INTRODUCTION

now that I know all my life contained, it seems to go back &
back into the past & bind it all & heal its bitter ache (Letter 65)

DURING the years 1866–77 Anny’s personal life was turbulent, yet her literary career was highly productive. In addition to numerous articles, she published eight books. Busy writing and sought after by editors, she traveled for pleasure, for her health, and to write. Like Thackeray before her, she took off with the chapters of her novels due for serial publication and, like her father, she always managed to get them in on time. While enjoying a busy life of travel and creativity, Anny wrestled with her misfortunes. She wrote: “We dreaded this Christmas but the children helped us through—last year Grannie died Then dear Amy died in India & then a cousin.” Despite these deaths, which exacerbated her grief for Thackeray, she began to write brighter, more optimistic letters to a wide circle of people, including Tennyson and Browning.

Since Thackeray’s death, Tennyson had become Anny’s mentor, and more and more often, she returned to Freshwater and its soothing natural aspects and to Tennyson’s salutary warmth. Something of the nature of their relationship appears in Anny’s Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Robert and Elizabeth Browning, published in 1892. Anny’s first recollection of Tennyson was “when she was propped up in a tall chair between her parents” (39). On her first visit to Freshwater, she described walking with Tennyson “along High Down, treading the
turf, listening to his talk, while the gulls came sideways, flashing their white breasts against the edge of the cliffs, and the poet’s cloak flapped time to the gusts of the west wind” (43).

Another time, the poet, nearsighted, asked her “to look and tell him if the fieldlark did not come down sideways upon its wing” (51). On still another occasion, Anny joined the Tennyson family in attending a performance of Hamlet. At the play’s end the actors, still in costume, joined the poet in his box. Anny described the scene:

The whole play seemed to flow from off the stage into the box. I could scarcely tell at last where reality began and Shakespeare ended here were the players, and our own prince poet, in that familiar simple voice . . . explaining the art, going straight to the point in his own downright fashion. . carrying all before him. (59)

Anny’s essay about Tennyson (like those on Ruskin and Browning) is not chronological, not critical, but wholly anecdotal. To her, Tennyson was a lifelong friend, a man she had loved and admired.

After the deaths of Thackeray and Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, Anny had established a shaky refuge. Although she remained close to her sister, Minny’s engagement and subsequent marriage to Leslie Stephen caused a rift in the relationship between the sisters. In her journal for 1866, Anny wrote: “Two days after Minny’s engagement, Tennyson came and I asked him to help me with the last paragraph of my book The Village on the Cliff. I was overwrought.” It was more than Anny’s last paragraph that needed help. She was “overwrought” at the prospect of losing Minny. A portion of the final paragraph of The Village reads,

And Nature, working by some great law unknown, and only vaguely apprehended by us insects brings about the noblest harmonies out of chaos. And so, too, out of the dire dismays and confusions of the secret world come results both mighty and gentle. (318)

With Tennyson’s help, she sublimated her feelings, losing herself in her book.

Whatever advice Tennyson provided, it is not unlikely that Anny’s unconscious dictated the end of her novel The Village. Although Anny and Minny did not resemble the heroines of The Village, the circumstances in which the heroines find themselves at the end of the novel were similar to those of Anny and Minny. The sad ending in Anny’s novel reveals the bereft heroine facing a life of loneliness. Anny herself
may have given up hope of ever marrying, especially since her younger sister had married before her; and now, after the death of her father, her life's focus on her sister was becoming blurred.

At the time of her engagement, Minny wrote, “I hope never to be separated from Anny, except perhaps during my wedding tour. I am sure she will have no reason to regret this change in our lives.” Though loving, Minny’s statement is more wish than practicality. With the addition of Leslie Stephen to the household, the sisters’ rapport lessened. The household no longer revolved around Anny and her career. Stephen was a demanding, donnish, penny-pinching husband, and though he admired Anny, their temperaments clashed. Anny wrote, “[I] am generally flourishing except in one way it begins with an L & finishes with a e” (Letter 51). Surrounded by Minny’s happiness, Anny’s loneliness and her need for someone to love who would love her became crushing, especially when seen in the light of Stephen’s revelation in his Mausoleum Book that “Minny had begun to think that it might be as well for Anny to take a house of her own” (23). Stephen continued disarmingly by admitting his faults: “I had a perhaps rather pedantic mania for correcting [Anny’s] flights of imagination and checking her exuberant impulses. A[nny] and M[inny] used to call me the cold bath from my habit of drenching Anny’s little schemes and fancies with chilling criticism” (23).

It is well to consider the fact that Leslie was too fond of Anny for Minny’s liking, and not the reverse. In a letter to Anny, Leslie admitted:

You know that I cant speak to you when you are here. I cant even write very easily; but I must say one thing. Of all the good you & Minny have done for me... you two have been a new influence in our family & thawed us all with kindness. When I laugh at your sentiment, dont fancy for a moment that I ever do or can forget, what I owe to it in making my relations to my mother easier & better. I wont say any more; perhaps I shall never say as much again. (Letter 59)

As scrupulously impartial as Thackeray had tried to be, he favored Anny. Now Minny had a husband of her own, and as much as she loved Anny, she wanted Leslie exclusively for herself. Again, in the Mausoleum Book, Leslie confessed: “Anny’s aggressions were not very irritating, and that she was like a person forced to live in a den with a fretful beast and persisting in stroking it the wrong way” (24).
The problem was that Minny did not want Anny stroking Leslie in any way.

What really rankled with Stephen was that "Anny was always the aggressor and could not keep silence" (24). He wanted to be the master of their home; Minny wanted to be its mistress; yet Anny was ruling them both. Despite the fact that they all loved each other, they had created a ménage à trois that was bound to fail. While Thackeray lived, Anny had been the adored daughter and sister; upon his death she assumed command of their home, and made all their monetary decisions. But in 1867, after Minny's marriage to Stephen, he took over control of Minny's exchequer. A receipt showing a repaid debt to Thackeray is signed by Anne Thackeray and Leslie Stephen for H. M. Stephen (Letter 52). As a good Victorian wife, Minny had relinquished her economic rights to her husband, leaving Anny with yet another loss of purpose.

Shortly after their marriage, the Stephens planned a trip to America. Anny refused to accompany them. Minny wrote to Mrs. Baxter in New York, giving three different reasons why Anny could not accompany her and her husband. Anny offers no excuse for staying behind except: "I think I am right" (Letter 53). That a problem existed is obvious; for Anny, separation from the newlyweds was necessary. In the same letter Anny continued, "Leslie too is a dear good old fellow & he adores Minny in his silent dobbin like way," but she could not help being disturbed by his masculine presence. "Leslie on the other side is smoking his pipe." In 1870 she again noted: "dear old Leslie works away & smokes & writes & smokes till I can scarcely tell w'h is him & which is his pipe" (Letter 54). Although Thackeray had smoked cigars, Anny never complained about them. Stephen's pipe became for Anny a bothersome habit. More likely, she resented his pipe as the symbol of his assumption of the role of master of the house.

Anny separated herself from her sister in her writing and in her relationships with other people. "Miss Thackeray" became part of the London literary scene and artistic salons. In 1870 George Lewes wrote: "At the dinner was Annie Thackeray, Mrs. Procter, an American lady, Butler Johnstone, Kinglake, Lecky, Rosetti [sic] Arthur Russell and a crowd in the evening." Not only Anny's inclusion in such a distinguished company of Victorians, but the fact that Lewes lists her name first, testifies to her importance within the group.

