INTRODUCTION

Who says, 'Youth's a stuff will not endure?' It lasts as long as we do, and is older than age. For those moments of eager life, of seeing and being, come back to us, and we babble of green fields and live among them to the very end.¹

Written six weeks before she died, these lines embody the principles by which Anne Thackeray Ritchie lived her old age. Anny rejected the concept of carpe diem expressed by Feste the clown, but paralleled her experience with that of Falstaff.² In one of her essays Anny made a similar statement in response to her account of having seen John Lockhart being taken for a drive by Mrs. Sartoris. As an elderly woman she reacts to this youthful memory: "The clown says that youth is a stuff that won't endure. But moments of youth last as long as we do ourselves, and we babble of green fields to the last."³ Anny believed that the past remains a constant part of one's life. From her past, from her life with her father and sister, she drew strength.

Anny kept the past alive both in her letters and in her writings. The letters of this period indicate that Anny maintained a steady relationship with her old friends like Henry James, Lisa Robins, and Maude Morrison Frank. During this time Anny was saddened by the deaths of numerous friends. Written in October of 1910, Letter 104 shows the effect of the death of William James on his brother, who was already suffering from a deep depression. In answer to Anny's repeated letters
to him, Henry James submits the following explanation for his "poor acknowledgement":

The reason is that for more than a year — all through my miserable illness of so many months — the days were almost heavier with rue than I could bear, & that of late, since my beloved Brother's death, I have sat stricken & in great darkness. (Letter 104)

According to Leon Edel, James's depression did not abate until the spring of 1911 when he returned to London. Nevertheless, this letter to Anny has glints of the Jamesian wit. He describes America as "this prodigious & unspeakable & unlikeable country (one may love it, from the old customary superstition, but like it never!)." Although he borders on being effusive (he calls her "Dearest old Friend," "dear éprouvée & generous & exquisite friend"), the letter is genuine and heartfelt: "I yearn over you meanwhile & greet Richmond & your children ever so faithfully — & am yours, my dear Anne Ritchie, ever & so affectionately always."

Anny's letter to Henry James is playful and intimate. She addresses him as "Dear Henry Jaques." In Letter 108, written soon after Richmond's death, Anny confirms her intimacy with James. Despite its inauspicious beginning, their friendship had meaning for them both.

Anny's friendship with Leonard Woolf developed from her family ties to his wife. Anny's letters to him are poignant and compassionate. She asks for the return of a book she has lent to Virginia in hopes that "it might have [a] peaceful soporific effect upon her — ! — would you — if she does not want it — send it back to me & forgive my boring you" (Letter 106); she wonders if they "w'd like the little Porch for a few weeks" (Letter 107). Concerned about Virginia's mental condition, she inquires as well about her work. They are the letters of an old woman, saddened by her niece's ill health, wanting to help, but powerless to do so. Her signature, "Yours auntfully," is both witty and wistful (Letter 106).

Still receiving correspondence from strangers about Thackeray, she responded. Even as late as 1913 she received requests for her own autograph — because she was Thackeray's daughter. Yet in some ways she and Richmond Ritchie had changed places. His position in the India Office was powerful and he was in demand socially. No longer the silent "infantile husband" of Miss Thackeray, but Sir Richmond Ritchie, he had made a place and a name for himself. Assured of his
contribution to the India Office, he spoke of it with a proprietary conviction. Knighted in 1907, he carried the honor with dignity.

In the early letters of this period Anny continued to communicate with great authority, vitality, assurance. Despite tragedies, illness, and age, she had the ability to spring back and enjoy life. In a manuscript notebook, under the heading “Notes of Happy Things,” she wrote between 1902 and 1905, “my message is nearly over now, but I mean to enjoy old age as much as I can. I still love my own life and the lives of others very much indeed.”

Her greatest personal sorrow was the death in 1912 of Richmond Ritchie. Because she was so much older than he was, she had expected that she would predecease him. However, suffering from overwork and Ménière’s disease, he died of complications. Days after his death she wrote to Henry James: “Your true note sounds thro my heart. We are doing our poor best and thanking God for what has been & will not cease to have been” (Letter 108). Throughout her correspondence she makes frequent and loving references to Richmond. Upon being presented with her portrait, she wrote, “Naturally enough my first thought was how pleased Richmond would have been.” After the outbreak of World War I, her thoughts centered on him: “I long for Richmond every hour, and feel if he were only here.” All unhappiness of the past is forgiven; she remembers only Richmond’s good qualities: his intelligence, his companionship, and finally his love. Seventy-five at Richmond’s death, Anny finally accepted her old age. And she continued to work at several personally important projects.

Between 1894 and 1898 Anny had created introductions for thirteen volumes of her father’s works which were published by Smith, Elder. Swinburne commented on these introductions in the Quarterly Review:

To the exquisite genius, the tender devotion, the faultless taste and the unfailing tact of his daughter, we owe the most perfect memorial ever raised to the fame and to the character of any great writer on record by any editor or commentator or writer of prefaces or preludes to his work.

A second edition was conceived by Reginald Smith but never developed. The Centenary Edition, in twenty-six volumes, was planned to tie in with the anniversary of Thackeray’s birth in 1911 and began to appear in 1910.

