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CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE NEWCOMES

By WILLIAM M. THACKERAY
Condensation by Charles K. Bolton, Librarian of the Boston Athenaeum

William Makepeace Thackeray, son of a civil servant in India, was born July 18, 1811, in Calcutta. He died Dec. 24, 1863, in London, where most of his life was spent. From 1840 on his wife was insane, so there lived in his heart, as in that of the other great humorist of his time, Dickens, constant sorrow.

Thackeray began in school days rather to absorb life than to attain scholarship. He delighted even then to reproduce it in comic verse and caricature. At Cambridge, in Weimar, in Paris art schools and London law school, he went gayly on his way, indolent in study but eager in friendship, ardent in life. At 21, he owned and managed a London newspaper, at 25 he was penniless, after scattering a comfortable fortune. But he had bought experience invaluable to the young journalist, priceless to the novelist.

Thackeray's astonishing versatility was early realized. He aspired to illustrate Dickens' novels; he wrote travel sketches, stories, ballads and burlesques. "Barry Lyndon," his first notable novel, was the history of a rascal; but, in the most fascinating of feminine rascals, Becky Sharp, Thackeray first brilliantly showed himself master in the creation of living character ("Vanity Fair," 1848-49). "Pendennis" (1849-50) was, like Dickens' "David Copperfield," in essence autobiographical. The need of money drove Thackeray reluctantly to the lecture-field. His course on Eighteenth Century Humorists, popular in England and America (1851), prepared the ground for "Edmond" (1852), his unsurpassed historical novel. "The Newcomes" (1854), "The Virginians" (1859), and the unfinished "Dennis Duval," complete the list of his best novels.



On a cold November night, in the year 1775, the English mail coach, on its way from London to Dover, was carrying among its passengers a Mr. Jarvis Lorry, a London banker of the well-known firm of Tellson & Co. As the coach stumbled along in the darkness, there arose before him the vision of an emaciated figure with hair prematurely white. All night between him and the spectre the same words repeated themselves again and again.

"Buried how long?"
"Almost eighteen years."
"I hope you care to live?"
"I can't say."

About eighteen years before the story opens, Dr. Manette, a prominent young physician of Paris, had suddenly disappeared. Everything was done to discover some trace of him, but in vain. The loss of her husband caused his wife such anguish that she resolved to bring up her little daughter in ignorance of her father's fate; and when in two years she died, she left little Lucie under the guardianship of Tellson & Co., to whose care Dr. Manette for many years had entrusted his financial affairs.

Strange tidings concerning the Doctor had just come from Paris, and Mr. Lorry was on his way to meet his ward, and explain to her the facts of her early life. This was a duty from which the kind-hearted banker shrunk, and when he saw the slight golden-haired girl who came to meet him, his heart almost failed him; but his task was accomplished at last.

"And now," concluded Mr. Lorry, "your father has been found. He is alive, greatly changed, but alive. He has been taken to the house of a former servant in Paris, and we are going there. I to identify him, you to restore him to life and love."

The servant that sheltered Dr. Manette was a man by the name of Defarge who, with his wife, kept a wine-shop in the obscure district of St. Antoine. The banker and Lucie were taken to an attic where a haggard, white-haired man sat on a low bench, making shoes, a wreck of a man, oblivious of all around him.

Again was the Channel crossed, and again the old inquiry whispered in the ear of Jarvis Lorry:

"I hope you care to be recalled to life?"
"I can't say."

Five years later, in the court room of the Old Bailey in London, a young Frenchman was on trial for his life. Near him sat an untidy looking individual by the name of Sydney Carton. With his eyes fixed on the ceiling, he was unobservant, apparently, of all that passed around him; but it was he, who, first noticing the extraordinary resemblance between the prisoner and himself, rescued Charles Darnay from the web of deceit which had been spun around him.

Between these two young men, the striking resemblance was in outward appearance only. Charles Darnay was of noble birth; but his ancestors had for many years so cruelly oppressed the French peasantry that the name of Evremonde was hated and despised. Wholly unlike them in character, this last descendant of his race had given up his name and estate, and had come to England as a private gentleman, eager to begin life anew.

