CHAPTER IV

CLASSIFICATION OF CHARACTERS

It is always difficult to classify characters under set heads, the more so if they happen to be life-like, since human nature is never ideal or the reverse, but a mixture. Victorian novelists, however, drew a definite line between white and black, and gave them descriptive terms such as virtuous or vicious. David Cecil rightly comments that the central convention of the Victorian novel is that "every character, however mixed, must be predominantly a force for good or bad." Theaferay's views of human
nature could not be confined to these clear-cut divisions. Thackeray 'did make an effort, but he never wholly succeeded. For though his view of human nature was essentially inconsistent with the typical Victorian one, yet he himself was a Victorian, educated in Victorian atmosphere; so that all the unconscious part of his outlook, his prejudices, his emotional responses, were Victorian through and through. Nor did he re-model his sentiment to fit what he felt to be the truth.' Thackeray himself was inconsistent and swung between what he knew and what he felt he had to write.

Now, like the Victorians themselves, we may classify his characters on moral criteria, not for its own sake but for convenience of study. But before attempting classification it may be useful to consider Thackeray's views on morality. Though a Victorian, his moral code was not that of a typical man of his time. For him, instinctive virtues were more commendable than assumed ones, and impulsive faults could be pardoned though not calculated ones. He was ready to forgive the failings of the flesh in the
eighteenth century manner, considering them an ineradicable part of human nature. For him, a cold heart is more to be deplored than a hot-blooded one. At the same time, he was himself intensely and even painfully conscious of morality. His futile friendship with Jane Brockfield was the outcome of such a psychology. He sacrificed his happiness on the altar of morality; hence, perhaps, he could not completely forgive his immoral characters.

While portraying rogues, Thackeray presented before the reader what he found in real life without any romanticizing. He condemned the practice of other novelists who eulogised their rogue-protagonists. That was why he disliked Bulwer Lytton's characters. He decided to fashion his first novel *Catherine* after an altogether different plan. 'The public will hear of nothing but rogues; and the only way in which poor authors, who must live, can act honestly by the public and themselves, is to paint such thieves; but real downright scoundrels, dissolute, low; as scoundrels will be........ No my dear madame, you and your daughters have no right to admire and sympathize with any such persons, fictitious or real; you ought to be
made cordially to detest, scorn, loathe, abhor, and abominate all people of this kind.

In the passage above, he has asked his readers not 'to admire and sympathise with' any of his rogues, but often Thackeray himself seems to go against it. He is not able to hold to this view throughout. He is at a loss over what to do with certain characters. If we collect all his statements about characters, this confusion in him becomes very obvious. His moral concern was uppermost but always at war with psychology. We find in him a constant conflict between morality and realism. Fortunately he yielded often to his natural instinct in his attitude to his characters, though he seems nervously to retract his sympathies.

We find a nervousness and an uneasiness throughout his works in portraying immoral characters. He could not help showing a sneaking sympathy for them, whenever he grew conscious of the drift of his mind, he seemed deliberately to spoil the characters. It is as if when he is engrossed in character portrayal, he deals fairly and sympathetically with the characters;
and, as soon as he grows conscious of his position as a social - novelist, he either seems to blacken his characters or indulges in direct criticism of them. He forces them to commit some odd or unnatural action, so that reader should confront only 'real, down-right scoundrels, leading scoundrally lives, drunken, profligate, dissolute, low -' and not 'poetical, rose - water thieves' as they may have become under sympathetic treatment.

Moral concern is there but he is never too unjust even in his conscious moments. While chastising characters, he has shown a sympathy and wonderful understanding of their weaknesses. He realised that vices spring out of weaknesses, and no man is free from them, while his moral consciousness was in the ascendant the psychologist in him is not far behind.

