

**MR. BROWN'S LETTERS TO  
A YOUNG MAN ABOUT  
TOWN; WITH THE PROSER  
AND OTHER PAPERS**

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Mr. Brown's letters to a young man about town; with the proser and other papers by W. M. Thackeray

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**W. M. THACKERAY**

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TO A

YOUNG MAN ABOUT TOWN;

WITH

THE PROSER AND OTHER PAPERS.

BY

W. M. THACKERAY,

AUTHOR OF "VANITY FAIR," "JEMES'S DIARY," "THE PRIZE NOVELIST,"  
"THE BOOK OF SNOBS," ETC. ETC.



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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



ON coming into this country I found that the projectors of this series of little books had preceded my arrival by publishing a number of early works, which have appeared under various pseudonyms during the last fifteen years. I was not the master to choose what stories of mine should appear or not: these miscellanies were all advertised, or in course of publication; nor have I had the good fortune to be able to draw a pen, or alter a blunder of author or printer, except in the case of the accompanying volumes, which contain contributions to *Punch*, whence I have been enabled to make something like a selection. In the "Letters of Mr. Brown" and the succeeding short essays and descriptive pieces, something graver and less burlesque was attempted than in other pieces which I here publish. My friend, the "Fat Contributor," accompanied Mr. Titmarsh in his "Journey from Cornhill to Cairo." The Prize novels contain imitations, not malicious I hope, nor unamusing, of the writings of some contemporaries who still live and flourish in the novelist's calling. I myself had scarcely entered on it when these burlesque tales were begun, and stopped further parody from a sense that this merry task of making fun of the novelists should be left to younger hands than my own; and in a little book published some four years



since, in England, by my friends Messrs. Hannay & Shirley Brooks, I saw a caricature of myself and writings to the full as ludicrous and faithful as the Prize novels of Mr. Punch. Nor was there, had I desired it, any possibility of preventing the reappearance of these performances. Other publishers besides the Messrs. Appleton were ready to bring my hidden works to the light. Very many of the other books printed, I have not seen since their appearance twelve years ago, and it was with no small feelings of curiosity (remembering under what sad circumstances the tale had been left unfinished,) that I bought the incomplete "Shabby Genteel Story," in a railway car, on my first journey from Boston hither, from a rosy-cheeked, little peripatetic book merchant, who called out "Thackeray's Works:"—in such a kind, gay voice, as gave me a feeling of friendship and welcome.

Here is an opportunity of being either satiric or sentimental. The careless papers written at an early period, and never seen since the printer's boy carried them away, are brought back and laid at the father's door, and he cannot, if he would, forget or disown his own children.

Why were some of the little brats brought out of their obscurity? I own to a feeling of anything but pleasure in reviewing some of these misshapen juvenile creatures which the publisher has disinterred and resuscitated. There are two performances especially, (among the critical and biographical works of the erudite Mr. Yellow-Plush) which I am very sorry to see reproduced, and I ask pardon of the author of the "Caxtons" for a lampoon, which I know he himself has forgiven, and which I wish I could recal.

I had never seen that eminent writer but once in public when this satire was penned, and wonder at the recklessness of the young man who could fancy such personality was harmless

joularity, and never calculate that it might give pain. The best experiences of my life have been gained since that time of youth and gaiety and careless laughter. I allude to them, perhaps, because I would not have any kind and friendly American reader judge of me by these wild performances of early years. Such a retrospect as the sight of these old acquaintances perforce occasioned, cannot, if it would, be gay. The old scenes return, the remembrance of the by-gone time, the chamber in which the stories were written; the faces that shone round the table. Some biographers in this country have been pleased to depict that homely apartment after a very strange and romantic fashion; and an author in the direst struggles of poverty waited upon by a family domestic in "all the splendour of his menial decorations," has been circumstantially described to the reader's amusement as well as the writer's own. I may be permitted to assure the former that the splendour and the want were alike fanciful; and that the meals were not only sufficient, but honestly paid for.

That extreme liberality with which American publishers have printed the works of English authors, has had at least this beneficial result for us, that our names and writings are known by multitudes using our common mother tongue, who never had heard of us or our books but for the speculators who have sent them all over this continent.

It is, of course, not unnatural for the English writer to hope, that some day he may share a portion of the profits which his works bring at present to the persons who vend them in this country; and I am bound gratefully to say myself, that since my arrival here I have met with several publishing houses who are willing to acknowledge our little claim to participate in the advantages arising out of our books; and the present writer having long since ascertained that a portion of a loaf is

more satisfactory than no bread at all, gratefully accepts and acknowledges several slices which the book purveyors in this city have proffered to him of their free will.

If we are not paid in full and in specie as yet, English writers surely ought to be thankful for the very great kindness and friendliness with which the American public receives them; and if we hope some day that measures may pass here to legalize our right to profit a little by the commodities which we invent and in which we deal, I for one can cheerfully say, that the good will towards us from publishers and public is undoubted, and wait for still better times with perfect confidence and humour.

If I have to complain of any special hardship, it is, not that our favourite works are reproduced, and our children introduced to the American public: children, whom we have educated with care, and in whom we take a little paternal pride: but that ancient magazines are ransacked, and shabby old articles dragged out, which we had gladly left in the wardrobes where they have lain hidden many years. There is no control, however, over a man's thoughts—once uttered and printed, back they may come upon us on any sudden day; and in this collection, which Messrs. Appleton are publishing, I find two or three such early productions of my own that I gladly would take back, but that they have long since gone out of the paternal guardianship.

If not printed in this series, they would have appeared from other presses, having not the slightest need of the author's own imprimatur; and I cannot sufficiently condole with a literary gentleman of this city, who (in his voyages of professional adventure) came upon an early performance of mine, which shall be nameless, carried the news of the discovery to a publisher of books, and had actually done me the favour to