

WARRINGTON

BY WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

1811-1863

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In this novel Thackeray essayed a task that would have invited failure in less competent hands. It deals with a time too far past to permit him to use the genius for depicting the manners, customs and life of the contemporaneous world which made his "Pendennis," "The Virginians" and "Vanity Fair" such monumental achievements in modern literature.

A man of lesser power probably would have succeeded only in making "The Virginians" a mere collection of historical novels, to which the story gains almost all of its interest from the history. William Makepeace Thackeray has made history gain by his story.

That is the difference between genius and others. There was only one subject in all the world regarding which Harry Esmond, of Virginia, did not agree with his adored twin brother George who, by fortune of having been born an hour or so before the other, was heir to the great estate of his grandfather, Henry Esmond.

That one subject was their young neighbor, Major George Warrington. "He always seemed greater to me," wrote Harry, "and I never longed after him (only he did not spell it so well). Poor Harry never managed the pen as well as he did the gun and the blade. 'I never thought of him other than as a hero.' If he fired a bullet as true as a hero's, he was a hero. If he flung a net the largest fish in the river was sure to be in it. To see him riding to hounds was as if to see him charging an army. His words were always few, but they were always wise; they were not idle as our words are, they were grave, sober and strong and ready on occasion to do their duty. In spite of his antipathy to him, my brother respected him; he was a general, and as I did admire the general, more than any other mortal man."

Whence sprang George Warrington's antipathy to that other George? Not from dissimilarity of temperaments for if he were a man of the like of his brother, he was not less brave or less thoughtful or less just than was Mr. Warrington; and Harry spoke truly of his brother's admiration for the gentleman.

Perhaps it was from an incident in their boyhood days, when Mr. Warrington, being called on for advice by the lady's mother in a matter of insubordination, had reluctantly but firmly counseled a thrashing by their tutor. He looked Harry fairly in the face and administered, owing to the fact that Harry and George nearly gave one to the tutor instead, George never forgot the part played by Mr. Warrington, a part which seemed to him a judicious reserve quite different from the eager, brave, headlong Harry, gave with all his heart.

As time went on, George looked with growing displeasure at the intemperate ways of his brother. He may have received at all times by the lady of the estate, his mother, Mrs. Warrington, who treated him with an evident and open respect that was only less than Harry's.

Not many persons in the colony of Virginia—not even the Governor and certainly not his lady—could boast of enjoying the deference of Mrs. Warrington, who held that her father's family of Esmond was only a little less than royal.

Indeed, she called herself Mme. Esmond, choosing to ignore the Warringtons of Norfolk, of which family her husband, Mr. Warrington, had been a younger son. Though she signed herself Esmond, as the one George was only a few years older than the other.

fort, and named it Duquesne, after the Canadian Governor. On the next year Major Washington again volunteered for wilderness service, and led a small body of provincials to repel the Frenchmen. In that expedition was fired the first shot in the French war of America. That was a savage forest of Pennsylvania, a young Virginian fired a shot and woke up a war which was to last for sixty years, which was to cover his own country and pass over into Europe, over France her American colonies, then to east England her American colonies, to rage over the Old World when extinguished in the New—and of all the myriad engaged in the contest to leave the prize of the greatest fame with him who struck the first blow!

Major George Washington returned defeated, but with the honors of war, and when General Braddock, ponderous, ignorant, brave, and full of wit and gentle in soft moods, arrived in the Potomac with regular troops, Colonel George Washington was selected as an aid de camp; a position which George Warrington succeeded in obtaining almost as much to the generous envy of Harry.

Before they departed to the wilderness George Warrington imagined that he had discovered the true reason why the young man had been selected for Mr. Washington's constant aid, and objecting very much to Mr. Washington as a stepfather, he set himself the task of forcing a quarrel on that gentleman.

Mr. Washington affected not to notice the young man's words for a long time, but at last, on a day just before the starting of the troops, George's anger reached a stage where he passed from polite affronts to open insult. "You found your impudence, you infernal young jackanapes!" suddenly declared Colonel Washington, with glaring eyes and every limb quivering with wrath. "For months past I have borne with such impudence as you find it hard to believe, and you are a young man who do not love your mother—yes, sir, and your good grandfather and your brother, I would put you across my knee and whip you, you snarling little puppy, that's what I would do!"