Her correspondence with Mr. Williams, the editor of her Centenary introductions to Thackeray’s Works, is self-assured but never dog-
matic. Aided by Hester, she was diligent in asserting the facts as she remembered them. In Letter 105 she corrected the date of her “little drawing [which] was later than 54. I had given my Father a certain dressing gown with my first earnings w'h he is wearing.” Not satisfied with merely compiling another set of introductions, she assiduously followed up all particulars (Letter 102). With her usual modesty, she acknowledged suggestions made to her by Richmond and Hester (Letters 101, 102). Not above recognizing the value of someone else’s ideas, she wrote:

One thing I do think we might with advantage borrow from the various Melville Editions — printing the yellow facsimiles to each novel in turn. It gives a certain character to the books to appear with their old dress & habit. (Letter 102)

The facsimiles of the title pages were included and add greatly to the flavor of the edition.

Anny expanded her original biographical introductions for the Centenary Edition by inserting more sketches, portraits, unpublished letters, and journal entries. The latter introductions are more anecdotal than the earlier ones. They serve the same purpose of humanizing Thackeray and elucidating his work. MacKay has stated in her introduction to a recently republished edition of the introductions that “[b]y writing Thackeray’s biography, [Anny] reconstructed herself as a fellow artist.” At the same time that Anny created her father’s biography, she fashioned her own biography, and saw herself in juxtaposition to her father.

In 1914, just before the war, John Singer Sargent drew Anny’s portrait. Given to her by her friends, it delighted her: “It really is an enchanting picture. I feel quite shy before my portrait, it is so human, and I feel so like it, yet more grim, alas!” Included in the 137 friends who subscribed to it were J. M. Barrie, Arnold Bennett, Rhoda Broughton, Henry James, and even Pierpont Morgan. Edmund Gosse’s description of the portrait should be cited:

Here Mr. Sargent, with his wonderful discernment of character, gives us a commentary on Lady Ritchie’s nature, The pure full arch of the forehead, the smiling eyes, by turns so keen and so vague, the sensitive and mobile mouth, all combine to render that look of exquisite and humorous sensibility, that quaint refinement which were native to the charming original.
Just as her portrait remains to show us what she looked like, so her books remain to illustrate her writing ability and her unique habit of mind. *Blackstick Papers* (1908) and *From the Porch* (1913) are collections of articles and a short story, all previously published. After editing and revising them, she wrote, "My printed page has done very well, and is going into a second edition. I liked putting the scraps together, rewriting some of them and thinking of the beloved past. It seems so great a boon to live back again."  

Ramblings into the past, these articles are filled, nevertheless, with vitality, humor, and insights. Named for Thackeray's good fairy in *The Rose and the Ring*, *Blackstick Papers* contains, as Anny explains, "certain things in which she was interested—old books, young people, schools of practical instruction, rings, roses, sentimental affairs, etc., etc." Anny discusses the education and condition of women, poets, musicians, writers, Paris in the spring, and a scene that caught her eye:

> Look at the greengrocer's man washing his carrots which flash with colour in the slanting sun rays, while the owner of the shop, sitting on a straw chair with an ink-bottle carefully adjusted into a sack of potatoes, is writing his accounts in a book. (154)

In a piece on "Jacob Omnium" (Matthew James Higgins) Anny writes with true Thackerayan humor:

> Carlyle called my father a Cornish giant once, and Mr. Higgins he dubbed Eupeptic giant. Not being eupeptic himself, grim Thomas seemed to disapprove of tall men and of many other obvious and inevitable facts. (182)

*From the Porch* contains thirteen articles divided into three sections: "Divagations," Monographs," and "Reminiscences." This book, too, has scattered throughout it flashes of perception, now rather simply and unself-consciously placed, such as, "What we human beings seek for in life, is life, and we instinctively turn to it."  

*From Friend to Friend* (1919), edited by Anny's sister-in-law Emily Ritchie, is a collection of six essays and a short story, all previously published, and two unpublished letters of Thackeray's. According to Emily Ritchie, one of the essays, "In a French Village," contains the last words Anny ever wrote for publication. This slight piece is evidence that, however diminished, Anny's power to describe a scene was still in force. She depicts a French village celebration for the war heroes of the Franco-Prussian War. Later, in 1918, at Freshwater, she added the words, "This was written in August, 1913. Was it some presentiment
which so impressed us as we stood by during the village-gathering, of the far more terrible war which was to over-shadow the old one?” (121) After the armistice of World War I, Anny added a letter written to her by her grandson James Ritchie describing London on that fateful day. The juxtaposition of the two—the small French village and the great city of London—both in the throes of celebrating the cessation of war, is a telling stroke, yet marred with sadness and irony. Each festivity commemorated the end of war. Anny witnessed the celebration for the end of the Franco-Prussian War and now her grandson is witnessing the rejoicing for the end of a world war. In France and in England, indeed all over the world, cessation of hostilities is commemorated, and yet, wars continue. James wrote, “One felt that the dark cloud that had been hanging over us for four years had been suddenly cleared away, thank God, and we have all emerged, sadder and wiser” (123). Emily Ritchie adds that Anny “wished [James’s letter] printed as a fitting conclusion” to her essay.17

