Court next year, and Pitt will give you a seat in Parliament!'

'What about little Rawdy - is he coming with us?' Rawdon asked tenderly. He did not like being parted from his son for more than a few days.

'No,' said Becky, 'he can stay here with Briggs - she'll look after him.' The faithful Briggs had come to work for the young couple after Miss Crawley's death.

The visit was a great success for Becky. She behaved herself with modesty and tact in front of the new Sir Pitt Crawley, and flattered his political ambitions.

She talked sentimentally about her son in front of the kind-hearted Lady Jane, and won that lady's friendship. With Lady Jane's mother, the Countess of Southdown, she talked religion.

Amelia, meanwhile, wrote regularly to Major Dobbin, who was with the army in India. She gave him all the news about Georgy. She also visited his sisters sometimes. One day the sisters told her some important news.

'William's getting married.'

She wrote to congratulate him, and to wish him happiness for the future.

Georgy went to see Dobbin's sisters by himself sometimes, and he came back from one such visit wearing a beautiful gold watch. He said that a lady had given it to him. Amelia guessed that the lady was a member of the Osborne family. In fact, it was George Osborne's sister, who had also been visiting the Dobbin sisters.

When Miss Osborne arrived home that afternoon, she told old Mr Osborne that she had seen Georgy.

'He looks just like his father,' she said tearfully.

The old man did not reply, but he went very red in the face and began to shake with emotion. He still hated the Sedleys, but he wanted to see his grandson. Slowly a plan began to form in his mind.

Dobbin was astonished to receive Amelia's letter congratulating him on his coming marriage. It was true that Peggy O'Dowd had been trying to persuade him to marry a relative of hers, but Dobbin was in love with Amelia. He was not interested in any other girls. When he read Amelia's letter he realised that she did not understand what he felt for her.

'Don't you realise that it's you I love?' he thought. 'Don't you remember how I looked after you when George was killed - how I brought you safely back to England?'

A little while later Dobbin received another letter from England. His sisters told him about Amelia. 'She's going to marry the curate at her local church,' they wrote. 'And Georgy is going to live with his grandfather.'

Both pieces of news disturbed Dobbin very much.

'Amelia will not marry again,' he thought, 'and I'm sure she'll never give up Georgy to Mr Osborne.' He suspected that she was in trouble, and once again he was determined to help her. He immediately asked for urgent leave to go to England.



## Chapter Eleven

### Amelia Makes a Sacrifice

Becky was now back in London preparing Sir Pitt Crawley's house for his return there. Sir Pitt knew that Rawdon and Becky were very poor. He was very fond of money, however, and did not offer his brother any.

Little Rawdon thought his mother was the most beautiful woman in the world, but he preferred spending time with his father, who talked to him and played with him. Becky usually ignored him, and made him eat in the kitchen when she had visitors.

One evening the boy was in bed when he heard his mother singing. Becky had a fine voice, and the little boy crept downstairs to listen. He opened the door of the drawing room so that he could hear better. Lord Steyne was in the room with his mother, and he saw the boy. Becky rushed out of the drawing room and smacked Rawdon very hard. The boy ran away to the kitchen.

'I'm not crying because she hit me,' he told the servants. 'But why can't I listen when she sings? She sings for that man, but she never sings for me!'

Rawdon and Becky had many creditors, but the sight of Lord Steyne's carriage outside the house every night made them confident that Becky was rich. They knew that Lord Steyne was one of the richest men in England.

As for Colonel Crawley, he felt out of place with the fashionable people who came to visit his wife. He spent most of his time playing with little Rawdon, or dining at one of his clubs with his old army friends. He saw very little of Becky in this period.

Trouble came to the Sedley household. The family had just enough money to live off from Jos, but old Mr Sedley began to invest the money that Jos sent from India. All his investments failed, however, and he lost the money. Mrs Sedley was afraid of the tradesmen who wanted to be paid. Amelia did not know anything about the financial difficulties of the household.

Just when Mrs Sedley was desperate about money, a letter came for Amelia from old Mr Osborne. He said that he wanted Georgy to come and live with him. He wanted to give the boy a splendid education, and Mr Osborne promised to leave him all his money when he died. He also offered to pay Amelia a small allowance. Amelia was offended by Mr Osborne's offer and she refused it.

The great day came for Becky when she was presented at Court to George IV. She attended the event with Sir Pitt and his wife Lady Jane. Everyone noticed that she was wearing some splendid diamonds for the occasion.

'Where did they come from, Becky?' Rawdon asked her in wonder.

'Where do you think, you silly man!' she said with a laugh. 'I hired them, of course. You don't suppose that all the diamonds that ladies wear to Court belong to them, do you?'

Becky never returned the diamonds to a shop, however, after her appearance at Court. She hid them away in her desk. The only other person who knew the truth about them was Lord Steyne.

Lord Steyne called on Becky later that day.

'Send that Briggs woman away,' he complained. 'I can't come here without running into her.'