Then he stalked on to the Colonel's study and demanded reparation. The stout Colonel's heart smote him. An immense tenderness and kindness filled him at the thought that he should be called on to shed the blood of one of these lads whom he loved. "I am bewildered," he said, "My words, perhaps, were very hasty. What is the meaning of this?"

An evil spirit was awake and victorious in young George Warrington. His black eyes shot out hatred at the simple and guileless gentleman before him. He replied with fresh insults. "In heaven's name be it," said Mr. Washington, with a deep grief in his face. The two champions withdrew to write their letters before the meeting. One of those written by Mr. Washington was addressed simply "M. C." "Who he stalked into the field where they were to fight.

"George! George Washington!" cried a voice. It was Harry, rushing with both hands out, with love and affection thrilling in his honest voice. He had discovered that the Colonel was paying court, not to Mme. Esmond, but to Mrs. Custis; and George was coming to apologize humbly. "Thank God, thank God for this!" said George Washington, with a faltering voice. He took Harry fairly into his arms and held him close to his heart.

He did not embrace George, but held his hand out to him gravely, saying, "George, take a true friend's advice and try to be less ready to think evil of your friends." The next day General Braddock, with his riotous soldiery and scarcely less riotous officers, who were loath to be married to a gentleman who had excellent liquor of Virginia, departed splendidly on his campaign.

For a time letters were brought back by couriers. Then came ten days of silence. And then a vast and sad gloom spread over the province. The army had been cut up almost to a man. All the officers had been taken except the French and the savages. The general had fled from wounds and had been scalped. Harry armed himself and set forth on the northward track. He went from one end to the other of the continent, but he found no longer haunted by Indians, but by the undisturbed possession of the birds of prey. He found no trace of his beloved George.

of his brother's loss found him arriving and introducing himself to his family. Met only coldly at first and referred to, secretly as the Cherokee and the Troquois, his amiable relatives gradually changed their tune when they heard and began to believe the stories that rumor soon built around him. "The Princess Pocahontas," said Madam Esmond had long been called by his English friends, had given him immense sums; so the society of London translated the allowance of 350 pounds a year which his mother had made him. Harry, condescending to tell nobody his business, did not undecipher the gossip, nor did he descend to correction when they spoke of his princeliness in Virginia. He listened with silent contempt to the stories, knowing that his slave and body servant Gumbo had started them; and he did not presume on the standing that the rumors gave him, but acted like a simple, well-bred fellow.

Lord Castlewood, the grandson of the man for whom Colonel Esmond had renounced the estate, promptly decided to pluck him. Castlewood's brother, penniless, disreputable, cowardly, resolved the same. Lady Maria, Castlewood's elderly but well preserved sister, decided that a province in America was the refuge for which she had been waiting.

Of all he found in Castlewood, there was only one who loved him unselfishly. That was the old Baroness Bernstein, the daughter of Colonel Esmond's wife by her first husband and therefore Madam Esmond's half sister.

If Harry had ever read the records of his family, which he could never bring himself to do, he would have known that this be-jaunted, be-wigged and be-powdered old woman was no less than the famous beauty, Beatrix Esmond, in defense of whose honor Colonel Esmond had faced the Pretender sword in hand, ending by breaking that sword, destroying his patent of Marquis and renouncing allegiance to the forsworn family for whom his had shed his blood.

Beatrix, thus protected quite against her will, had followed the young Prince when he fled to Europe. Her name had never been mentioned again by the Virginia Esmonds. By what twaddling, intriguing, humbling stages Beatrix Esmond had been passed from royal court to court, finally being married to a gentleman who was made bishop for his complaisance and ending, on his death, by marrying a still less particular person, who was made a German baron, only the Baroness herself could say—and her lips were clever ones, that told only what she wished.

Old and her influence over kings gone, she returned to England to amuse herself by plucking Lord Castlewood and his family, lashing them with her scorns and open disdain, which they bore heroically for the sake of inheriting her wealth. She saw in Harry's face the spirit of Colonel Esmond. "That was the only man there ever was in this family," said she to the Castlewoods. "There never was one of the male Esmonds that had more brains than a goose, except him. He was not fit for this selfish, wicked old world of ours, and he was right to go and get out of it. Where would you have been but for him?"

The memory of Colonel Esmond was the one softened thing that stirred in the wicked old baroness's heart. Even when she had followed the Pretender, she had thought in her soul that her kinsman challenging the royal race in his wrath had looked more like a King than she humiliated young Prince. And now she saw in Harry Warrington some of that noble light of eyes and simple bravery of bearing.