As with Tennyson, Anny enjoyed a long and warm relationship
with Browning, assuming the roles of a bright daughter and a charming companion. Never a sycophantic follower, she endeared herself to these older men with her cleverness, wit, and perception. Asking favors of Browning, she perceived exactly how far she could go in her requests.

She had known and admired Elizabeth Barrett Browning when the Thackeray family lived in Paris and later in Rome. In her essay on the Brownings, Anny quoted "a girlish note in [her own] old diary: 'I think Mrs. Browning is the greatest woman I ever saw in all my life.'"6 Always in search of maternal tenderness, Anny was impressed by Mrs. Browning, the mother whose son Pen was constantly by her side. Anny's mature judgment in the essay assesses her schoolgirl partiality for the poet: "I don't think any girl who had once experienced [Mrs. Browning's friendship] could fail to respond to Mrs. Browning's motherly advance" (130-31).

In 1872 Browning and Anny rented houses near each other in Calvados, Normandy (he in St. Aubin and she in Lion-sur-Mer). It was there that Browning conceived the idea for his narrative poem Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, which Anny titled for him and which he dedicated to her. In a letter written in 1872 from Lion-sur-Mer, Anny described the village:

> It is close to the place we came to ten years ago nearly with Grannie & where I wrote The Village on the Cliff here nothing seems changed. There are the cotton nightcaps & the melons & the bathers; its a sort of Pompei with little feasts all the way down the street & great shining fish coming up out of the sea & tumblers & a gladiator or two & the most astounding chatter & barter. (Letter 57)

The cotton nightcaps are also noted in The Village. However, because of the gory nature of Browning's poem, about a sensational contemporary suicide, he amended the title to Red Cotton Night-Cap Country. The poem is not one of the better received of Browning's works. Attacked by the critics for her part in its composition, Anny was indignant for Browning rather than for herself. He, in turn, was indignant for her: "Indeed the only sort of pain that any sort of criticism could give me would be the reflection of any particle of pain it managed to give you." Used to criticism as he was, he continued: "Remember that everybody this thirty years has given me his kick and gone his way . . . but any poke at me which should touch you would vex me indeed—" (Records, 181).
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As Thackeray’s daughter there was bred in her an independence of spirit and a nonchalance in dealing with Victorian men of letters which enabled her to be good friends not only with Tennyson and Browning but also with Carlyle, Ruskin, Darwin, Arnold, Swinburne, and later James. At the beginning of her essay on the Brownings, Anny wrote:

The sons and daughters of men and women eminent in their generation are from circumstances fortunate in their opportunities. From childhood they know their parents’ friends and contemporaries, the remarkable men and women who are the makers of the age, quite naturally and without excitement. The friends existed first; then, long afterwards, they became to me the notabilities, the interesting people as well, and these two impressions were oddly combined in my mind. (129)

This “oddly combined” attitude augmented by her own abilities made her a suitable companion for these men.

Between 1866 and 1878 Anny published eight books. The three novels are of particular interest because heretofore her fictional efforts had been short, episodic forays into the lives of her characters. In these novels Anny tried not merely to lengthen the tales but to impose more form, continuity, and plot sequence on them.

First published serially in the Cornhill, The Village on the Cliff (1867), Old Kensington (1873), and Miss Angel (1875) are domestic novels. But as always in Anny’s writing, there is a great deal going on beneath the everyday surface. Although the chief occupation of Anny’s orphan-heroines is to find a husband, they all work, as governess, painter, farmer, volunteer. The usual machinery of the domestic novel abounds: the love triangle; the lost inheritance regained; the pretty, noble heroine; the romantic hero; the conscious class system; the neatly packaged happy ending. Anny brings to this formula a style and psychological approach that are peculiarly her own. When she was a young girl traveling through Europe, she depicted scenes in her letters almost as if she were painting them. Quick impressionistic strokes caught pictures seen from a train or a coach window. In the same way, she captures a place, a feeling, or a mood in her novels. In The Village the hero Richard Butler wanders about Caen in this pleasant confusion of sight, and sound, and bright colour. [he walked] round and about, stopping at every corner, looking into every church, noting the bright pictures, framed as it were in the arches, staring up at the gables, at the quaint wares in the shops; making mental notes of one kind and another, which might be useful some day. (27)
Butler is a Pre-Raphaelite painter, storing details which he will use one day. This is what Anny, herself, did. Of Petitport, a small seaside resort in Normandy, she wrote: “The horizon is solemn dark blue, but a great streak of light crosses the sea; three white sails gleam, so do the white caps of the peasant-women, and the wings of the seagulls as they go swimming through the air” (7). In the sharp visualization of the three white sails, the white caps, and the wings of the seagulls, Anny paints a picture realistically, yet she is also impressionistic when she describes the birds as “swimming” through the air, not flying. With deft touches she etches in sky and sea, linking them together with the waves, women, and birds. All the universe—inanimate nature, animal life, and humanity—are part of God’s plan for a peaceful Sunday afternoon. This is not a static view, but rather more like one frame of a moving picture, captured with painterly words.

Anny unreels other pictures in a slow, leisurely expansion of detail and idea until she reaches the perfect metaphor for Caen: “a goblin city” (26). Her use of the present tense in description creates a sense of immediacy, echoing the 1864 journal, in which the present tense served to evoke for Anny a Thackeray still alive. The narrative happened in the past, but the nature passages present an ongoing phenomena.

*The Village* is recounted in the first person by a narrator, Miss Williamson. Anny uses this same spinster in *Miss Williamson’s Divagations*, *The Story of Elizabeth*, and *Fulham Lawn*. One may speculate that Anny consciously or unconsciously chose the name William-son, thus reaching back to William Thackeray and the son he never had. Miss Williamson (or Anny) was indeed following in her father’s literary footsteps.

In *Old Kensington* the descriptive passages follow the form of those in *The Village*: the short, impressionistic sketch and the longer mood-building scene of nature combined with place. However, there is a special ambience which Anny conveys in this novel. Set in the Kensington in which she had grown up twenty-five years earlier, the novel is a long reminiscence through every street and house and by-lane that she remembered. It is nostalgic, filled with an innocence, a serenity that was no more and perhaps never really was.

Although the setting is the Kensington Anny knew as a child, the circumstances of the heroine’s life are similar to those of Anny’s when she lived in Paris with her grandmother. Both heroine (Dolly) and author suffer from the effects of an absent mother. They are relocated, at the same age, to live with elderly, childless relatives. Dolly’s father
dies, while Anny’s father saw his children only sporadically. For Dolly, as well as Anny, life was austere, adult, and gloomy. In addition to the remembered sadness, Anny was depressed by her life at the time she was writing the novel. Living in the home of a younger married sister with a newborn child must have been trying. Despite the happy ending, the novel, like most of Anny’s writing at this time, bears an imprint of bittersweet melancholy.

Even more interesting is the parallel structure of *Old Kensington* to *Vanity Fair.* In reliving her life in Kensington, Anny also seemed to be reliving *Vanity Fair.* She follows the lives of two heroines, Dolly and Rhoda, one good, one bad, as their fortunes rise and fall. Instead of being killed in the Napoleonic wars, Anny’s George dies in the Crimean War. Just as Dobbin waits for Amelia, so Raban waits for Dolly. Rhoda is no Becky Sharp: there is little joy in her, but she is drawn with psychological acumen. Unlike Becky, she ends her days living on the charity of Dolly, the friend she has wronged. Dolly is a milk-sop maiden, but with a difference: she undergoes introspection leading to growth and some change.