The later letters of this group show a gradual decline of Anny’s powers, but never a complete loss. More strikingly, an increase of weariness, which she tried to dispel with her usual buoyancy, becomes apparent. Occasionally this despondency surfaces in a single telling sentence in her letters. For example, “I do hope you will both come in happier times” (Letter 109); “But we have had sad news of our own from the front & we are only cheering up again” (Letter 111). Yet she never loses her felicity with words. She thanks a friend for a letter: “It picked me up & patted me on the back & shook me by the hand & said old friend old friend, so sweetly & caressingly that I dont know how to thank you” (Letter 112). In 1915 she wrote with a sense of playfulness:

Everything is so sad and unnatural that to fly away into one’s youth and the youth of one’s friends and companions is the best calmer and comforter. I wish you could get younger and younger, and I too! and that one could go off via childhood again.18

Despite the plague of increasing illness and advanced years, she remained optimistic and enthusiastic, her imagination always spinning tales of happier times. On a visit to London at the start of 1917, she tries still to maintain an optimistic and happy demeanor, but the strain of the war and of her age wears through: “It is a good thing one is nearing the end at last, for life is too overpowering for this tired mortal coil” (Letter 112). But with characteristic resilience she still brings
humor to the situation. She continues, “I hope I shall be two or three young cheerful capable people in my next life.”

During the war she wrote articles, raising money for the refugees and for the wives of service men. Thanking an American friend for her contribution, she wrote:

The best anodyne to worry & anxiety is trying to help a little & I am thankful that there are certainly things old people can do. It gives one a reason for going on still, but O how one prays for an end to all this. (Letter 110)

First through the death of her favorite nephew, Arthur Ritchie, and later through the bombing of her home in London, she felt the reality of war. In Letter 111 she wrote from the Porch, her home on the Isle of Wight, outlining the reasons for removing from London:

With my bronchitis it is such a problem keeping quiet enough & keeping the house warm eno' that it seems easier to spend the winter here where we can get wood to eke out the coal & where there is plenty to interest us & occupy us.

The society at Freshwater still centered around Farringford, now occupied by the new Lord Tennyson as by his father before him, who was a close friend of Anny’s as his father had been. Anny spent the last two years of her life there, writing to friends and relatives, and enjoying visits from her family, particularly from her grandchildren.

You may imagine how happy we are to have them here neatly packed in the little Porch. We are beautifully decorated with loops of mistleto & ivy berries. The Soldiers attracted by the magnificence of our porch garlands all came to sing glee's to us last night. I wish you could have heard James & the little girls singing Good King Wencelas & marching round the room as they sang. (Letter 114)

As Henry James noted, Anny was “an infatuated grandmother” (Letter 104). Her last available letter is a picture postcard, almost illegible, of one line, to her granddaughter Catherine: “I am sitting up & send my love / Grandmama” (Letter 115). Written shortly before her death, it illustrates Anny’s insistence on keeping in touch with her grandchildren, on participating in life, through the one medium which never failed her—writing. Anny died, following a brief illness, on 26 February 1919.

All her life Anny had no head for numbers, lost track of dates, and
often seemed to act in a vague and disorganized manner. Her writing sometimes bore these marks—not in their composition but in their manuscript form. Establishment mores bored her; there was no room in them for her fancy. In a book of memoirs George Smith wrote:

[Anny’s] “copy” for her books was a medley of pieces of paper of all shapes and sizes, written here and there and fastened together with a needle and thread: an expressive symbol of her somewhat vagrant genius. [She was] a woman of genius— with many of the characteristics—and some of the limitations, of a woman of genius.  

Eccentric and genius, both implied in Smith’s summary, are the characteristics most frequently used to describe Anny. In different ways they are both appropriate and both incomplete. Anny was unique as a personality and as a writer. No one who was muddleheaded could have written twenty-one books, countless introductions, and innumerable articles. The proper daughter of a Victorian household, she nevertheless found ways to be herself—an original. Thackeray gave her the courage to stand alone. When he said, “I am afraid she will grow up to be a man of genius,” he was able to foretell that she would move contrary to the mainstream of women of her time. Outwardly she conformed to Victorian mores; when they did not suit her, she forgot the numbers or dates, blamed it on faulty memory. As she got older, Anny sometimes neglected the distinctions of the present because she spent so much time in the past. In this way, she did as she liked without flouting society, and for it she was labeled eccentric and patronized and indulged by a male-oriented world. Being a lady bred, she was never abrasive, but softly achieved her purpose. Her vagueness and disorganization were not studied effects; they were unimportant details about which she chose not to concern herself. Just as there was a hard core of reality underneath her most frothy writing, so there was a pith and marrow of great strength within Anny herself.

Many of Anne Thackeray Ritchie’s critics have been unable properly to value her writing because they adored the woman, and because of this, they did not deal seriously with the artist. In addition, the myths that engulfed her—Thackeray’s daughter, vague and disordered, a Victorian dinosaur, a social butterfly—all contributed to obscuring her writing. Beguiled by the surface ease with which she wrote, and her casual and modest acceptance of her own work, they looked no further. They have qualified their praise by comparing her to Thackeray, or pointing out that her métier was not fiction but prose, or
not prose but letters. Critics have gushed over her as well—for all the wrong reasons. Her writing was wholesome; it was full of “Matthew Arnold’s hackneyed catchword. ‘Sweetness and light.’”