So she warned him against Castlewood, suggesting pointedly that it had been long since he could get a gentleman to play with him, since he was suspected of being too successful most times and of never paying when, by an unusual chance, he lost. She was even more plain about Cousin Will, since there was nothing so bad about him that it was not said openly in every club in London, most of which he dared not enter.

For a while, too, he escaped Castlewood; and indeed, that bankrupt, bespattered, conscienceless crea-

ment of the nobility kept his hands off in the beginning, after a talk with gay world that came thronging to the Baroness. But Harry was not so fortunate with the female portion of the wretched Castlewoods. Else why should Harry one day fall to kissing a withering vegetable which he carried in his breast, and which had been a rose when it was plucked for him by the fair hands of the Lady Maria? And if his eyes, looking through love, could translate the amputated greens into the blooming glory they had been, why could they not translate the Lady Maria's somewhat yellow neck and her somewhat too blooming complexion into what they had been once, when the charmer was twenty instead of the twenty-eight that she owed to Harry (and the forty-two that she really was)?

So Harry wrote to her as his angle, and Lady Maria, whose tattered and scarred heart still had enough passion to feel true love for the handsome, flushed, eager lad, forgave the bad spelling for the sentiment. It was lucky for the peace of mind of the Princess Pocahontas that she did not know how well her hair was progressing in the arts of society, which she had paid it on him to learn. The Baroness Bernstein, vastly proud of him, introduced him to all the her rooms none the less eagerly for losing no opportunity to retail her past career.

Castlewood introduced him at court, which was almost the only place in London where he could still appear without too much danger of being cut dead. In London Harry fell in with the Earl of March and Ruglen, who laid Harry three bets the moment he met him, all of which the Virginian won. He was equally successful at cards. My Lord of March was then the wisest, bettor and gamester in England, willing to bet on anything from a ny to the death of his friends.

"The Fortunate Youth," they christened him. "The Troquois won 300 hundred pounds generally last night at White's from my nephew," wrote Sir Horace Walpole about that time in a letter to a friend. "They say he has led Lord March of thousands—Lord March by whom so much blood has been shed that he has quarreled with everybody."

"The Fortunate Youth," wrote Lord March in a letter to George Selwyn, the famous wit, whose jokes as we read them now seem so sadly like corked wine. "I had an estate in Virginia as big as Yorkshire. He had had the devil's luck here, and if you can settle our Esmond account please hand him 350 pounds, which I will owe him after pretty well emptying my pocketbook. I had Chesterfield had dropped six hundred to him. He has won my money in a very gentlemanlike manner."

He fought his battles like a hero, gamblers' battles though they were. He was not flustered by good luck or cast down by bad. "By George," said Mr. Selwyn in a rare fit of enthusiasm, "you deserve to win! Your treat your fortune as a gentleman should!"

Now, how did Harry get the capital to begin his gaming? In his stately letters to the Princess Pocahontas he did not enlarge on this part of his career, nor suggest to her that he was living in a fashion which even the simple Virginia lady would perceive as incompatible with an allowance of 250 pounds a year.

In London there lay two sums of 5,000 pounds each, one in Harry's name and the other in George's. These had been left to them directly. The latter Harry would not touch. He had not even caused its transfer to his name. It seemed like a natural act of love for the departed to let it go as it was.

But of his own he had taken 500 pounds. He did not mention to the Princess Pocahontas that he had thus begun to spend his capital. His luck at lansquenet and maccé availed it of thousands. But he brought fine clothes, fine horses and made good presents. He was free and kind with Fortunatus's purse in his pocket. The unlucky had but to ask and he stood ready to lend or give. In short, he was for a time a wild,

barum-scurum, dissipated fortunate youth. There was but one fly in his ointment. It was his engagement to Lady Maria. "Somehow that dream had faded very soon, and he could not shut his eyes though the poor lad tried honorably enough, to the fact that it was pain and not bloom, art and not charm, that had affected him so powerfully at first. He did not pine any more to hold her hand in some dim corner. He kissed no more dead roses. No longer did he all but swoon with bliss when she called him her Enrico and swore that she would never, never take from her heart the sash that held his precious letter in which he had asked her to be his.

Cousin Will had showed him the record of her age. Other tongues had whispered to him of her past career, and the lack of spicy detail was due only to an uncomfortable habit he had of clapping his hand to his sword and telling officious gentlemen that they would have to answer for anything they might say.