Now we will take up characters from each of his novels and try to ascertain where they stand on the moral scale. We will start our classification with bad characters. Catherine is the rogue - heroine of the piece named after her. She has all the faults which one can imagine. Her sole aim was to
attain the wealth and position which her birth has deprived her of. She wanted to hook a rich person in marriage, and enjoy the rest of her life in plenty. Due to her tricks and charms she had admirers even in the village but 'three shilling a week and a puddin was not to girl's taste.' she did catch a Count Gelgenstein but unluckily could not keep him long. When she came to know his real intentions she had the audacity to poison him. Somehow he escaped death. Out of desperation she married her old village admirer, Mr. Keys. She could not find the satisfaction with the life provided by him. Even after marriage she tried her charms again on the Count. On the Count's instigation she murdered her husband in order to marry him. This also proved futile and she was hanged for committing murder. She wanted things to go her way, and, if they did not, she tried to remove the obstacle with all her might. Throughout the story we do not find any commendable trait in Catherine's character and behaviour.

The male counterpart of Catherine is Count Gelgenstein. He flirted with Catherine and forced her to slope with him. The worst part of his character
comes out when he did not leave Catherine even after her marriage and induced her to kill her husband. He is shown to be haughty, imperious and treacherous; and completely without concern for the feelings of others. He had cynical views about women: "Look you, are like dogs, they like to be ill treated: they like it, Sir; I know they do, I never had anything to do with a woman in my life but I ill-treated her, and she liked me the better." Thackeray rightly comments on his character: "No stigma affixes on him for betraying a woman; no bitter pangs of mortified vanity; no insulting looks of superiority from his neighbour, and no sentence of contemptuous banishment is read against him; these all fall on the tempted, and not on the tempter, who is permitted to go free."

Thackeray, however, does not let him go free: he metes out justice to him. He has made the Count suffer at the hands of his tyrannical wife, all those humiliations, which he was in the habit of inflicting on others.

Another character, Mr. Brock, is again a rogue. He was an accomplice of the Count in all his adventures. This novel is full of scoundrels and cheats, and is practically a rogue's gallery.
The portrait of Barry Lyndon, from the novel named after him, is also that of a rogue. He is a self-centered type, and puts convenience above conscience. He was a first-rate cheat and duped all who came in his way. Being poor by birth, he had a great urge to acquire money and position. His only profession was cards, and he cheated at it. Barry was rather proud of the way he was earning money. Whatever he did, he always found a justification for it, however unconvincing or absurd.

He considered women the means to get things. He made love to every woman he met of whatever age or degree of beauty. The only real love of his life was with his cousin Bore, with the experience and age he derived the conclusion that "it is only your low persons who marry for mere affection." He was determined to consolidate his fortune through marriage.

He did that by marrying Lady Lyndon, but could not keep her for long. She rebelled, and left him a beggar. He was convicted and put into jail to pass the rest of his life there. The outstanding traits we find in him are determination and pride. But his
pride went to the wall if the occasion demanded it. While pursuing Lady Lyndon, he remarked: 'I wouldn't have left her—no, though they had kicked me downstairs everyday I presented myself at her door.' His meanness and roughness extended even to the ill-treatment of his wife. He justified even that on the plea that he had to be strict in order to keep control over a rebellious wife. He is a rogue incarnate, having all the vices.

Lady Lyndon, Barry's wife, was the richest woman of her time, and had earlier been married to Sir Charles Lyndon. Frivolous by temperament, she flirted around with men even after marriage. Sir Charles used to say: "My wife is so fond of me that she is even now of thinking of appointing a successor." Unlike Barry, she had no other purpose than mere flirtation, since she had all those things which Barry lacked, and wanted only to feed her vanity. She tolerated all the names Barry called her except when he described her as 'old.' That word hurt her vanity. 'The fact is the old Countess thought her charms were perennial.' She is not shown to be
treacherous like Barry, but we do not find any good quality in her to justify putting her in any other class than Barry's.