Critics commonly compared her, unfavorably, with Jane Austen. Leslie Stephen did this in his estimation of her writing which he placed in an entry under her husband’s name in the Dictionary of National Biography. In his Mausoleum Book he decries her eccentric method of composition:

[Anny] showed more perception and humour, more delicate and tender and beautiful emotion, than would have made the fortune of a dozen novelists, had she had her faculties more in hand. Had she, for example, as I often thought, had any share of Miss Austen’s gift for clearness, proportion and neatness, her books would have been much better and incomparably more successful. She wrote fragments as thoughts struck her and pinned them (with literal not metaphorical pins) at odd parts of her MS. I remember how old Trollope (who was free from that fault!) and G. Smith and I used to entreat for a little more orderly arrangement of her plots, the relationship of her characters and so forth. (14)

That Anny could not or would not learn to write like Jane Austen was a subject of grave concern to Leslie Stephen. Perhaps Anny was not capable of changing; more likely, she chose not to do so. Whatever the reason, Anny did not become a pallid copy of Jane Austen. As Virginia Woolf pointed out, Anny remained true to her own vision. Stephen seems not to recognize that the source of Anny’s eccentricity was also the source of her special strengths.

In 1897 Leslie Stephen wrote, “If anybody compared our letters they would say that it was like a dove talking to a gorilla.” Slippery to explicate, the metaphor of the dove was used again by Edmund Gosse. When “A Discourse on Modern Sibyls” was published in the Cornhill, Gosse wrote to congratulate Anny, “You are yourself the one authentic Sibyl left, with your delicate wavering style that is like shot silk George Eliot is satin, Mrs. Gaskell is velvet, but you are the dove’s neck.” From her own day onward, readers of Anne Thackeray Ritchie have been surprised at how good her writing really is.

In Virginia Woolf’s second novel, Night and Day (1919), the character of Mrs. Hilbery is based on Lady Ritchie. Discussing her novel, Woolf wrote to Vanessa Bell, “My only triumph [in Night and Day] is that the Ritchies are furious with me for Mrs. Hilbery.” And again, “I think the most interesting character is evidently [Mrs. Hilbery] who
is made exactly like Lady Ritchie down to every detail apparently. Everyone will know who it is of course.” In the novel Mrs. Hilbery is writing the biography of her famous poet father. As the mother of the heroine, Mrs. Hilbery brings the two lovers together. Mrs. Hilbery ascertains that her daughter Katherine and Ralph love each other, and acts as the *deus ex machina* to furnish the novel’s happy conclusion.

Traveling to the unfashionable side of London, Mrs. Hilbery brings back the hesitant Ralph in a trip with many diversions. As with Anny, her eccentricities lead to an unexpected truth.

Virginia Woolf’s portrayal of Anny as Mrs. Hilbery is of course an equivocal one. As Gordon Ray sums it up:

Though there is more than a touch of animus in Virginia Woolf’s picture of Lady Ritchie as Mrs. Hilbery struggling helplessly with her poet-father’s biography in Chapter 3 of *Night and Day*, the episode is not altogether without warrant. Virginia Woolf leads one to believe that Mrs. Hilbery will continue to bumble along, collecting material for, but never finishing her father’s biography. Anny completed two sets of biographical introductions for Thackeray’s *Works*. In many places Mrs. Hilbery is a caricature of Anny; but Woolf also appreciates her strong points:

Ideas came to her chiefly when she was in motion. She liked to perambulate the room with a duster in her hand, musing and romancing as she did so. Suddenly the right phrase or the penetrating point of view would suggest itself, and she would drop her duster and write ecstatically for a few breathless moments. And yet they were so brilliant these paragraphs, so nobly phrased, so lightning-like in their illumination, that the dead seemed to crowd the very room.

Woolf repeatedly endows Mrs. Hilbery with a certain magnificence, and then, through caricature and parody, undercuts her portrait. For example, after extolling her writing skills, Woolf adds, “many of these [paragraphs], it is true, were unfinished, and resembled triumphal arches standing upon one leg, but as Mrs. Hilbery observed, they could be patched up in ten minutes, if she gave her mind to it” (42). In a review of *Night and Day*, Ford Madox Ford described Virginia Woolf’s attitude toward the Hilberys and their class: “You find it difficult to know whether she approves of them or whether—as is probably the case—she isn’t mocking at them tenderly.” Ford is correct in finding Virginia Woolf’s feeling for Anny ambivalent. In a letter to Vanessa Bell, Woolf wrote:
And I've just done Aunt Anny, on a really liberal scale. Yes, since I wrote last she has died. I suppose my feeling for her is half moonshine; or rather half reflected from other feelings. Father cared for her; she goes down the last, almost, of that old 19th Century Hyde Park Gate world. For myself, though, she need have had no anxieties on this head, since I admired her sincerely.

If Aunt Anny had not been a Victorian, she would have fared better in the hands of the younger novelist. Woolf's own hostility for that Hyde Park Gate crowd found its target in Lady Ritchie as Mrs. Hilbery.