His honest mind never entertained any thought of breaking his word. He would not even permit himself to suspect that he had been trapped. Baroness Bernstein pleaded with him in vain. He declared that he would marry Maria despite the fact that she was as old as his mother. In his sturdy loyalty he even paid her debts when she got into trouble over the money she owed. It made another hole in his patrimony, but this did not prevent him from going to White's again and risking the Fortunate Youth. He had to take recourse again to his patrimony. It melted away in the next nights like the thousands that he had won in his brief, bright, jangling career.

Then my Lord Castlewood, long disgusted with himself at letting others win what he might win, suggested a little game of piquet. When it was done, Castlewood was the richer by a thousand pounds.

That evening the Fortunate Youth goes into White's and sits down with Lord March and others. He is no more fortunate than he has been in preceding nights. He calls for more counters and more. Then, a little pale and silent, but very easy and polite, he gets up and goes home. He has lost all his winnings and all his patrimony—five thousand pounds gone in three nights!

Oh, to think that a Virginian Prince's back should be slapped by a ragged ballista's follower! That Mme. Esmond's son should be in a sponging house! Yet to such a pass in the rake's progress had Harry come quickly enough.

It was, however, rage and annoyance that Harry felt more than worry. He had friends. So he sent to Lord Castlewood, telling him that a little matter of five hundred pounds had caused his detention. And would Lord Castlewood be good enough to make him a loan out of what he had won?

My Lord Castlewood regretted in a polite note that he had already spent his winnings and had not a penny. Well, there was Sir Miles Warrington, his dead father's brother. The baroness's family had been very eager for the Fortunate Youth. Only a few nights ago he had sent him a letter, saying that he had loved him like a son. Alas, the messenger brought back a letter from Aunt Warrington regretting that her husband was out of town. She enclosed a tract and begged Harry to read it.

With a bitter laugh he sent Gumbo to White's with a note to Lord March. Gumbo returned with a polite note of excuses in reply. "Did Lord March say anything?" asked Harry, looking very pale. "He said it was the coldest thing he ever knew," said Gumbo. "And another fellow said, 'Damn his impudence!'"

who shall despise him as of feeble courage? But there were friends in need, who had turned away from Harry in his story and his days of Fortunate Youth, and who now came to him, Sir George reproach and without a trumpet. While he sat staring into the fire, their names were announced and presently they were ushered in. One was a tall, kind-faced, good-humored looking soldier in a very plain and worn uniform. He was General Wolfe, a very striking companion in arms of Harry's father.

The other was very lean and very pale. His hair was red, his nose and cheek-bones were high. Altogether a very homely young man, but altogether a very striking companion in arms of young man was this—Lieutenant Colonel James Wolfe, of Kingsley's Regiment. They had warned Harry against his company, and then retired. Now, without any fine speeches, they approached to offer themselves as surety for him.

Harry turned his face away that they should not see his tears. At that moment a voice sounded below. Harry Warrington answered it with a wild cry. "Whose voice was that?" he called, his own trembling with a strange, incredible, heavenly hope.

The door opened and—"Come away, James," said General Lambert. "We are not wanted here any more." For the middle of the crowd of George Warrington. The lost was found again. The dead was alive. The prodigal was on his brother's breast. How George had been wounded; how he had been saved from the scalping knife by a French officer; how he had lain, ill and unconscious in a frontier camp, ever threatened by the Indians who demanded him from his French captors; how at last he had escaped, and a last time to pay those who aided him 1,000 pounds, all this he told Harry that night after he had paid his debts and freed him.

The two brothers were a nine-days' wonder in London. The society re-adjusted itself and the clubs and assemblies were full or polite sneers at Harry for pretending to be overjoyed at his elder's return to life and thus robbing him of the estates.

George became the inheritor of all the adulation that had been wasted on the Fortunate Youth, while he was hardly noticed. Even Aunt Bernstein developed an amazing gift for looking fixedly past him while she talked to George.

"It is Bayard," she said, when George told her that he would not come to life again to rob Harry, but would share his all with him and gladly. But that declaration was not made before the Castlewoods, and Lady Maria, not caring for the portion of a younger son, who had spent his patrimony to boot, had smothered her love for Harry and had very kindly told him that the dream was over.

George now set to work to straighten out his penniless brother's affairs, dipping deep into his own patrimony to do it. Harry, full of remorse, felt shame to live upon him, and if the need to do it humbled him, he was the tolerated guest in the houses of the great, where he had been the admired one so recently.