Another member of this group is the Chevalier de Balibary, the uncle of Barry. He was the elder brother of the two; but had been disinherited because of his views contrary to his family religion. He left Ireland, and wandered on the Continent making his livelihood by various legal or illegal means. On the Continent, he spent a very reckless life without any moral inhibitions. The main source of income was cards, and that also he did not play squarely. He owed money in all the places he had visited. This fondness for cards did not let him settle down at any place. For fear of being caught, he fled from one place to another. He could not adopt a respectable profession. He spoiled Barry also. It was he who taught Barry to cheat at cards. It was again he who instilled in his mind the idea of marrying for money.

Besides these major characters there is host of minor characters which also comes under this head. In this novel Thackeray seems to bent upon presenting
rogues and cheats. He is, perhaps, unable to find goodness in his protagonists as well as in other persons. Now we will take up Thackeray's most famous work, *Vanity Fair*.

Rebecca Sharp is the most famous, not only of Thackeray's characters but of the whole range of English fiction. She has been shown to be the most efficient among all of Thackeray's rogues. Being an extremely clever woman, she was always busy with schemes to acquire wealth and position. She realised that she lacked the advantages of parentage and money, and that she should herself achieve what she wanted. Like other characters of Thackeray, she wanted to climb the social ladder through a rich marriage. In the beginning, Joe was enough for her but after losing him, her ambition mounted higher. She married Fawdon and later repented it, then his father, Sir Pitt, proposed her. She had missed the chance of becoming a Lady. Even after marriage, she flirted with General Tuito, George Osborne and Lord Steyne in order to get money and an entry into fashionable society.
In the relationship with her husband, we have a feeling that in the first half of her career she recognised at least the existence of the husband. But as she grew more prominent in society, her love, if she had ever felt it, vanished; and contempt took its place. Newdon never gave her any occasion for such feelings on her part. As she grew intimate with other people, it was the husband who became superfluous or rather an obstacle. Her meanness is seen at its worst when she did not help him out of the prison when he was arrested; rather, she enjoyed the freedom in the absence of her husband. As she was unable to love, she was indifferent even to her only child. Like the husband, the child was also a hindrance in her way. The ‘consciousness that the child was in the house was a reproach and a pain to her. His very sight annoyed her.’13 This is the worst side of her character.

H. Wethered expresses the opinion: “Her worst crime was neglect of little Newdon. That may be hard to forgive; but the rest of the company, one feels, could take excellent care of themselves; or if they could not— that at any rate is the atmosphere of the book — they got only what they deserved.”14
Another of the incidents which blacken her is Thackery’s hint on Becky’s committing murder of Joe for his money.

This moral degredation can be ascribed to her wish to attain what her situation denied to her. She puts aside morality and decency in order to be introduced into the nobility, to have luxuries, name, fame and wealth. We have a feeling that, apart from the desire for wealth, she flirted with people just for the fun of it. It fed her vanity that, though she was, mean of birth and poor in means, people of name and fame cared for her so much. They ran after her, neglecting their wives and other rich ladies. She revenged herself thus for the insults done to her at the Academy or in the rich houses.

Rogue she certainly is, but we follow her career with keen interest. We do not appreciate her actions but in some corner of our heart we have some sympathy for her. H.E. Wethered says: "No grudges can be felt against Becky herself. We are grateful for her cleverness and courage ......

15 It does not mean that we approve of her behaviour. She gains "our human fellow feelings just as Heathcliff does, and she too
gains it not in spite but because of her rebellion. She evokes our admiration, which leads us to sympathise with her, or, at least sympathetically understand her point of view.

Sir Pitt is another rogue from Vanity Fair, but of an unpleasant and utterly depraved type. He is shown as a drunkard, a debauchee, a creature who wasted his paternal wealth on vices as well as on foolish speculations. He has none of the spirit and energy which could elicit admiration in Becky.

He was a baronet, but had not the dignity proper to even a common man. He enjoyed the company of housemaids and stable keepers. He had extremely low habits and was no credit to the nobility. He took undue interest in the governess of his daughters, Becky. As soon as his wife died, he proposed to Becky even while the corpse was lying unburied in another part of his house.