Probably she did not consciously set out to copy the structure of *Vanity Fair.* Yet it was part of her consciousness when she began to write about her experiences in Young Street. Fact and fiction—Young Street and *Vanity Fair*—were inextricably fused together. Her father’s novel was part of her life, not only in the reading of it, but through its actual creation. When she remembered posing for Thackeray’s drawing as one of the two little girls packing up his puppets, was she Anny of Young Street or a character in *Vanity Fair*?

Both books are domestic tales with strong traces of the historical novel. Both novels include characters with ties to India. Both contain memorable minor comic characters; both are without true heroes. The triangle-scene climax in *Old Kensington* is not as dramatic as that of Rawdon’s discovery of Becky’s liaison with Lord Steyne; Anny is quieter and more overtly psychological in her handling of Dolly’s discovery that her fiancé loves another. She walks out of a concert hall, leaving him in the insinuating hands of Rhoda. Yet there is nothing of the corruption and evil of Lord Steyne about these two; they are weak people, who, having put all their faith in the power of money, are unable to stand up to adversity. Although Rhoda gets her just deserts, it is Thackeray who moralizes; it is Anny who analyzes. Thackeray gives us a sparkling cross-section of hearty Regency England; Anny’s view
of Kensington is charming but somber, and it is not knowledgeable about all classes of society. Instead, she examines the motivations of several women of the same class.

At the time *Vanity Fair* was published, Thackeray was thirty-seven years old; he had lost his wife to insanity, he was the father of two children, and determined to make a home for them. At the time *Old Kensington* was written, Anny was thirty-six years old and well on her way to becoming a spinster. Thackeray was a man of the world who picked up the pieces of his life and tried to make the best of what was left to him; Anny had suffered grievous losses, but she had not yet lived. The world of *Vanity Fair* is complete—containing as it does both good and evil; the full world of *Old Kensington* is yet to come. Thackeray had lived his life; Anny's is yet to come.

The last chapter of *Old Kensington* is entitled “The Play Is Played, the Curtain Drops,” and is based on the final words of *Vanity Fair*, “our play is played out.” These in turn are similar to the opening line of Thackeray’s ballad “The End of the Play,” “The play is done; the curtain drops,” printed at the end of Thackeray’s Christmas book (1848-49), *Dr. Birch and His Young Friends*. I do not presume to compare *Old Kensington* with *Vanity Fair*; the first is a moving novel about an appealing young woman, the second is a masterpiece. Yet, despite its inadequacies, *Old Kensington* is worthy of its place in the direct line of descent from *Vanity Fair*. Like it, *Old Kensington* is a panoramic view of a time that is no more, about characters who are always with us.

Anny’s peculiar novelistic talent lies in her depiction of the psyches of female characters. Soon after her engagement to the worthless Robert Henley, Dolly lies awake thinking.

She had found out, by her new experience, that Robert loved her, but in future that he would rule her too. In her life, so free hitherto, there would be this secret rule to be obeyed, this secret sign. Dolly did not know whether she resented it. Dolly, conscious of some hidden weakness in her own nature, deified obstinacy, as many a woman has done before her, and made excuses out of her own loving heart for Henley's selfish one. (252-53)

Here Anny is not leaving “the mysteries of womanhood to be described by some interloping male,” as Richard Whately described authoresses, but doing it herself. Toward the end of the novel, when Dolly admits that she loves Raban, he refers to her as the prize. Dolly thinks that “perhaps the prize isn’t worth having, she was only
thinking as she stood there of all her friend's long fidelity and steady friendship" (526). Like Amelia, Dolly sees, at last, the worth of her patient lover, but unlike Thackeray's heroine, Dolly proves to be a real prize. Amelia is "the prize [Dobbin] has been trying for all his life." Thackeray, and Dobbin, know that she is a "tender little parasite," and Dobbin declares that "the prize I had set my life on was not worth the winning." Early in Anny's novel, Raban calls Dolly "a beautiful sour apple" who will "want time and sunshine to ripen and become sweet" (110). This touch of the sour apple is exactly what is missing in Amelia. Anny understood that some women could and did grow and ripen.

Miss Angel is Anny's one attempt at historical romance. Set in the eighteenth century, the novel interestingly depicts the life of a female artist, Angelica Kauffmann. She becomes the overnight sensation of English society and is nominated a founding member of the Royal Academy. The novel is steeped in eighteenth-century lore: coach tours through Italy with outriders and quaint hostelries, great balls, powdering rooms, visits with Samuel Johnson and Queen Charlotte. Anny refers to and quotes from the Rossi biography of Angelica Kauffmann, but with several changes from real life (as far as Rossi describes it) in her fiction.

In real life, through the intervention of friends in high places, Angelica received an annulment of her disastrous first marriage. Because female artists were a rarity in the eighteenth century, "[t]raducement of [Kauffmann's] character was an occupational hazard. The myth was that she was a flibbertigibbet who spent most of her time flirting." In Anny's novel Angelica waits for the fortuitous death of her first husband and then enters into a happy union with another artist. In Miss Angel, not only does Sir Joshua Reynolds paint Angelica's portrait—as he did in real life—but he is made her unsuccessful suitor as well. Anny comes closer to portraying the real Angelica Kauffmann than did the petty gossips of the eighteenth century. Anny's heroine is a hard-working serious artist, an intelligent woman capable of holding conversations with Goethe. Hurt by the posturing and obeisance intrinsic in the role she assumed in order to become a painter, she turned to her art. Understanding the value of creativity, Anny wrote:

The sympathies and consolations of light, of harmony, of work, are as effectual as many a form of words. They are substitutions of one particular manner of feeling and expression for another. To hungry, naked, and imprisoned souls, art ministers with a bountiful hand, shows them a way of escape (even though they carry their chains with them). Angelica was
never more grateful to her pursuit than now when time was difficult on her hands. (135)

For Angelica, as well as for Anny herself, work was the only anodyne for troubled times.

In his chapter on contemporary novelists in his autobiography, Trollope adds “two ladies” to his list “in order that I may declare how much I have admired their work. They are Annie Thackeray and Rhoda Broughton.” He continues:

Miss Thackeray’s characters are sweet, charming, and quite true to human nature. In her writings she is always endeavouring to prove that good produces good, and evil evil. There is not a line of which she need be ashamed,—not a sentiment of which she should not be proud. But she writes like a lazy writer who dislikes her work, and who allows her own want of energy to show itself in her pages.11

Trollope, whose own psychological acumen was profound, nevertheless shows himself not fully sensitive to the psychological depths of Anny’s female characters. Underneath the sweetest and most charming of her heroines was a repressed turmoil. Her heroines do not explode; they come to quiet realizations; and continue to measure out their lives with teaspoons. Her female characters do not include a Lizzie Eustace, a Mrs. Proudie, or a Lady Mason. These are all extraordinary women. Anny’s heroines are good women, ordinary women trying to understand themselves and their worlds. Anny brings them to life, “quite true to human nature,” and shows that even the simplest of them is important in her hidden complexities. Anny reaches down into herself as she constructs a heroine. If she did not create dramatic women as Trollope did, she created, with an honesty that a woman could easily perceive, the reality of a young, vulnerable, inexperienced woman.

Trollope equates Anny’s casual, colloquial prose with laziness and absence of style, but her distinctive manner serves her purpose. Her wanderings and leisurely asides, her ample descriptions of nature, her slow unraveling of motives, are as pertinent to her stories as the narrative and enhance her analysis of character. Never the omniscient writer, she is rather a friend sharing a psychologically acute tale, talking directly to the reader in the manner of an oral storyteller.