Yet Woolf could see beneath the tea-party manners to the strength and uniqueness of the "ancient voyager" and "magician" when she assessed her as a writer. In a review entitled "The Enchanted Organ," Virginia Woolf discusses a book of newly published letters of Anne Ritchie. She was, recognized Woolf, "always escaping from the Victorian gloom and dancing to the strains of her own enchanted organ." In this essay, written five years after Anne Ritchie's death, and therefore with more dispassion and distance than the one written directly after her death, Woolf paid general tribute to her aunt's abilities as a writer:

But if her random ways were charming, who, on the other hand, could be more practical, or see things when she liked more precisely as they were. . . . Her most typical and, indeed, inimitable sentences rope together a handful of swiftly gathered opposites. To embrace oddities and produce a charming, laughing harmony from incongruities was her genius in life and letters. She was a mistress of phrases which exalt and define and set people in the midst of a comedy. And the music to which she dances, frail and fantastic, but true and distinct, will sound on outside our formidable residences when all the brass bands of literature have (let us hope) blared themselves to perdition. (836)

Even in the Times Literary Supplement article to which Woolf refers in her letter to her sister, published shortly after Anny's death, Woolf pays tribute to Anny the writer on "a really liberal scale." Three times she uses the word "genius": "a writer of genius," "Lady Ritchie's genius," and "whimsical and capricious genius." The ending, sentimental and florid, is not characteristic of Woolf; Anny herself would have laughed at it. Yet within the body of the article Woolf says much that is valid and laudatory:

While none of her novels can be called a masterpiece, each one is indisputably the work of a writer of genius.
She was completely and transparently faithful to her vision. In other words she was a true artist.

With all her power of creating an atmosphere of tremulous shadows and opal tinted lights, with all her delight in the idyllic and the rapturous, the shapes of things are quite hard underneath and have, indeed, some surprisingly sharp edges.

In her task of recording the great and small figures of her own past, the whimsical and capricious genius has its scope unfettered and exquisitely inspired. . . she invented an art of her own. . . . But her skill in suggesting the mood, the spirit, the look of places and people defies any attempt to explain it. (123)

Although not actually related by blood, Anne Ritchie and Virginia Woolf remain linked, and their relationship has attracted the attention of a number of critics.32 Talented, individualistic, and honest, both writers shared a common heritage. Despite their great difference, both in temperament and in achievement, they admired and respected each other. One of the differences between them was that Anny never used Virginia Woolf, or anyone else, as the model for a caricature. And Woolf also owed more to Anny than she ever admitted or recognized. As Winifred Gérin sees it:

[T]hey had in common the poet’s vision, the capacity to see. It was Virginia’s recognition of this hidden power in her aunt that made her perhaps take stock so closely of her every variation of mood. And Anny was unwittingly setting her an example as the eminent writer she herself intended to be. (242)

In 1952 a Times Literary Supplement article stated that “no enthusiast has as yet thought to establish a cult of Anne Thackeray Ritchie” despite the fact that “to-day she is forgotten.”33 The critic pleaded for Anny to “speak for herself” in her own letters and reminiscences. Yet, this writer, sympathetic as he was to her, nevertheless added that “though she may have earned no permanent place in the history of English literature, yet [she] escapes oblivion by virtue of her unquenchable kindliness and charm” (92). Perhaps Anny’s misfortune was that she was too “eupéptic,” too good-natured, to be seriously considered by some critics, who could essentially dismiss her in this way with praise for her “kindliness and charm.” Unlike the Brontës, Anny’s life allowed no legend of possibilities cut off by personal tragedy; unlike George Eliot, Anny did not occupy an intellectual
throne that could add status to her position as a novelist; unlike Woolf herself, she did not see her art as the fragile exercise of genius. She wrote easily and naturally, every day until she died, and without the fuss attendant upon it by those who perceived writing as a God-given vocation. It was what her father had done—and it was what she did.

In contemporary criticism, most writing has explored Anny's relationship with her father.\textsuperscript{34} Even Winifred Gérin, Anny's first biographer, came to her in a convoluted and secondhand fashion. Gérin wanted to write about Thackeray, but, in her own words, "It would have been presumptuous to write about just Thackeray after Ray's book."\textsuperscript{35} She turned, instead, to Anny and traced the relationship between father and daughter. Appreciative of her writing, and sympathetic to her life, Gérin nevertheless depicts Anny essentially as Thackeray's daughter. Gérin writes of their relationship: "Anne Thackeray's love for her father was of the essence of her life. She was more his child by inheritance of mind and spirit than most children are to their parents" (268). Certainly Thackeray was the most important factor in her life; but more than that, Anny partook of the essence of his life. As Leonard Woolf wrote, "Aunt Anny was a rare instance of the child of a man of genius inheriting some of that genius."\textsuperscript{36}

In critical reviews and personal memoirs about Anne Thackeray Ritchie, the one word that keeps recurring is: genius. This cannot all be ascribed to excessive Victorian civility. In defining the parameters of the novel, Henry James refers to Anny as "a woman of genius." Against all things Victorian, Virginia Woolf nevertheless used the word genius for her aunt Anny.