So one day Harry sailed westward as aide-de-camp of his friend, James Wolfe, now promoted to be a general in command of the expedition against Canada. General Wolfe was very pale and very ill when he sailed. He left behind him his affianced bride. But he never saw her again. He was never to see England again. One day in England men embraced when they met. The people shouted aloud in the streets. And though James Wolfe had fallen on the Plains of Abraham before Quebec and died in that wonderful consummation of his career, his end was so glorious that men dared hardly deplore that end. The whole nation rose up and felt itself the stronger for Wolfe's fall.

Many years passed, however, before Sir George finally went to Virginia. He found a different America than the one he had left. The colonists had begun to confiscate the tea imported from England rather than pay the tax. The Lees, the Randolphs, the Washingtons, the Harry Warringtons, much to the wrath of that uncompromising loyalist, his mother, had signed rebellious proclamations. In the face of her neighbors she insisted on flaunting her royalist opinions and at every opportunity she cried, "God save the King!" till the mob attacked her town house in Richmond and drove her to seek refuge in Castlewood, where she held forth as doughtily as ever.

George did not share his mother's unreasoning hatred of the colonial side. He saw the mischief that English politicians, and chief of all, the English King had done. But he thought the colonies were wrong for all that. He wanted to go back to Norfolk again, he felt that duty forced him to stay in his native land and uphold England's cause.

One day Harry Warrington rode north to join General Washington. Soon came Lexington, and the provinces, with a thrill of wrath and fury, heard of the blood drawn there. The Virginian farmers and country folk rushed toward the north; and George Warrington joined the English forces. By the middle of August following that famous Fourth of July when the colonies broke away forever, George Washington was with Mr. Washington had come over with all-Hows before New York. General Howe's army was on the march on a small island where every British officer knew the Americans were to be beaten, and whence there was no chance for escape. A hundred British frigates were in the harbor. George Washington fought. His heavy levies were utterly overthrown. His artillery was taken. The remnants of his army huddled into an entrenched camp after the rout.

"They cannot escape," said the British general. That night a whole army moved under the British eyes in one single night to the mainland without the loss of a single man. In the morning the whole British army, which had crossed the East river, and England's empire in America had slipped away. Sir George was badly wounded in the battle of Long Island. So it happened that his next fight was almost a year afterward, when he was with Harry Clinton conducted an expedition up the Hudson river to save Burgoyne. As usual, it was too late. But the force to which George was attached took Fort Clinton after a hot fight.

On the 22d of October he was sent to the American general up the river with a message. The American officer who met him was Harry. Then they learned that they had been engaged on opposite sides the night before. The two prayed humbly, thanking God that they had not met; and that night they slept side by side as when they were boys.

When Sir George Warrington parted from his brother Harry was with the determination to withdraw at once from the fratricidal strife. Harry stood on the shore till his figure grew dim before his misty eyes. "Amongst our cold Englishmen," thought George, "can I hope to meet with a friend like this? How brave you are and how modest; how eager to see others' merits, how diffident of your own!"

A few weeks afterward he returned to England with his wife, and a general outcry that bore them took the news of the great disaster at Saratoga. "Too late, always too late!" thought George. "Our supplies and reinforcements always too late. Our feet appear only as victors' steps, just after Cornwallis's surrenders! Burgoyne has a way of retreat open and resolves on it too late! Our chiefs squabble and abuse each other in their own defense. Save a very few, very few indeed, they are steady as the rock. They wonder to the most degree, but who will know his real victories?"

"His great and surprising triumphs are not over the enemy, but over Congress; over his own friends and his own allies in his own camp, whom his great spirit has to meet and master. Here is a general who beats us with no shot at times, and no powder and no money, and all our courage never counts. Through all the doubt and darkness, the danger and long temptation of the war, I think it is only the American leader's indomitable soul that has remained so victoriously steady. And after years Sir George Warrington and General Lambert and Parson Blake, who were a red coat at Monmouth, met to fight the battles again over their bottle at Warrington, in Norfolk. "Ah, if James Wolfe had been alive for twenty years more!" says Lambert.

"Ah, sir," cries Hal, "you should have heard the general talk about him." "What general?" asks George innocently, with a chuckle. "My general!" says Harry, standing up with a full glass. "His Excellency, General George Washington, who has done it all with his heart!" cries Sir George Warrington. Next Sunday's one-page classic will be "The Red Rover," by James Fenimore Cooper.



MR. GEORGE WASHINGTON AND LADY ESMOND