'I can't,' said Becky sadly. 'I owe her money, you see. She gave me all her money to invest for her and I've spent it.'

Lord Steyne swore angrily.

'How much is it?' he asked angrily.

That evening Becky received a cheque from Lord Steyne. She did not pay off her debt to Briggs, however. She paid some of her other bills, and the rest of the money she hid away in the desk with the diamonds.

At last Amelia discovered the truth about her father's investments. The Sedleys were now completely ruined. The only way to save the family was to accept old Mr Osborne's offer to look after Georgy. The boy himself was quite excited at the idea of going to live with his rich relatives. He did not realise how much his mother suffered at the change. It nearly broke her heart to see the boy go off to his new home, but there was nothing else she could do.

## Chapter Twelve Imprisonment and Violence

Little Rawdon had been sent off to an expensive school paid for by his Lordship, and Briggs had been found another job. Lord Steyne often passed the evening with Becky and Rawdon at their house.

One night Becky and Rawdon went to a party at Lord Steyne's house. Rawdon stayed behind after his wife left, to smoke a cigar with Lord Steyne's assistant, Wenham.

The two men strolled through the streets together. Suddenly they were joined by three other men, one of whom touched Rawdon on the shoulder. He knew immediately what it was.

These men had come to arrest him for debt.

'Lend me a hundred, Wenham,' Rawdon asked.

'I haven't got any money,' Wenham replied.

The men took Rawdon off to prison. He was not worried, as he was sure that Becky had money to save him. He wrote her a note explaining what had happened. Then he lay down to sleep.

He waited all the next day for some message from Becky. At last a letter arrived in the evening. Becky said she was ill in bed, but that Lord Steyne had some money to send him. Rawdon blushed as he read his wife's letter. He remembered that he had been walking with Lord Steyne's assistant when the men arrested him. Had there been a plot to get him out of the way? He wrote to Sir Pitt Crawley now, and in an hour Lady Jane arrived with the money that he needed. Rawdon was ashamed. He realised that Lady Jane was kind, and he wanted to change his life.

Rawdon hurried home. He was surprised to see that the drawing room was lit up, when Becky had told him she was ill. He entered the house quietly and approached the drawing-room door. He could hear Becky singing. When he opened the door he saw that there were only two people in the room, Becky and Lord Steyne. He saw that Becky was wearing the splendid diamonds that were supposed to have been hired and returned.

Becky looked up in horror as she saw her husband.

'I'm innocent, Rawdon,' she cried. 'You must believe me, I'm innocent!'

Lord Steyne, meanwhile, thought that Rawdon and Becky had planned to trap him. He was furious.

'Innocent, you!' he shouted at Becky. 'I've given you thousands of pounds that you and this man have spent together. Don't try to fool me.'

Rawdon hit Lord Steyne, who fell to the floor. Then he made Becky remove all of her jewellery, and he hurled it at the frightened nobleman. One of the pieces struck Lord Steyne on the forehead. It left a scar that he carried for the rest of his life.

Now Rawdon made Becky open her desk. He saw that there was a lot of money inside, including the cheque from Lord Steyne.

'I'll send this back to him in the morning,' he told her grimly. 'You might have got me out of prison,' he told her sadly. 'I always shared with you.'

Then Rawdon left the house. Becky understood that he was gone forever. All her plans had come to nothing.

Rawdon was determined to fight a duel with Lord Steyne. First he went to see Sir Pitt to ask him to look after his son if anything happened to him. Then he went to his club to ask one of his officer friends to arrange the duel.

Later that day Becky came to see Sir Pitt Crawley. Sir Pitt had seen something in that morning's newspaper that he wanted to discuss with her. There was an article saying that Colonel Rawdon Crawley was expected to be appointed Governor of Coventry Island.

'It's true,' Becky told him. 'Lord Steyne organised it for him. Don't you see, Pitt, everything I did was for Rawdon. I'm innocent!'

Lady Jane was not happy to see Becky. She asked her to leave the house.

Rawdon's army friend had also seen the newspaper article and he showed it to Rawdon. Wenham walked into the club.

'You're making a terrible mistake, Crawley,' Wenham said. 'It was only by chance that your wife and Lord Steyne were alone in the house that evening. My wife and I had also been invited, but we couldn't come because Mrs Wenham had a headache.'

Rawdon did not believe Wenham's story, but he saw that he could not fight Lord Steyne now in the light of Wenham's evidence.

He thought very carefully about what he should do. In the end he decided to accept the Governorship of Coventry Island. He wrote very regularly to little Rawdon from there, but he never contacted his wife again. Little Rawdon spent his school holidays with Sir Pitt and Lady Jane.

Becky herself was now ruined. Her servants and creditors all demanded to be paid, and Mr Raggles took his house back. He was ruined as well. Thus Vanity Fair makes other people pay for its pleasures. Becky fled the country.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Final Destinies

Major Dobbin came as quickly as he could back to England. He met Jos on the journey, and they travelled together. Jos told Dobbin that Amelia had not mentioned any plan to marry, and this news cheered the Major up considerably.