Anne Thackeray—as a writer and as a spinster living in her sister’s house—found a kindred soul in Jane Austen.12 In notes for her essay on Austen, Anny quotes Richard Whately:
AUTHORESSES CAN SCARCELY EVER FORGET THEY ARE AUTHORS. THEY SEEM TO FEEL A SYMPATHETIC SHUDDER AT EXPOSING NAKED A FEMALE MIND. THEY LEAVE THE MYSTERIES OF WOMANHOOD TO BE DESCRIBED BY SOME INTERLOPING MALE, LIKE RICHARDSON OR MARIVAUX WHO IS TURNED OUT BEFORE HE HAS SEEN HALF THE RITES & IS FORCED TO SPIN FROM HIS OWN CONJECTURES THE REST. (LETTER 55)

At this time Anny, unmarried, knew little about men, nor did she have the ability to understand them in the way that Trollope understood women. However, the empathy that Trollope brought to his female characters was not an intimate knowledge of the female psyche, but rather a more general understanding of the human condition. Anny was deficient in her portrayals of men (until she wrote *Mrs. Dymond*); her heroes are one-dimensional. But in her female characters she exposes “naked the female mind.” They question their given positions in life and search for new roles as Anny herself had done.

There are two great classes of women—those who minister and those who are taken care of by others; and the born care-takers and workers are apt to chafe in early life. Something is wrong, hearts beat passionately, boil over, ache for nothing at all; they want to comfort people, to live, to love, to come and go, to feel they are at work. (109-10)

Anny was a caretaker, and so were her heroines, who wanted to live and to love.

Many of Anny’s heroes at this time wander aimlessly and passively; in a sense antiheroes, they are the centers of actions done for them, the inheritors of fortunes, the recipients of good, rather than the initiators of action and of life. Catherine (the second heroine of *The Village*) sends Butler back to Reine, the woman he loves. Catherine serves the same purpose of getting the two lovers together as Mrs. Hilberry (modeled on Anny herself) does later in Virginia Woolf’s *Night and Day*. Without Becky’s wit and good humor, Reine is the same kind of strong, self-sufficient, and steely young woman—a loner out of her class, fighting to survive. Like Becky she says, “I am no angel,” but then she adds, “We in our class are not like you others. I cannot dissemble” (200). Here Becky and Reine part ways.

Anny’s females have fragile egos; they are victims and as such often cannot free themselves. When they do, they turn to a more loving and honest suitor, but they never become whole in their own right or fully emancipated. They still define themselves as their men see them. Anny called her women to account for cowardice and foolishness, but rarely did she attack a man for his defects. What she dealt with was a woman’s
faulty response to a man. In *The Village*, Anny states, “Women usually respect a man when he is angry even when he is in the wrong” (106). For Anny, a woman’s cowardice was far more damaging to her than a man’s wrongdoing against her.

It is intriguing to consider why George Eliot found Anny’s novels to her liking. She wrote: “I am obliged to fast from fiction, and fasting is known sometimes to weaken the stomach. I ought to except Miss Thackeray’s stories, which I cannot resist when they come near me—and bits of Mr. Trollope” (Haight, VI, 123). And again two years later Eliot wrote: “I know nothing of contemporary English novelists with the exception of Miss Thackeray’s and (a few of) Anthony Trollope’s works” (VI, 418). Indeed, Eliot sent *The Story of Elizabeth* to a friend along with copies of *Orley Farm* and *The Small House at Allington* (IV, 209). Of Anny’s novel, Eliot wrote, “It is not so cheerful as Trollope, but it is charmingly written” (IV, 209). In a diary entry for 19 April 1878, Eliot recorded having read “Annie Thackeray ‘The Village on the Cliff’” (VII, 22).

From George Eliot’s references to Anny’s novels, there appears to have been something more appealing in them for her than being “charmingly written.” I propose that Eliot recognized a woman’s insight into a female character—that one step more into a female psyche than a male writer could take in order to expose “naked a female mind”—which Trollope, also presumably chosen by Eliot for his psychological insight, did not sufficiently recognize. In her essay “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists,” Eliot insists that “women can produce novels not only fine, but among the very finest;—novels, too, that have a precious speciality, lying quite apart from masculine aptitudes and experience.”13 Anny’s “precious speciality,” her psychological insights into her female characters, combined with her ability to express them, rendered her different from the usual Lady Novelists, and therefore readable to Eliot.

Anny wrote many fairy tales that are reworkings of old tales set in Victorian times. The giants and monsters are industrialists, fanatics, grasping misers, and the unloving. The disasters they create are personal as well as public. Not fairy tales for children, they are cautionary lessons for adults. As moral as Thackeray, Anny lacked his light touch and irony to make her message palatable. The fairy tales are, however, extremely imaginative in applying myths to the morass of Victorian society.
One essay of all those written in this period must be considered. Anny rewrote "Toilers and Spinsters," first published in the *Cornhill* in 1861, for inclusion in her 1873 collection of the same title. Some grammatical changes are incidental. Additions occur in the explanation of advances that had taken place in the realm of women's work opportunities and facilities, for example, the establishment in 1873 of the Berners Street Club for women.

At the end of the 1873 rewrite, Anny acknowledges that Thackeray "wrote a title to the rambling little paper" of 1861. Though the two versions are similar, there are some interesting additions. In the earlier paper Anny asks for more and better jobs for all women who want to work. She asserts that a spinster can enjoy the world as well as a married woman—and even as well as a man!

What possible reason can there be to prevent unmarried, any more than married, people from being happy (or unhappy), according to their circumstances—Are unmarried people shut out from all theatres, concerts, picture-galleries, parks, and gardens? Does Mudie refuse their subscriptions? May not spinsters, as well as bachelors, give their opinions on every subject, no matter how ignorant they may be. I know of no especial ordinance of nature to prevent men, or women either, from being ridiculous at times.

The great problem for single women (as for married ones) is “want of adequate means.” “[S]urely it is the want of money, and not of husbands,” Anny continued, which brings with it great unhappiness. Women must be trained in order to enter the work force, and “every woman in raising herself may carry along a score of others with her” (8). Anny also suggests a club where working women may go for a decent meal, a glass of port, and a quiet reading room. From today's vantage point, her requests seem modest indeed, but in 1861 they would have appeared radical had they been written by anyone but Miss Thackeray. She was asking for many more job opportunities for women, for greater social equality between the sexes, and for recognition of a woman's human rights. It was of supreme importance for her that a woman be allowed to earn her own living.

The changes made in 1873 are significant because Anny herself realized that she was writing from a “double point of view and from the two ends of fifteen years” (24). After acknowledging the changes which had enabled more women to earn their own livelihoods, she continues:
What Arnold did for schoolboys and schoolmasters, inventing freedom for them and a rescue from the tyranny of common-place and opposition, some people have been trying to do for home-girls, schoolgirls, and their teachers, for whom surely some such revolution has long been needed. (29)

She asks:

What is it, then, that we would wish for. . Eyes to see, ears to hear, sincerity and the power of being taught and of receiving truth; by being taken out of ourselves, do we most learn to be ourselves and to fulfil the intention of our being. (30–31)

Anny’s original premise in 1861 was simply to open the way for better job opportunities for women and to establish eating clubs for women. In 1873, she asks not only for more and better education for women but for the right of women to declare themselves as women—to come into their own and be themselves. Her scorn at the failure to expand the suffrage to women is clear, though the subject is relegated to a footnote added in 1873. Noting that the “apathy of ‘half the women of England’ who do not care for votes, and whose supineness in the Attorney-General’s eyes is a good reason for not giving the Franchise to those persons who do happen to care for it,” she protests.