Thackeray's daughter Anny, the writer Miss Thackeray, and Sir Richmond Ritchie's wife Lady Ritchie, all elicited hyperbole from friends, relatives, and critics alike. With a tremendous capacity to love and be loved, Anne Thackeray Ritchie kept her old friends and made new ones all her life. Prickly only enough to give her conversational zest, she was tolerant and broad-minded. Enthusiastic, ebullient, and optimistic despite all the tragedies in her life, she inherited, from Thackeray, the ability to know and insist on reality. Like him, she disliked humbug, and was not hesitant in ferreting it out. Her optimism stemmed from her genuine love of people and their possibility for good. Being her father's daughter, she perceived that reality carried with it evil, but never conceded the world to the cynics. Like Thackeray, she was a moral writer, but she also understood that human
nature was frail, that no one was all evil, and that fate could deal sud-
den or secret blows to the just or unjust. She embraced the world—
with its misfortunes—and looked for its happiness, indeed made it,
where she could. "I do thank God," she wrote, "that life is not only 
bad and hard, but strong and kind and enduring." 37
LETTERS 99—115

To Henry James

Letter 99  
Harvard  
(392)

Dear Henry Jaques I had a delightful account from Miss Askwith\(^2\) of the medieval apparition of the men of mark of today — marching right out of the temp Edwards & Henrys with dignified robes & impassive mien & being cheered by the young men of today — I cannot find it in the Times\(^3\) & I do hope I am giving you the proper title

and I find I do take an interest & a very warm one in my own interest in honouring of my friends — however old friend I am! — & Im y’es affect

I went to the Irish play last night — did I take an interest I wonder? —

To “Dear Madam”

Letter 100  
Princeton  
AM21903

Dear Madam

I am sure you will understand when I tell you that although I should like to do as you request, & send you, what I am sure you wd value — , I have so little left of my Father’s mss — & I still — after 40 years — get so many letters about it that I am obliged to my great regret to make a rule to refuse any but old friends and relations. It seems very churlish but I have no other way to preserve something for my children

Believe me
Faithfully y’es
Anne Ritchie
To W. J. Williams

Letter 101
Princeton

AM15626

109 S’ George’s Square, S. W.
{19 May 1906}

Dear Mr. Williams

My daughter has read marked & is delighted with the introductions. She has made one or two excellent suggestions — once I had repeated myself — another page she wants me to keep back out of the Newcomes for the final volumes for w’b we shall want material. Having quoted Miss Hennell it was rather long to again quote Mr. Elwin.

I am returning the mss of the Lectures on the Eng: Humourists & the IV Georges (withdrawing pp. 12 & 24 about Charity Humour w’h comes in later on) the Newcomes (withdrawing p 45, 46 — a portion of 47, & page 48 & Christmas books.

Yrs sincerely

Anne Ritchie

To W. J. Williams

Letter 102
Swannington House

Princeton
18 Sept [1910]

AM15626
Leicester

Dear Mr. Williams

Here are the two portraits I wrote of. I think they are both very good — better than some of those we selected. I should much like to come again with my daughter & look at our collection when we return on the 1st of 8th. Will the 4th or 5th suit you to see us?

I am writing to Cambridge & also to Mr. Lambert. I was busy & accidentally prevented from doing so yesterday — & I have not yet had time to go thro’ the proofs but I send you certain passages from the Introductions w’h my husband wrote down for the 26th Volume w’h I think might follow the preface in Italics & w’h I think express all that Mr. Reginald Smith wished said. It seemed to me better than anything I could write & they — as you suggested — follow admirably upon the preceding sentences. The rest of the Introduction will remain for V. 26.
One thing I do think we might with advantage borrow from the various Melville Editions — printing the yellow facsimiles to each novel in turn. It gives a certain character to the books to appear with their old dress & habit.

I have been reading & comparing, & I am glad to have another fortnight here to get on & to compare the lists & proofs you kindly send me with what material we have.

Can you remember what happened about the quotation from Elwin — I think we rec'd permission to quote from it at the time.

I will write no more now as I wish to catch this post.

With thanks

Yours very truly
A Ritchie

To W. J. Williams

Letter 103
Princeton
AM/5626

Do you like 'Centenary' in inverted commas.

The Centenary Biographical Edition. — seems to me to be much more dignified unquestioning & English. America uses inverted commas more than we do.

2). Would you place the picture as I have not got it here.

3) p 18. Kindly alter this page

AIR

From Henry James to ATR

Letter 104
Harvard

[30 Oct 1910]

Dearest old Friend.

I have to thank you for the most generous & repeated bounties, renewed signs of tenderness & fidelity of remembrance by which I have
been greatly touched & yet this poor acknowledgement is shamefully belated & weak. The reason is that for more than a year—all through my miserable illness of so many months — the days were almost heavier with rue than I could bear, & that of late, since my beloved Brother's death,² I have sat stricken & in great darkness. It has all together meant a great deal of blackness, for the worst of my illness was a hideously cruel & melancholic nervous crisis — following on a primary damnable disorder. Then came this tragic climax of my loss of my wonderful & admirable brother the most valued & cherished, & pre-eminent presence in my life. However, that is what it is — such ordeals are what it is — to have a life; as no one knows in this prodigious & unspeakable & unlikeable country (one may love it, from the old customary superstition, but like it never!) but the end of that will come, & when I return to dear old England (which I both love and like!) I shall be more in London (which I really adore) than the recent years have allowed & then I shall come & show you a hundred yards of the silver cord all shining & straight & strong. Meanwhile the company of this one handful of the only near relatives I have left in the world infinitely sustains & consoles me — for the reason that they happen to be each & all valuable & charming, which is an extraordinary piece of good fortune to their aged & doting & dazzled relative. It's the next thing to being, like you, an infatuated grandmother — which would have been, better than you, dear éprouvée³ & generous & exquisite friend. I have seen you far too little for far too long — & yet you have always let me feel that no thread of our particular old silver cord of friendship was the least bit loosed. I am spending 3 or 4 — 4 or 5, or even more — months with my sister in law & my singularly interesting & delightful nephews & niece.⁴ I feel, my real vocation. I yearn over you meanwhile & greet Richmond & your children ever so faithfully — & am yours, my dear Anne Ritchie, ever & so affectionately always

Henry James

Cambridge
Mass. U. S. A.
Oct: 30: 1910
To W. J. Williams

Dear Mf. Williams

I see my little drawing was later than 54. I had given my Father a certain dressing gown with my first earnings wh. he is wearing. The facsimile page is all right & out of the big 4 George Note book but it evidently concerns early times — Put it into 25 if you think it easy.