His dealings in money matters were also very odd: he was a miser and at the same time a reckless waster on all sorts of sensual enjoyments. He did not scruple to exploit people under him. He seemed to
think that, since he was a baronet, he had no obligation to pay off his debts. We find an unnatural jealousy in him of his son who was preferred by Belcoy. In short, Sir Pitt can be called a bohemian in culture, manners and character because intellectually he was dull; in learning he was most backward; and, in morals, he was debased.

After Vanity Fair we come to the novel Pendennis. It is very difficult to term any of its characters a rogue as Thackeray has remarked that in this novel he intended to present the 'natural in art'. Still we have characters which certainly are not good. If they are not rogues they are at least predominantly bad.

Blanche Amory is a character who is more on the wrong than on the right side. She is shown to have all the qualities, common to a woman of fashionable society. The most outstanding trait is her flirtatious manner. She had a weakness for the opposite sex. Pen and Foker can be called two of her victims. At first, she caught Pen but gave him up as soon as she came to know his means. Thackeray has also hinted at Blanche's
earlier escapades. Pen rightly said about her, 'She is not a girl for love and cottage.'

She had an imperious nature and dominated even her step-father and mother. She had no regard for her parents. In this she is possibly a counterpart of Rowdon Crawley. She recognised no duty and no obligations. She did not tell anybody about her father's existence because of the fear that it might hamper her progress in society.

Blanche cannot compare with Becky in energy; that is understandable since she does not need to rise in society as Becky does. Her efforts are directed solely towards satisfying her vanity. Blanche was selfish, mean, unscrupulous, and imperious but was not a positive rogue like Becky.

Another character who is a rogue through and through is Colonel Altemont Amory - the father of Blanche, and the first husband of Lady Claverling. He was a perfect crook, and had married for money and wasted it on all sorts of low pleasures. He was imprisoned on some charges and, after his release, he did not turn up at home. His wife took him to be dead.
and re-married Lord Clevering. On knowing this, Amory tried to blackmail Lord Clevering on the charge of bigamy. Thus he ruined the life of his wife and his daughter. This character is the type of unscrupulous adventurer and is not developed on as large a scale as that of Blanche. Thackeray has introduced him just in order to give an impression of the black side of society.

Another character who fits this category is Emily Costigan — known as Miss Fotherington — a stage actress. She was extremely dull and had no academic attainments at all though she knew very well the buttered side of her toast; 'a prudentless who always kept her fine eyes on the main chance.' She encouraged Sam because she took him to be the rich heir of Fairoaks; when she knew the truth she discarded him immediately. She was a woman sufficiently experienced in matters of the heart not to commit herself to anything in letters. She also took precautions so that her reputation may not be affected. Because of the cunning manipulation of the Major she left Chatteris; and Thackeray does not pay much attention to her after she moves out of the life of the
Beatrix is another woman fashioned after Becky and Blanche. Beautiful she was no doubt, and utilised her beauty fully to captivate men who came near her. Her aim was to get the richest husband possible. She attracted a bevy of admirers but was unsuccessful in the marriage market. She cared more for admiration than for love.

Her low character is very obvious in her relationship with Harry. She treated him like a slave, knowing well his love for her. She shamelessly deceived him by eloping with the Pretender. Besides flirtation, she was also jealous, imperious, haughty, cruel and positively rejoiced in family quarrels. She could not tolerate her brother as he was their mother's favourite. She ordered everyone about, even her parents. She was an extremely selfish woman and was not in a habit to pine for anyone for long, if someone goes out of her life.

When Harry refused her in the end, her vanity was mortified; and, out of desperation she left England for Paris, considering her family as an enemy,
and led a bohemian life on the Continent.

There are two more characters which can be put in this group - Lord Mohun and the Pretender. Both were of loose and immoral character and brought ruin and misery to the Castlewoods. They have been shown completely black, without a streak of goodness, and can be classified as complete villains.