If the Victorian woman

is able to rule her household, to bring up her sons and daughters in love and in truth, and to advise her husband with sense and composure, she may perhaps be trusted in time with the very doubtful privilege of a 5,000th voice in the election of a member for the borough. (11–12, n. 1) 

Whatever the limitations of her manifesto, it must be remembered that Anny was writing before there was much feminist discussion. In 1861 she had begun a little paper about spinsters; in 1873 she brought the essay up to date. That women should be able to work and be better educated was their right, not because they were women, but because they were human beings. This is one of the significant beginnings of today’s feminism. Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own is a natural descendant of her Aunt Anny’s “Toilers and Spinsters,” albeit with a difference in focus. After Leslie Stephen had been a widower for three years, he married Julia Duckworth. Virginia Stephen (Woolf) was their daughter. Anne Thackeray was a friend of both Julia and Leslie Stephen, and visited them often in their home at Hyde Park Gate. Because she was Aunt Anny to Laura Stephen (Minny’s daughter), she became Aunt Anny to all the Duckworth and Stephen children. For
the young Virginia Stephen, Anne Thackeray was a powerful model of a female writer.

In “Toilers and Spinsters” Anne Thackeray spoke for the common, untalented spinster; in *A Room of One’s Own* Virginia Woolf spoke for the elite and talented artist. Anne Thackeray hoped that a woman would be given the opportunity to earn her own living; Virginia Woolf asked for five hundred pounds a year to be given as a legacy to enable her artist to work. Anne Thackeray was a Victorian Lady who frequented the best drawing rooms in London; Virginia Woolf was a rebel from Bloomsbury who had been denied admittance to the Oxbridge Library. Anne Thackeray, later Lady Ritchie, spoke for the poor; Virginia Woolf the radical spoke for the elite. What must be remembered is that Anne Thackeray and Virginia Woolf were part of the same family, the same Victorian class. Anne Thackeray worked within its parameters; Virginia Woolf turned her back on Hyde Park Gate and all it symbolized for her. Yet, paradoxically, it was only the intellectual elite, but still an elite, she cared about. Anne Thackeray’s essay broke ground; Virginia Woolf’s became part of the feminist vernacular.

Anne Thackeray’s “little paper” bears looking into; it shows the fifteen-year evolution of a working writer, unhampered by societal strictures. By being herself and examining the world from her unique perspective, Anny had developed a devoted following of friends and of readers. Yet in the midst of her literary triumph came personal tragedy.

Before the birth of her second child, Minny died. Anny was now indeed alone. At times of crisis we often revert to behavior of a previous critical time. When Minny died, Anny’s guilt, not only at being alive but at the jealousy she could not suppress at Minny’s good fortune, added to the burden of true sorrow she felt about the loss of her sister. She reverted to her suppressed feelings of sisterly jealousy over Thackeray and back even further to her primal jealousy against her mother over her father. “I think I am writing to tell you that Papa is dead. It always seems to be that come back, not anything new,” Anny wrote in Letter 62. Bereft now of Minny, Anny mourned once more for Thackeray.

Among Thackeray’s papers, Anny had found “Adieu,” a poem by Carlyle, copied out by Mrs. Brookfield (JOB). On the envelope Anny had written:

Written out by JOB
Kept by my Father
When Minnie died
I used to read it & read it.  

Anny had to learn the bitter lesson of saying "Adieu forever now" to all those she had loved.

In another letter written in October of 1876 to George Eliot, Anny is still grieving. In discussing Eliot's newly published *Daniel Deronda*, she wrote: "I hope you are pretty well & rested from y' work — I have felt it come Very home to me — it is the first book I have ever read without Minnie & does not seem to me quite a book so much as something w'h has been" (Letter 63). Eliot wrote to John Blackwood, "What a blow for Miss Thackeray—the death of that sister to whom she was so closely bound in affection" (Haight, VI, 200).

Minny's death was indeed a blow to Anny but in another way it served to hasten her liberation from several Victorian mores. She was forty years old; her mother was insane; her father, grandmother, and sister were dead; her nearest relatives were the dour Leslie and her mentally deficient five-year-old niece, Laura. Taking into consideration her warm nature and her need for love, the time was ripe for her to find a husband. Instead, she was found by Richmond Thackeray Willoughby Ritchie, the son of Thackeray's favorite cousin, William Ritchie. Educated at Eton, Richmond was a King's scholar and a Newcastle medalist; later he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, on a scholarship. He was brilliant, serious, handsome, and completely enamored of his famous, worldly, and elder cousin. Richmond's adolescent worship turned to love. Encouraged by Anny's need of his adulation, he was determined to marry her. How could a sensitive young man find her anything but captivating when she wrote him such letters as this one from Interlaken:

> How I wish one could send all that one sees to you and to all other poor hard-working people who really want it! I should like to send you a pine tree, a bunch of wild strawberries, and a valley of sloping, nodding flowers with thousands of glittering spiders' webs, the high up snows and far below lakes and yesterday's yellow evening, dying rather sadly behind the pine ridge and the misty Stockhorn.

She called him her "dear Tonic," and her "blessing," a nickname used heretofore only among Thackeray and his daughters.

After the devastation of Minny's death, Anny and Leslie learned to live together. When Richmond Ritchie's visits to the house became insistent, Leslie protested. He found them together in the parlor kissing,
and like an irate father or spurned lover, he demanded that a decision be made. After all (even years later) Leslie wrote, “It was clear that a long engagement would be very undesirable. She could not afford to waste time.” Anny was forty, Richmond twenty-three, and still at Cambridge.

To the consternation of Richmond’s many friends, who were foreseeing a brilliant academic career for him, he forged ahead with his intentions. Leaving Cambridge, he entered the India Office as a junior clerk. On these expectations, coupled with Anny’s earnings from her writing, they were married. On 2 August 1877 George Eliot wrote to a friend:

And Miss Thackeray’s married today to young Ritchie. I saw him at Cambridge and felt that the nearly 20 years’ difference between them was bridged hopefully by his solidarity [sic] and gravity. This is one of several instances that I know of lately, showing that young men with even brilliant advantages will often choose as their life’s companion a woman whose attractions are wholly of the spiritual order. (Haight, VI, 398)

Eliot was not aware of how prophetically she spoke, for Anny’s marriage was to anticipate her own two years later, in 1880, to John W. Cross, twenty years her junior.

Richmond was tall, good-looking, and a Thackeray. He was old for his age; she was young for hers. He assuaged her reawakened grief for the loss of her father. When questioned by a friend about her feelings for Richmond, Anny wrote that she loved him “but not well enough to refuse him.” To her old friend Hennee Synge, Anny wrote:

I knew y!' kind heart would understand & sympathise with the strange happiness which has come so unperceivedly into my life. Richmond has been away ever since it was settled so that at times I almost imagine it is all a strange dream. But it is no dream & no vague story — all is true all his goodness & faithful affection & now that I know all my life contained, it seems to go back & back into the past & bind it all & heal its bitter ache. (Letter 65)

Literally she went “back and back,” doubly safe in the love of a male Thackeray, who would help her to lay to rest, for now, her longing for her father.