I see I made a slip of grammar in that last little note.
Will you kindly have it re-typed?

Yrs in haste
AIR

To Leonard Woolf

Dear Leonard. I wonder if you would do me a kindness — one gets little fads as one grows old — I find one of mine is to read myself to sleep over certain books wh. send me off peacefully. I despatched one of these to dear Ginia — C Leslies Life & letters thinking it might have the same peaceful soporific effect upon her — ! — Would you — if she does not want it — send it back to me & forgive my boring you — I find that I miss it & I cant get another copy easily.

But what I want still more is a good account of her & news of her. Are you coming to London at all — Is she pretty well — Is V's new book out — are you ever this way. I went to Gordon Square wh. seemed full of workingmen then I wrote to Nessa, but I have not heard from her & now I shall cast this upon the waters for I do want to hear something of you all

Yours auntfully
Anne Ritchie

I am here till Sat'dy next.
To Leonard Woolf

Letter 107
9, S! Leonard's Terrace,
Chelsea, S.W.
July 9 [c. 1912-16]

Dear Leonard

I am beginning to think I shd so much like a note from you about dear Ginia if you wd kindly write here or to Kilmonan Freshwater Bay IW, where I am going for a final week end to be with the children I wonder whether some day you & she wd like the little Porch for a few weeks Molly McCarthy is there. You have to take a maid for they are difficult to gather on the island That is the only impediment

With my love to V

Yours ever & looking forward to the new book
Anne Ritchie

To Henry James

Letter 108
[Oct. 23] [1912]
Harvard
(393)

Your true note sounds thro my heart.
Thank you dear old friend

Yr
AIR

Be well get well We are doing our poor best and thanking God for what has been & will not cease to have been.
To Maude Frank and Sister

Letter 109 9, S'Leonard's Terrace
Columbia Chelsea, S.W.
Aug 21 [1914]

Dear Maude Franks

Here is a little scrap of my Father's ms — I wonder if you will think it as interesting as I do — It is f" the Newcomes where the Colonel goes to ask Barnes for Ethel for Clive & you see a little drawing underneath ² I found it by chance & it is worth about £4 or £5

I am just leaving home please register & return it to me if for any reason you do not care to keep it. It has been printed from, for the printers name is there You & Miss Schodle ³ have been so kind to us, that before going I tried to do as you wished & looked for something you might like This framed I think w'd be a memento you might value — I would gladly keep it and indeed I should like to give it you but I have promised my children to keep from giving without consulting them. & they are both away & not well ⁴

It is a very sad solemn time for us. One can only thank God for the courage & goodness of the brave allies— & those the Germans driven to war by their officers their officers ache ones heart. May God grant peace.

I do hope you will both come in happier times & go on being our friends

In future I shall only think of you as my Fathers friend and appreciator & ours & with all love & good wishes to you both think of me dear Miss Franks ⁵

To Maude Frank and Sister

Letter 110 London 21 Jan [1915]
Columbia 9, S'Leonard's Terrace,
Chelsea, S.W.

Dear Miss Franks What a kind friend What kind friends you are. I dont think I can do better than send £4 to the enclosed fund for which we are working hard. I am getting a letter into the London Times. ¹ I have had to copy it out & I ² send you — gratefully indeed the original draft.
The rest of the money will be so very very useful for a wives club which is being started to keep the poor souls from brooding alone — or worse still in Public houses — The friendly (American Lady) groaned out to my daughter “The wooden chairs alone are over £5 — Now they will be less thanks to you.

The best anodyne to worry & anxiety is trying to help a little & I am thankful that there are certain things old people can do, remember reach to out of the past [?]. It gives one a reason for going on still, but O how one prays for an end to all this how one feels sympathy how one shrinks from cold & critical works & feelings such as one comes across not from ones Friends in America but from ones non-friends who dont know us & who — thank goodness we dont know or understand.

Yours gratefully
A I Ritchie

To Elizabeth Robins

Letter 111 Aug 7 [The Porch, Freshwater, c. 1916]

Fales

My dear Lisa Robins (tho' I know yours is now another name) I only know the old one & gratefully realise that you are giving dear dear Florence help & strength. And what a kind letter you write & what a mountain of work she has been climbing with her wondrous spirit & organising power. Beloved woman she must now organise her own life wh is so big & full of gifts for other people & with so many sick people wanting her health, that she must indeed take care of it. I am interested & amused to hear today of my little grand-nephew — a charming little Charles Villiers — doing his reading every day in her french book and getting on so admirably. Pinkie says he speaks quite charmingly. We have had our dear little creatures here & are expecting James & Linny before we go. We are told we can sell our house easily in 8br or Nov & so we want a week or two more in London for ourselves. With my bronchitis it is such a problem keeping quiet enough & keeping the the house warm eno' that it seems easier to spend the winter here where we can get wood to eke out the coal & where there is plenty to interest us & occupy us. Lord Tennysons marriage makes everything much less sad somehow
for all of us who care for him & one can speak out loud at Farringford again. All last year this Lady Tennyson who loved Audrey Tennyson had been running the hospital & then to everyones relief Ld Tennyson & she eloped. But we have had sad news of our own from the front & we are only cheering up again. Old friends & those who have shared our troubles in the past & helped us, cannot be replaced. Again thankyou for writing & do come someday if you are in town in September or 8r