Dobbin hurried to Amelia's house as soon as he arrived in England. There he learned that Mrs Sedley had died, and that Georgy was now living with Mr Osborne. Georgy was happy in the old man's house. He did not think often about his mother. He did not understand her pain.

Mr Sedley died soon after Dobbin's arrival in the country, and Dobbin was now George's guardian. He had to pay a visit to Mr Osborne to discuss the boy's futures. Old Mr Osborne had looked through his son's papers, and he now realised that Dobbin had been sending Amelia money for years. He asked Dobbin to explain what had happened.

'Well, sir,' Dobbin told him, 'the marriage was very much my doing. I thought George had gone too far to let Amelia down. And so, when she was left without money, I did what I could to help her.'

Mr Osborne turned very red in the face.

'You did me a great injury,' he said. 'But you're an honest man, sir. Let me shake your hand.'

Dobbin did everything he could to make peace between the Sedley and the Osborne families.

'It's true that Amelia took your son away from you,' he said once to Mr Osborne, 'but you have also taken her son away from her.'

Finally Mr Osborne's hatred for the Sedleys began to fade away. He made a new will, leaving some money to Amelia as well as Georgy. He never met Amelia again, however, because he died suddenly after a heart attack.

Dobbin, meanwhile, had told Amelia that he loved her, but all she offered him was her friendship and gratitude.

Jos, Amelia, Dobbin and Georgy now went on a tour of Europe together. They stopped at a large town in Germany, and Jos went off - to play roulette. He was very surprised to be greeted by the woman sitting next to him.

'Mrs Crawley!' he gasped in astonishment.

'Call me Becky,' she replied softly. 'You always used to.'

Becky now used all her charm on the gullible Jos. She told him that she was very poor now, and that she had enemies who made her life miserable.

Jos told Dobbin that he had met Becky.

'Her again!' Dobbin exclaimed. 'She causes trouble everywhere.'

Amelia did not want to see Becky at first, but at last Jos persuaded her. He told her that Becky was very unhappy. The meeting went well, and Jos and Amelia invited Becky to come and stay in their hotel. For once Dobbin was angry with Amelia.

'Don't let her come,' he advised her. 'She wasn't always your friend, Amelia.'

Amelia was suddenly very angry with Dobbin. She remembered how unhappy she had been when her husband had abandoned her at the ball to dance with Becky.

'That was cruel of you!' she cried.

The next day Dobbin apologised for his remark. He said that he had heard bad things about Becky. Amelia did not forgive him.

'I've loved you for many years,' he told her bitterly. 'Now I see that you were not worth the devotion I have spent on you. You can cherish memories, but you cannot love as I do. It's not your fault, but I have decided: I'm going away. I shan't ever come back.'

Becky overheard the argument between Amelia and Dobbin.

'She's a fool,' she thought. 'That man loves her.'

Dobbin left the town and returned to England.

The days went by, and Jos and Becky spent more time together.

Amelia and Georgy missed Dobbin terribly. Amelia wrote to him, but she did not tell anyone that she had done so.

'You must go away from here,' Becky told Amelia. 'You must go away and marry again. You must accept your faithful friend.'

'I shall never marry again,' Amelia told her. 'I have tried, but I can't forget George. He was the only man in my life.'

Becky gave her friend an old letter. Amelia was astonished to recognise George's handwriting. It was the letter he had put among Becky's flowers the night of the dance in Brussels. He had asked Becky to run away with him.

At first Amelia cried when she thought about her faithless husband. Then she began to remember Dobbin and his constant love for her. She realised that she was free to love Dobbin now!

Soon Amelia and Dobbin were happily married in England. At last Dobbin had married his true love. They went to live near Sir Pitt and Lady Jane. The two families became great friends.

Jos remained in Europe with Becky. There were rumours that Jos was ill, and that he had taken out a huge insurance policy on his life. Amelia was worried about her brother, and asked Dobbin to find out what was happening.

Dobbin discovered that Jos and Becky were in Brussels. He managed to see Jos without Becky knowing about his visit. Jos looked unwell and he seemed frightened.

'Don't let Becky know you've been here,' he begged Dobbin. 'I'm afraid of her.'

'Come away with me now,' Dobbin suggested.

But it was no good. Jos could not bring himself to leave Becky.

Three months later Jos was dead. The circumstances were suspicious, and at first the insurance company refused to pay the sum due on his life policy. The company had no evidence that Jos's death was due to unnatural causes, however. In the end they paid the money.

Becky, who now called herself 'Lady Crawley', settled in England once more. Her husband Rawdon died of yellow fever on Coventry Island, six weeks before the death of his older brother Sir Pitt Crawley. The whole Crawley estate thus came to Becky's son who became Sir Rawdon Crawley. He always refused to see his mother, but he made her a generous allowance.

Amelia and Dobbin saw Becky once again when they were in London with their children. Becky smiled as Dobbin and Amelia grabbed their children and walked quickly away from her.



- THE END -