Winifred Gérin believes that From an Island, written at the hectic time directly before and after Anny’s engagement, is “as near to being a little masterpiece as anything she had yet produced.” Gérin praises Anny’s analysis of character and her sense of place. The novella also has
great biographical interest because of the time in which it was written. Struggling with the problem of the suitability of her approaching marriage, Anny had to deal with criticism about the seventeen-year age difference between her and Richmond. In the novella, the heroine almost loses her husband, but he returns to her strong and loving. In reality Anny feared that she might lose her new-found love. While in this dilemma, Richmond sent her a telegram explaining that he had reconciled his mother to their engagement. Seemingly joyful, Anny accepted Richmond and his love for her. Her true feelings of fear and possible loss were relieved in the happy ending of her novella—in effect, her wish, her hope, rather than her certainty.

The setting of the story is Freshwater, to which Anny escaped from her trials in London, while the great house of the painter in the novella is that of the Tennysons (Farringford), in which she places the entire cast of Tennyson's family and friends. Eleven years after Tennyson had helped her with the ending of *The Village on the Cliff*, and again with Tennyson's guidance, Anny transposed her life into the fiction of *From an Island* and accepted her great good fortune. She wrote to a friend:

> If it were not Richmond, I should be afraid to take such a life's gift, but he knows his own mind so clearly, that this blessing of affection seemed to have lightened the darkness in which I have been living, and now at least I feel as if it were ungrateful indeed if we did not take the happiness which has come like a sort of miracle.23

Once again, there was a blessing in her life; nature had worked its miracle.

Anny's inheritance from her father was vast, and she had enriched her share in her own unique manner. She had inherited his friends, like Browning and Tennyson, and then gone on to forge her own relationships with them. She had inherited some of his ability to create unique and compelling novels, essays, and letters. Out of her own life she had created art. Thackeray's works and Thackeray himself were a part of Anny's life. When writing to announce her engagement (Letter 64) she compares her situation to that of two of her father's literary characters and then had wondered how he himself would have responded to the news. Anny had also inherited her father's love for domesticity and for children, and she fulfilled her desire for a family in an unusual manner. Anne Thackeray's letters of 1866-77, as well as her professional writing, show an author who has learned her craft and a woman who has come into her own.
LETTERS 51–65

To W. W. F. Synge

Letter 51     [1867]
Fales

What a delightful amusing letter you wrote me my dear WF.¹ & how glad I was to get it. I hate writing so & have had so much to do lately that pen & ink always make me sick & that is why I have not answered before. I had a most delightful trip & am generally flourishing except in one way it begins with an L & ends with a e — I send you all my best love & should like to see you again very much. I am going for a little bit with Minny to some baths wh she has been sent to, for she has been ill & is still far from strong & cant walk a quarter of a mile. It is rather tiresome to pack up again so soon — Cant you Come & lunch one day — we dine out Im afraid almost everynight — say Chuseday or Wensday if you are in town

yrs ever with love
to dearest Hennee²

AIT

To W. W. F. Synge

Letter 52     8br¹ 23 1867
Fales

The Eyrie,
Henley-on-Thames

Received from WWF Synge Esq. seventy five pounds being payment in full of all owing by him to my Father.

Anne I Thackeray
Leslie Stephen (for H.M. Stephen)
My dear M\textsuperscript{ss} Baxter

Your letter came yesterday when Minny was in London buying her little provisions for America, & I could not help opening it & beginning to cry over your dear kind familiar handwriting — It was a happy little cry making me feel that my dear was indeed going, but going to find one place at least where she would be at home & at peace with friends of our dearest Fathers choosing I know you will be so good to her, & indeed I do believe that seeing you is one of the very most \textit{sic} things I take her to America. I feel as if a little bit of my life & ease of heart was going & yet I think I am right to stay behind — She is so true & clear & she looks with such simple bright eyes that I dont even feel as if I could keep my conscience straight without her for very long — Leslie too is a dear good old fellow & he adores Minny in his silent dobbin like way — This little note of mine will be brought out to you by a young friend of ours, of whom my Father was very fond, & he longs to make your acquaintance & I think I may introduce him to you. His name is Herman Merivale, his sisters are both in America & his father has just come back. M\textsuperscript{r} Merivale the father is Under Sec\textsuperscript{st} for India — As I write there is a grand talk going on across my paper. M\textsuperscript{r} Appleton\textsuperscript{2} is making out their route for them & leaning across the table, Leslie on the other side is smoking his pipe & asking questions Minny in her blue cap ribbons is opposite to me & writing it all down Outside theres the garden & the birds all singing in the sunshine. It seems like a little bit of USA here, the Storys are delightfully companionable, M\textsuperscript{r} Appleton as kind as kind can be, & there is a nice M\textsuperscript{r} Dexter\textsuperscript{3} who can talk to us about all of you & that is always a bond. How I wish your Lucy would take courage & come. She & I would go to Rome together & make all sorts of nice little expeditions & then I would come back to America & give her up safe into your hands. Dear M\textsuperscript{ss} Baxter it makes me so happy to think of Min quiet & safe with you & coming back to your home from various expeditions to tell you all about her impressions & to ask your advice & help in her various schemes & difficulties Theres nothing she thinks so pleasant as home & quiet & she hopes everybody except you will ask her
to meet people & that you will never have anything but a home welcome for her

I am going off to Switzerland with my cousins for a fortnights trip the very day they start. I hope I shall meet Mt. Longfellow there & his daughters. We shall be a large party & I mean to try & be as happy as I can & then to come back here & write my book until I see them again. My children are growing up into dear little companions now & Margy puts her arms round my neck & says Poor dear Aunt Anny I will 'em your handkerchiffs & make your tea when I am big. I send my love to Lucy & I am Dear M.s Baxter

Affectionate
Anne Thackeray

To Lucy Baxter

Letter 54 [1870]
Columbia Elm House. Wandsworth

Sunday,

Here is a quiet Sunday morning dear Lucy for me to write & tell you how I thanked you for your last kind welcome letter. I wish I was a better correspondent. I think my letters & then naturally they dont go. But now that I have come away into a more tranquil life I shall have time to write once at least to each of my friends. London is my home & always will be, but its almost too big a home for a person who isnt very decided or rich or strong & who has no good excuse for saying so. I have had to set up health but that is rather nonsense for I am quite well & only get knocked up if I do too much. However having set up health & a little convenient neuralgia — I have come off here for a fortnight to write all the morning & to my friends on Sunday.

I wonder if this is like an American house-hold. There are Mt. & M.s Senior. She sings like a bird & has beautiful golden hair & has one big son at Oxford. Then there is old M.s Senior very old & very ill with little funny rows of white curls — Then there is M.s Hughes y Matching Seniors mother in whose room I am established — She is a brave old lady the mother of Tom Hughes the M.P. you may have heard of — All round the room hang the pictures of a whole past away generation, & of her own sons — three of them are dead — They were g.s friends of
Leslies — his pupils at Cambridge. Then there is Hastings Hughes a widower with 4 little children & a governess who also lives in this funny old Elm House & there is a long garden and beyond it a great wide plain crossed by railways that puff & scream & throb like the waves of the Sea. All the morning I write (only I am sorry to say nothing but mice come out [sic] these mountains of mss) & in the afternoon I think I generally go to London & see Minny for it is only a little way, & these whizzing trains are always ready to carry one off. (As I dip my pen into my inkstand I think that Papa's pen used to go into it once when he used to write to you) — I had a long talk about you the other day with Mf Bingham Mildmay who took me in to dinner at Mr. Sartoris — I dont think I like him very much, tho' when he talked of you — all that bit of him was very very nice. Only he is so completely alive — & when I talk to people like that I feel as if I was little more dead than them & as if in that sense I had got on ahead of time. but it may be only fancy and I suppose the meaning of life is to live & to do & that is better than feeling. He said I was to send the very kindest message I liked to your mother & you. I said I should say he remembered you. Mf Mildmay is rather thin long faced & aristocratic looking — I wondered if she knew all about you all but I did not ask her. It was at Mr. Sartoris, there were diamond ladies & satin ladies — I had my best gown on & was deeply interested by the arrival of Lady Herbert of Lea in a sort of beautiful sateen [?] like dress & wreaths of simple false plaits — what a shame of me — I cant scratch it out, as I ought to for she was very kind & said would I become a Catholic? & that she had reviewed all my stories in the Tablet.

long time after. Easter Eve.