Yours with affectionate greetings
AIR

Mrs Ernest Richmond & her children came to tea last night & to a bonfire in our orchard The little boy was up the trees in a minute like a bird & all the little Tennysons toddled up with sticks & dry leaves The eldest is 4

*To Lady Georgina Pollock*

Letter 112
Fales
Sesame Club, 29, Dover Street, Piccadilly W.
Monday. 1 Jan (1917)

I wish you a loving New Year dearest Lady Georgie & thank you for your dear warming words! — Who ever wrote so kind a letter — It picked me up & patted me on the back & shook me by the hand & said old friend old friend so sweetly & caressingly that I dont know how to thank you. I feel proud that you & Sir Phil shd have read what I loved to write: and how it interests me to think of such dear past neighbours as you & Sir Edward in our street. it will always seem quite different to me now that you have graced it. Hester & I have both come here to lunch & for a change after this grim Xmas of fire & flurry I hoped Claire wd have come with Peggy next Saturday (I had sent her a message) but I hear she is going to you. Oddly eno I had been telling Margie Peggs' mother what a real friend & playfellow I always felt you to be & yr dear letter came in just after. I shall tie it up for my sweet little granddaughters to see & I am going to them for January & if Billy has to be in town he will stay with Hester during much of the time. It is a good thing one is nearing the end at last, for life is too overpowering for this tired mortal
coil — I hope I shall be two or three young cheerful capable people in my next life & O how one has enjoyed things here & thanked God for them — tho not half eno'

"Le meilleur de tout et un ancien ami"²

That was not Ruskin but Victor Hugo I never saw

Dearest amie y' grateful with love to you all

AIR

**To Sir Algernon West**¹

Letter 113
Fales

The Porch,
Freshwater Bay,
Isle of Wight
Monday
20 Aug 1917.

Dear Sir Algernon

How I enjoyed y' charming book² — So many many names & people I remember they all come & go in turn before me & how graciously you evoke them all — & I hear them talk once more

This tiny scrap of my Father's is all I can send alas — only a bit of paper w'h he tried his pen There is a pencil on the back of a fading old lady & her knitting The picture I thought of, is ugly & not like him somehow — (a number of his best drawings went down in the American Steamer the Lusitania)³ Yes I have enjoyed the city & the men & the women & thankyou so much. I only saw L'd Randolph Churchill⁴ in that sort of attitude windmilling at M'l Gladstone with a box between them⁵ on w'h he banged as he scolded I was furious for I adored M'l G in those days — Now you have made me care for him again by your warm hearted & beautiful tribute & for L'd Randolph too!

Yesterday Lady Gore came to tea to meet the elite of FW⁶ at the Albion where Hester & I sometimes give modest entertainments. Sir
Francis had gone to the golph course. Another Sir Francis — Elliot f m Athens came with M r Elliot who interested me & M r s Boyle & I wish you had been there

Yours sincerely
Anne Ritchie

To Mrs. Charles Booth

Letter 114
U. of London
MS797/I/5845

THE PORCH, /FRESHWATER BAY, /
ISLE OF WIGHT.

Christmas Day [1918]

My dearest M r s Booth

Yesterday came your welcome beloved gift — O how much I like to have it from you & I am reading it with more interest than I can well express — every word means so much just as his life means so very very much. and you have told the story so simply so convincingly. I have finished the first half — my eyes dont hold out for more than a little. I am grateful for the good print & the fine style which makes reading easy (Another friend has written a book of which I have to read & re-read each sentence)

I like the pictures very much I feel what it must have cost you to write down all that you give as well as all that you keep. But the life will make his dear presence more & more real & vivid to his grandchildren as it does even to those who remember him & knew what he was.

You may imagine how happy we are to have them here neatly packed into the little Porch. Meg kept in bed yesterday she was so tired & she has the little spare room to rest in & the others are at M r s Downers with windows to the sea & the downs. They arrived wonderfully fresh we thought; we can just get 8 into the room in which we dine. We are beautifully decorated with loops of mistleto & ivy berries. The Soldiers attracted by the magnificence of our porch garlands all came to sing glee s to us last night. I wish you could have heard James & the little girls singing Good King Wencelas & marching round the room as they sang. Billy is taking them off to church this morning. It is a dear old church but such a long way off — a mile at least — It used to seem nothing at
all We are all going to tea with M's Alfred Tennyson and tomorrow we are going to Farringford

I send you my love & my loving thanks dear dear old friend and I am your faithful and affectionate

Anne Ritchie

Meg is a letter & tells me about all your varied & most interesting changes & hopes — Dear Dodo What a blessing one longs for, for her

To Catherine Ritchie

Letter 115
U. of London
MS 797/I/5846 [Postmark: 24 Fe./19]

Miss Catherine Ritchie/The Old Vicarage/Ware/Hert

The Porch

I am sitting up & send my love

Grandmama