Lady Kew is the typical female rogue from the nobility in *The Newcomes*. She had all the unattractive qualities common to her class. She dominated everyone, including even her daughter's family. She was the cause of the degradation of Ethel and Lord Kew, though Lord Kew freed himself early from her clutches. Her religion was money and rank. Here is a character, which is altogether unattractive.

Mrs. Mackenzie, the old campaigner, is another vile woman from *The Newcomes*. She hooked Clive for her daughter Rosey, and also tried her hand on the Colonel for herself but could not succeed. She comes out in her true colours after the failure of the Dundelcund Bank when the family was ruined. She treated
Colonel with unsparing cruelty. She grudged every penny which she spent in the house. She can be grouped among Thackeray's villainous characters, which arouse only contempt and disgust. In wickedness she stands alone in the wide canvas of this novel.

Barnes Newcome also belongs to this class. The difference is that in the end he became a pathetic figure when his wife left him. In youth he sowed his wild oats; and, later shamefully deserted the woman, whom he made his victim, leaving also two children with her to die of starvation. He was the one who created obstacles in the way of Ethel, and later pocketed the money which rightly belonged to Clive.

He was also devoid of any sense of decency, and had no respect for his elders. He is a typical bad man of the fashionable world, having almost all the vices common to his rank and class.

Charles Honeyman belongs to the group of degraded men of the Church. He was a parasite on Colonel Newcome, and extracted as much as he could. He did not hesitate to cheat even the poor butler Ridley and his wife. He was an accomplished hypocrite
and dissembler. He showed off his learning in classics and serious literature while he was 'well enough read' in profane literature..."¹⁹ He is, however, not detestable like Barnes. We enjoy the spirit with which he goes about. He is a rather pleasant type among Thackeray's rogues.

The character of Beatrice Esmond is elaborated in The Virginians in the person of Baroness Bernstein. As of old, she is shown haughty and imperious. She had inherited a large sum of money from her late husband, and enjoyed life to her heart's content. She was extremely fond of cards, drink and parties. Though an old woman, she used to spend whole nights at the card-table or at some dinner party. She also spoiled Harry by teaching him to play cards, which ultimately proved to be his ruin. She was so unfeeling that she avoided all poor relatives. As soon as she came to know that instead of Harry, George was the real heir, she began to ignore Harry. Her meanness was such that she did not help Harry even in the prison. George was not a man to be easily led; hence he was saved from her influence. The Baroness is the only prominent woman in
the novel, and plays a considerable part in it.

Now we come to Thackeray’s last finished novel *The Adventures of Philip*. Mrs. Baynes, the mother of Charlotte, is the only bad woman of the piece. Like other mothers, she tried to secure by hook and crook the richest possible husband for Charlotte. In spite of all her efforts, Charlotte married Philip. Even after marriage she did her best to torture the young couple by not giving what was due to them in the days of their poverty.

Mrs. Baynes is the typical mother-in-law of Thackeray’s conception. She can readily be grouped among others of the tribe like Mrs. Mackenzie.

Another such character is George Brandon Firmin. He is easily the worst of all Thackeray’s bad men. He did not hesitate to cheat even his own son. Being an utterly selfish person he ruined the life of Philip and caused him much suffering. He is the meanest of the fathers Thackeray has created.

After this discussion of the bad characters among Thackeray’s men and women, we may turn to the
other category — the highly moral characters. No doubt, 
Thackeray revels in portraying villains, cheats and 
rogues; but, offer a contrast or to heighten the effect, 
he does create moral or virtuous personages.

In his novelette Catherine — there is no 
character which can be put under this head. In his 
first full length novel, Barry Lyndon, we have only one 
character, Prince Victor, who can be termed virtuous. 
However, he is not directly connected with the main 
story, and remains in the background.