I thought my beginning of a letter had gone to India dear Lucy & I looked for it in vain to send it off. I am home again for a few days on my way to the Isle of Wight where all my cousins are, & my friends Mf Cameron & our Alfred. He is not like Papa & yet he is in some ways, in a sort of simplicity w'h I think belongs to all really great men & I find myself turning again & again to Freshwater. Two days ago I went to see the dearest little American Lady for whom all our hearts have ached — Mf Kühn whose husband was killed at Rome out hunting. She & he were both great friends of mine at Rome. I daresay you will know of her, Minny fell in love with her twin sister in America. I wish you could see her going out smiling in blue satin. She looks bright & pink & happy thank God & dear old Leslie works away & smokes & writes & smokes
till I can scarcely tell w\(h\) is him & which is his pipe. They send all love & true greetings to you as I do. Did you ever get my book.\(^7\) It was sent addressed to you to the care of Messrs. Putnam New York — a long time ago. This is just such a spring day as I remember it was when I wrote to you begging you to come to us that eventful summer when we went to Switzerland & met Minnys fate. Everything & nothing has happened since then — I only wish there was ever ever a chance of your coming to us even as much as there was then the Butlers\(^8\) are coming over Mr. Kemble writes — I have a presentiment that some day we shall know each other — and I neednt tell you that such as it is, our shabby little sunshiny home is yours dear Lucy always & at any time I went on Monday last to see the children — Little Anny wanted to come back with me very much — I feel rather frantic at times (but only for a minute or two) when I think of the slippery hold I have of everything I love\(^9\)

it is a mistake — if it were only for this life it wouldn't matter but this is only an abstract speculation & means no more that it expresses And now I must finish dear Lucy & once more good bye. And with my love to your mother Believe me always

Yours affectionately

AIT

PS. I was ashamed of my abstract speculation & tore it off. So please forgive in \(\text{[word illegible]}\)

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Memorandum

Letter 55 [Memorandum]  
Frognal,/Torquay\(^1\)

British Library  
{c. Spring or summer 1871}\(^2\)

Add. Ms. 45741; 230–33

As I must leave off being young, I find many douceurs in \(\text{[sic]}\) — for I can drink as much wine as I like\(^3\) You will kindly make allowance for any indistinctness of writing by attributing it to this venial error.

She\(^4\) never grizzled over her state, nor allowed her conscious superiority or intellig \(\text{[sic]}\) to claim distinction in her home. Tho an artist, she had no artistic temperament.

An oblique reproach upon me.
Brought up in a kind of atmosphere wherein convention in the things that matter was omnipotent. No “isms”, & dogmatism is as hard to discover as scepticism.

Esther of Splendeurs — Miseres de Courtisanes loves Lucien with a far more chaste affection than many a correct heroine. Mistresses of famous men not sensual. Méme du Châtelet’s relations with Voltaire based on affinity of lit. taste & critical appreciation more than phys. attraction. Aspasia intellectual not sensual

Whately remarks

Authoresses can scarcely ever forget they are authors. They seem to feel a sympathetic shudder at exposing naked a female mind. They leave the mysteries of womanhood to be described by some interloping male, like Richardson or Marivaux who is turned out before he has seen half the rites & is forced to spin fr. his own conjectures the rest. Woman rarely possesses the power of laughing at her own misfortunes. Humour the principal ingredient of the philosophic temperament. Who is more humourless than the notoriously funny man? A large bulky figure (says Miss Austen) has as good a right to be in deep affliction as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. She stayed in Hans Place.

To George Leslie

Letter 56
Princeton
AM20792

16, Onslow Gardens
S. W.
[1872]

Dear M’ Leslie

I have been wondering what picture you are going to be kind enough to do for me for the second part — if by chance you were to do the little bit where Dolly throws a snow ball at Henley, this is to say please that he is rather tall & inclined to be stout. I have always imagined him with fair hair & a composed expression & clean shaven with small barrister-like whiskers —

Please remember me to M’ Leslie & believe me

Yours sincerely
AIThackeray
My dear Friend. A sort of fatality has prevented me from writing to you for a long long time & even now I am almost afraid that this one of my many letters may never reach you — But I have seen M't Strong & heard of you f'm him & I must try to write once more though I am ashamed to say that after he left I searched through the house in vain for the little card he had given me with y'r address. Minnie says perhaps by sending this to y'r niece it may reach you, & so my letter shall go to Minnie in Cornwall first before it starts on its journey to America.

Dearest M't Baxter how can I write to you of this terrible & unexpected sorrow. Your life seems to me one long sorrow & one long love. How Papa would have felt your loss. I remember so well how he came back describing you all, & telling us that perhaps your son was coming to stay with us for a long time & we have the picture still in the old book at home & I can hear him telling me y'r childrens names & ages, how he loved you all. My heart aches as I think of you & I send you, dear unknown familiar friend my love & truest sympathy. Words dont come very easily but they mean that our hearts are with you & dear Lucy & the past which is so much my life & my present, that it comes before me far more vividly than do these little Norman Gables & corners & the voices in the moonlit court.

Minnie is in Cornwall in a little green gably house, & I have come here with the children for an unlucky whooping cough made it risky for us to be in the same house with little delicate Laura — (here I must tell you that indeed I wrote to tell you of her dear little existence but something as usual must have happened to the letter)

It was such a pleasure to me before we left London to see y'r brother & to hear of you, & to try & trace some likeness to the face I have always imagined to be yours. I was less fortunate in missing your niece to whom I wrote to the address she gave, but my letter of course came back through the dead letter office.

This is another green over grown place with a garden & an old Marquise in a camisole & the little Norman church chiming in the sunshine & moonlight & the dear little girls scampering about very happy as I need scarcely say. I have also a bright young couple of cousins here with
some more sweet little God children of mine & the old Marchioness & I contemplate our respective families from the two ends of the garden. It is close to the place we came to ten years ago nearly with Grannie & where I wrote The Village on the Cliff here nothing seems changed. There are the cotton nightcaps & the melons & the bathers; its a sort of Pompei with little feasts all the way down the street & great shining fish coming up out of the sea & tumblers & a gladiator or two & the most astounding chatter & barter. This morning I quite frightened a poor old thing with pots of butter by saying do ask the real price I am so very busy, & have no time to beat you down. I found I had quite hurt her feelings. I must finish this tonight & take it into Caen tomorrow where they will know the way to America — Here the good old woman who keeps the stamp shop can only send to England & Paris & Switzerland at the farthest — Today I sent a little scrap for Leslie who is at Zermatt now & who wanted a holiday for he was so thin & so over-worked when I came away that I was quite unhappy about him.

Minnie is looking very well & thank God the little one is growing & getting stronger. She can almost walk & almost talk & she is the most tender little heart. She has a little look of my dearest Father sometimes but she is even more like Leslie. She is so fond of music & sings with happiness when the sun shines or when her Mother takes her — My last letter was full of poor Minnies troubles with a little donkey whose Mama gives Laura milk for breakfast. It was rather affecting & that is why I will put the little letter in if I can find it.

