

**LITTLE MASTERPIECES:
SELECTIONS FROM THE BOOK
OF SNOBS, ROUNDABOUT
PAPERS, AND BALLADS**

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Little Masterpieces: Selections from The Book of Snobs, Roundabout Papers, and Ballads by W. M. Thackeray

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W. M. THACKERAY

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always yours Wm Shakeray.



Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

miscellaneous
W. M. THACKERAY

SELECTIONS FROM

THE BOOK OF SNOBS

ROUNABOUT PAPERS

AND BALLADS

NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

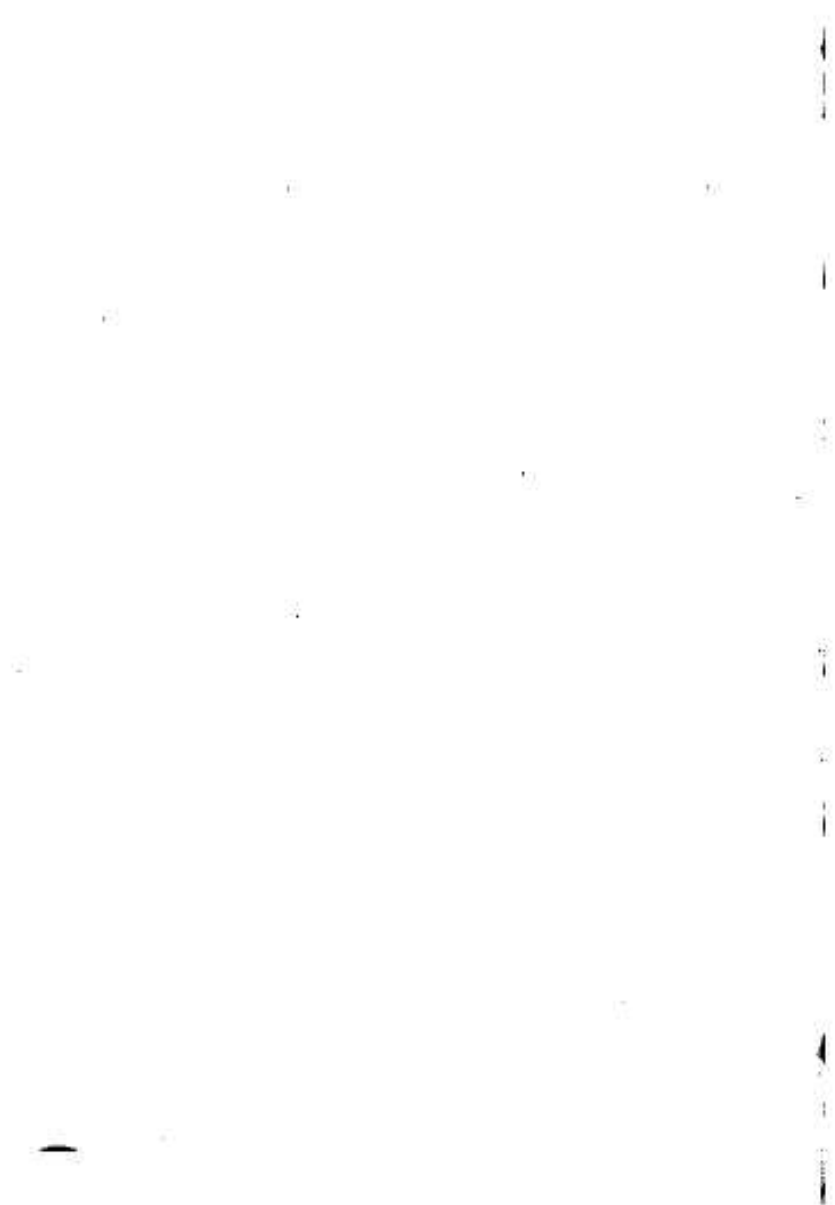
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Introduction

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Introduction

THERE is something whimsical, one must confess, about the suggestion of a pocket Thackeray. A collection of the great scenes in his novels might easily be made, but your lover of Thackeray carries these scenes through the world with him without ever burdening his pockets. Besides, even the great scenes have less to do with our sense of Thackeray's command of his art than the countless little scenes, inextricably interwoven, which make up the texture of his human comedy. But, impossible as it is to give any adequate representation of the novelist in such a series of books as the present one, it is quite possible to show something of the caustic and kindly humor, the careless, inevitable grace, which give Thackeray's minor writings such a note of distinction. Even the most fugitive of his rollicking burlesques is written as no one else could have written it, while "The Book of Snobs" and the "Roundabout Papers" are masterpieces of their kind.

"The Book of Snobs" closes with a significant sentence: "Fun is good, Truth is still

Introduction

~~Y~~ better, and Love best of all." It sums up, with singular appropriateness, Thackeray's career as a man of letters. He began with *Fun*: burlesque and roaring farce and witty parody. Then he set his hand to satire, and told for a while the bitter Truth, tearing the mask away from hypocrisy and winning his first wide fame. He was Punchinello no longer; he was the author of "*Vanity Fair*." It was only then, with fun no less sincere for being less uproarious, and truth the more unerring for being told in love, that he turned real novelist, the novelist of "*Esmond*" and "*The New-comers*." Last of all, the necessity of writing a monthly essay during his editorship of "*The Cornhill Magazine*" produced the "*Roundabout Papers*," where surely there is fun enough and truth enough, but where the spirit of love is nevertheless supreme. The "*Roundabout Papers*" are discursive, reminiscent, inimitable talk, enriched by a life-time's commerce with what is best in books and in society, touched now and then by a natural melancholy, yet uttered with all the old grace and with a new gentleness. To compare them with "*The Yellowplush Papers*" or "*The Book of Snobs*" is to observe the ripening of a character as well as the maturing of a mind.

Thackeray's occasional verse has endeared itself so much to his readers that three of his best known poems have been reprinted here. In "*The Ballad of Bouillabaisse*" the inscrut-