Amelia Sedley comes first in this group. 
She is the female character who is next in prominence to 
Becky Sharp in the novel, and stands as a foil to Becky. 
She was an extremely simple, polite and uncomplaining 
sort of girl who knew no rage, anger or cruelty. It 
was her excessive sentimentality which made her 
judgment somewhat weak. She could not recognise Becky's 
real character till very late. The most remarkable 
point about her is her devotion for George. Even after 
his death, she considered it a sin to think of any 
other men. The same sort of devoted affection, we find 
in her for her son. It was a living death for her to
part from her son. Her character can be summarized in
the following line: Love was Amelia's God, her
religion and at length her life.

In this category, after sentimental virtue
we meet another sort of virtue in the person of Dobbin.
He is the most simple, straight and soft-hearted
character. Unlike Amelia he has sense enough to judge
a person's true character. From the very beginning,
he knew Becky and always avoided her. He warned Amelia
against her, but Amelia's foolishness blinded her. His
lover for Amelia was also noble. While loving Amelia
all the time, it was he who brought about the marriage
between George and Amelia, knowing her love for George.
Even after George's death, he never forced Amelia to
accept him. It was she who, though very late, recognized
his worth and accepted him.

Thus, Dobbin is the most virtuous of all
males of Vanity Fair. What may appear defects in him
are the outcome of his simple and faithful heart, and
his consideration for others.
Laura Bell of **Pendennis** can be grouped among these moral characters. She is a very humble, simple and virtuous girl. She was grateful to Helen who gave her refuge and unbounded love. She wanted to help Pen in his financial straits so that she may repay some of the money spent on her by Helen. She was not sentimental and foolish like Amelia, and loved Pen in a different way. She did not want to get him for herself unless he loved and desired her truly. That was the reason why she refused him at first. She accepted him only when she was sure of his feelings. When Pen was going astray, we find a slight weakness in her for Warrington, but that was very short-lived, and she herself repented it. In short, she is an example of virtue and intelligence.

Helen Pendennis is one more of Thackeray's fond mothers with weaknesses which are rather a credit to her as a mother. The most prominent aspect of her life in the novel is her love for Pen. She loved him in right or wrong. She was not ready to impute any blame to him, and made others responsible for his weaknesses. She also loved Laure, the daughter of her cousin, as if she were her own daughter. Helen's world was
circumscribed, by these two children; and, throughout her life she did everything possible to make them happy. She was miserable when Pen grew angry with her over Fanny. It was her last wish to be reconciled with her son and die in his arms. This wish is fulfilled in the novel by Thackeray, as it were, because of his regard for her.

In the series of good characters, we may take up Henry Esmond next. Thackeray, for the first time, has presented here a perfect man like Sir Charles Grandison. He has been given all the good qualities Thackeray could imagine in a man. He has been shown as a very subdued, gentle and self-effacing sort of person. He sacrificed all for the sake of his patron's family, and went to settle down in Virginia. He loved his patron's daughter, Beatrix, but never pressed his suit very vigorously. She was aspiring very high; and, so, he withdrew himself painfully. He realised very late that his happiness lay in another quarter, and hence married Lady Rachel, Beatrix's mother. He got the happiness which he deserved, as he lived a contented life with his wife on the Virginian estate.
Lady Rachel is another of this group having a sweet, soft and understanding nature. She can be termed 'immoral' according to the Victorian norms because of the end of the novel. If we judge her according to our own twentieth century standards, we might find her guiltless. She loved her family most. She grew indifferent to her husband only when she came to understand his real character but never exchanged a rude word with him. She started loving Harry, but was unwilling to admit it even to herself. Thackeray has shown the alternating state of her mind between love and duty, and duty won. She accepted Harry only when her husband was dead, her son had married and the daughter had left for Europe breaking off all relations with home. Thus she can be put nowhere else but among the 'good' characters.

Colonel Newcome of *The Newcomes* also belongs to this category. He again is a completely virtuous man having weaknesses which are the result of excessive goodness. His affection for his son is also remarkable. Simplicity, honesty, generosity and straightforwardness are his assets. He was too unworldly to cope up with the selfish people surrounding him. He had an invincible spirit but was cowed down by
Mrs. Mackenzie as he held himself responsible for the family-ruin. The unhappiness of his son, Clive, was too much for his gentle soul. He wanted to make him happy but could not. Towards the end of his life he went to live at Gray Friars among poor brothers just to chastise himself as his Bank — failure ruined many. He died there and could not see Clive married to Ethel — his long cherished desire.