I should dearly like a letter from you or Lucy now & then though I know that with you as with me writing makes but little difference, but still I do long to hear from your own self how you are & all of you — and goodnight dear Mrs. Baxter & God bless you & yourn. & help you & keep you prays

Your affectionate
Anne Thackeray

Please write to 16 Onslow Gardens
My dear M! Browning

This is too provokingly absurd & disappointing & tiresome & not to be thought of. I am so sorry for you. I cant imagine anything more maddening. What should I do if after all our work & trouble anything so impossible were to come & stop one, but I do hope the counsels will find out that it is all nonsense — Who ever heard of any Frenchman except M! Milsand who ever read an English book, & besides — after having it all in the papers — It sounds too absurd altogether. Meanwhile I want to see the book more & more & do please dear M! Browning relent & send me the proofs & most most sympathetically

Yours sincerely
Anne Thackeray

From Leslie Stephen to AIT

Dearest Anny,
This is my first letter this year & I send it to you with all appropriate good wishes. I only wish that it could be more cheerful; but that is out of the question just now.

Poor little Laura is still coughing & it is a severe trial for Minny. I dont believe that it is really anything to trouble ourselves about much. The doctor has been here this morning & promises that she shall be better tonight; he says that it is merely a cold & with no bad symptoms; & moreover she is quite cheerful & always playing with her toys. It is all the more pathetic to look at her dear little face & see it always cheerful though she is tormented by this hideous cough. And Minny is made so nervous by it that I have great trouble in calming her at all. I hope she will be better by the time you return; but I tell you of
new trouble — wh. I have not diminished because I think you would prefer it.

The sheer melancholy weighs upon us at times. I fear — I cant quite say how much I fear or precisely what: but I fear at least that we shall all have to look back upon this time as a very solemn one. No words can say how beautiful my mother seems to me now; or how kind & good she is. But I seem every day to have less hopes for any length of time. I have lately observed more distinctly an uncertainty of mind, wh. is so gentle that it is hardly painful except as a symptom; but I cannot but think of the time when she will no longer be present to make us better whenever we see her.¹

You know that I cant speak to you when you are here. I cant even write very easily; but I must say one thing. Of all the good you & Minny have done for me, there is one thing for wh. I shall love you as long as I have any love left in me. It is that somehow you have not only comforted my mother during her last years, but you have brought me nearer to her. I am sometimes saddened when I think of her fondness for me & think how little I used to deserve it. Latterly I hope I have been better to her, &, if I have, it is chiefly because you two have been a new influence in our family & thawed us all with kindness. When I laugh at your sentiment, dont fancy for a moment that I ever do or can forget, what I owe to it in making my relations to my mother easier & better. I wont say any more; perhaps I shall never say as much again.

Goodbye dearest Anny & the happiest of all possible years to you

Your affte

LS

I think I have rather exaggerated darling Memee's² ailment. It is rather very vexatious than serious.
From Robert Browning to AIT

Letter 60
Baylor

Dear Miss Thackeray,

I feel properly humiliated. On referring to the Poem, I find the line to be simply

"Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng"¹ — & so forth. How the other reading got into my head, I can't guess. Do forgive my blundering memory!

Ever truly yours
Robert Browning

From Robert Browning to AIT

Letter 61
Baylor

Dear Miss Thackeray

We never got any note, or you should have been properly thanked, depend on it: Sarianna¹ will call with this & tell you so. I ought not to go out, I believe, but how can I deny myself so great a delight as to do as I am bidden so kindly?

Ever yours most truly,
Robert Browning

To Mrs. George Baxter

Letter 62
Columbia

My dear Mrs. Baxter

I knew you would write to me when I looked at my half written letter to you. I think I am writing to tell you that Papa is dead. It always seems to be that come back, not anything new.

About my darling I have no words & I am still so unaccustomed to it
that I dont feel I think very much — only that I have the tenderest faithfullest most unspeakably loving sister that all one ever ever had. She was expecting her confinement & well comparatively speaking & she talked quite cheerfully w'h she had never done before of her dear little baby, & one day I went away for a night —

You see it is my Fate — & she was dead when I came back next day, with tender closed eyes and a face so radiant. It was Papas illness killed her not her little baby, w'h never was born, some convulsion. — We had no parting only she had been so very tender — like a mother

Poor Leslie has been so good but so wrung & strained & theres plenty to do for a time till our turns come. The card said your Lucy had oh! such lovely eyes: and you two have gone through this & other sorrows all your lives — But if death is only our dearest it seems to lose all its terrors. Of course Leslie & I are going on together with Meme & I shall have the children & everything I ever wanted, except the light & warmth & tender blessing of our home w'h came f'm her.

Yr affectionate
old old friend

To George Eliot

Letter 63
Berg

My dearest Mrs. Lewes. I have had a letter from an American gentleman who has been to see us once or twice — & please would you be so very good as to read it — & if you wouldn't mind — let him come one Sunday to see you. I sh'd be so obliged — He knew Leslie & my Minnie in America

I hope you are pretty well & rested from yr work — I have felt it come Very home to me — it is the first book I have ever read without Minnie & does not seem to me quite a book so much as something w'h has been.

I hope to come & see you in a few weeks — but for the present, I am thankful for a bad cold w'h gives me a real reason for keeping quiet Little Meme has been very well all the summer, but she is not quite right just
now. Nor indeed is her Father — but he is coming to see you & I am sure you will do him good & M' Lewes too.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely
Anne Thackeray.

I have a great happiness in Margie and Annie who have come for two years.

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**To W. W. F. Synge**

Letter 64
Fales [1877]

My dear WWF

I had hoped so much to have seen you this time but I am going away again today & I only came out [?] for one night — for Leslie sent for me to settle [?] something —

Dear WF. I am going to marry Richmond Ritchie¹ who is years & years younger than I am but who has cared [sic] me so long & with such wonderful fidelity & unchangeableness that I have no courage to say no to the happiness it will be to us both to belong to each other It is much nearer to Lady Maria than to Lady Esmond² only then his feeling has been like Esmond, without any Beatrix or change for nearly seven years I have wondered & wondered what My Father would have said — I think perhaps — if he had known all — he might have agreed³ Leslie has been so, so, kind & M'⁴ Ritchie has agreed most anxiously & affectionately & will you tell Hennie with my love f⁵

Yf affect old Friend
AIT
To Henrietta Synge

Letter 65
Fales

[May 1877]

Dearest Hennee

Thankyou. I knew y'r kind heart would understand & sympathise with the strange happiness which has come so unperceivedly into my life. Richmond has been away ever since it was settled so that at times I almost imagine it is all a strange dream. But it is no dream & no vague story — all is true all his goodness & faithful affection & now that I know all my life contained, it seems to go back & back into the past & bind it all & heal its bitter ache — Margie & Annie are so good about it. They are to stay on with kind Leslie & my sweet little Meme will have her 'chicks' as she calls them to keep her company — I have been looking at little houses all round about Young Street is now so grand that they ask 500 for 2 years lease. I am very busy arranging all sorts of things but when I can & when Richmond can spare the time (for he is just coming up) I or we will come gladly & spend a day with you — Mama is now at Wimbledon & I go to her when I can, she has got the most charming little house there, & we are to be married in July, & R'd will begin his India Office quite directly — he is coming up on Friday & do tell WF with my best love that I shall be at home all the mor & dearest Hennee I give you a loving enfold & am y'r affectionatest

AIT