Sydney Carton was a young English lawyer, brilliant in intellect, but steadily deteriorating through his life of dissipation, able to advise others but unable to guide himself, "conscious of the blight on him and resigning himself to let it eat him away."

He and Darnay soon became frequent visitors at the small house in Soho square, the home of Dr. Manette and his daughter. Through Lucie's care and devotion, the Doctor had almost wholly recovered from the effects of his long imprisonment, and it was only in times of strong excitement that any trace of his past insanity could be detected. The sweet face of Lucie Manette soon won the hearts of both the young men, but it was Darnay to whom she gave her love.

And so that interview between Lucie and Sydney Carton has a pathos that wrings our hearts. He knew that even if his love could have been returned, it would have added only to his bitterness and sorrow, for he felt it would have been powerless to lift him from the slough of selfishness and sensu-

ality that had engulfed him. But he could not resist this last and confession of his love; and when she weeps at the sorrow of which she has been the innocent cause, he implores: "Do not weep, dear Miss Manette; the life I lead renders me unworthy of your pure love. My last supplication is this: Think now and then that there is a man who would give his life to keep a life you love beside you."

But dark days were to come. In the year 1789, the downtrodden French peasantry turned upon their oppressors. The streets of Paris were filled with crowds of people whose eager cry was for "blood." Madame Defarge no longer sat behind the counter of her small wine-shop, silently knitting into her work the names of her hated enemies, but axe in hand and knife at her belt, headed a frenzied mob of women on to the Bastille. The French Revolution had actually begun.

Madame Defarge was one of the leading spirits of the Revolution. Early in life she had seen her family fall victims to the tyranny and lust of the cruel nobility and from that time her life had been devoted to revenge.

Three years of crime and bloodshed passed, and in 1792, Mr. Jarvis Lorry and Charles Darnay landed in Paris, the former to protect the French branch of Tellson & Co., and the latter to befriend an old family servant who had besought his help. Not until they had set foot in Paris did they realize into what a caldron of fury they had plunged. Mr. Lorry, on account of his business relations, was allowed his freedom, but Darnay was hurried at once to the prison of La Force, there to await his trial. The reason given for the outrage was the new law for the arrest of all returning French emigrants, but the true cause was that he had been recognized as Charles Evremonde.

Those tidings soon reached London, and Dr. Manette, with his daughter Lucie, hastened to Paris, for he felt sure that his long confinement in the Bastille would win for him the sympathy of the French people, and thus enable him to save his son-in-law. Days and months passed, and although the Doctor succeeded in gaining a promise that Darnay's life should be spared, the latter was not allowed to leave his prison.

At last came the dreadful year of the Reign of Terror. The sympathy which at first had been given to Dr. Manette had become weakened through the influence of the bloodthirsty Madame Defarge. Also, there had been found in the ruins of the Bastille a paper which contained Dr. Manette's account of his own abduction and imprisonment, and pronouncing a solemn curse upon the House of Evremonde and their descendants, who were declared to be the authors of his eighteen years of misery. Charles Darnay's doom was sealed. "Back to the Conciergerie and death within twenty-four hours."

To Sydney Carton, who had followed his friends to Paris, came an inspiration. Had he not promised Lucie that he would die to save a life she loved? By bribery, he gains admittance to the prison; Darnay is removed unconscious from the cell, and Carton sits down to await his fate.

Along the Paris streets six tumblers are carrying the day's wine to in gullotine. In the third cart sits a young man with his hands bound. As he cries from the street arise against him they only move him to a quiet smile as he shakes more loosely his hair about his face.

Crash! A head is held up and the knitting-women who are ranged about the scaffold count "One."

The third cart comes up and the supposed Evremonde descends. His lips move, forming the words, "a life you love."

The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, then all flashes away.

"Twenty-three!"
"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

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MEREDITH HIGH IN DEMOCRATIC RANKS,



Secretary of Agriculture Meredith as he looked upon leaving Washington for the Democratic Convention at San Francisco. Mr. Meredith has taken an important place in Democratic ranks since his appointment to the cabinet.

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WEST'S OWN TO CALL DEMS TO ORDER



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