Clive Newcome inherited all good qualities from his father, but was not unworllyy like him. His only love was Ethel and, at first, he could not get her as her aspirations were very high. He married the other girl — his father's choice. He could not be happy with her as she was dull and unable to share his interests. Clive had to face the consequences of the Bank — failure but he never entertained a grudge against his father. He earned what he could through painting. When he received the money, his due, from Ethel, he was happy, not on his own account, but because he would be able to keep his father with him, away from the old tyrant, Mrs. Mackenzie. Ethel came to her senses very late and Clive married her after the death of the wife.
George Warrington is also a virtuous character from *The Virginians*. He was a very sober and quiet sort of a man who hated all sort of wild and rough pleasures. He was contented with his studies and the domestic atmosphere. His liking for the Lamberts is a clear indication of his taste. He married Theo, a simple home-loving girl leaving all rich and aristocratic society girls. He was extremely fond of his brother Harry, and helped him in all possible ways. George had a high sense of honour and propriety. Being the elder he went to fight in spite of Harry's skill in fighting. He also refused to take any help from Harry during the days of poverty. Gay London society tried to tempt him but he was impervious to its attractions. He is a firm and strong type of virtuous character.

Theo is modelled after Amelia but is not half so prominent. She is a quiet, mild and simple girl who loved her husband to distraction. She was also fond of her children, and was most unhappy in their absence. She is the one who brought reconciliation between her husband and his mother.
Thackeray describes Amelia as 'dull and insipid' but Theo is even more colourless; but virtuous she is like her predecessor.

Mrs. Brandon, the Little Sister, is one of the female characters in Philip which can be termed good. She was a very simple and faithful woman. Her love for Philip was exemplary. She backed him in right or wrong; and, for his sake she stole the forged Bill from Hunt. She confined her aim in life to the happiness of Philip and his family. She both loved and hated Dr. Firmin at the same time. Loved because she could not forget that once she married him and hated because he was the man who deserted her and brought all sorts of ruin to her. She was so strong in her likes and dislikes that she could not forgive Dr. Firmin even after his death. That "woman has every virtue: constancy, gentleness, generosity, cheerfulness and the courage of a lioness."

Philip Firmin has no weakness which can be called immoral. The worst of them all was his 'capacity to do nothing'. As long as his father supported him, he remained idle; but when the responsibility fell on him, he managed his household. He was never ashamed of
his poverty, and met all his friends with his head high. He also fulfilled his duty as a son. He helped his father even in the days of penury. He has all other good qualities with which Thackeray provides his virtuous heroes.

Charlotte is again modelled after Amelia and had the same sort of deep-rooted love for Philip. She is also a colourless character like Theo, Rosey and Amelia. But, unquestionably, she is virtuous.

After classification into two groups—normal and immoral, certain characters are left, which cannot be put into either of these categories. We have discussed characters who are predominantly good or bad; but, Thackeray has created a few characters who are not predominantly good or bad. They have both the qualities in almost equal proportions. Besides, some of these characters do not remain the same throughout. They have the capacity to change, and move from one category to the other.

Sir Charles of *Barry Lyndon* is the first character which can be included in this class. Like
Barry, in the beginning, he married Lady Lyndon for her money and soon realised his mistake. He duly warned Barry of Lady Lyndon's ways but to no avail. He became wise with advancing age, and grew indifferent to his wife's amours.

Mrs. Bell Barry, the mother of Barry, also belongs to this group. She has no vice except that she encouraged Barry in his vices. It was her excessive fondness for her son which led her to do many improper things; and, again it was the love for him which made her tend Barry in his imprisonment. This trait glorifies as well as lowers her.

Rawdon Crawley is the best example of this category of characters. In the beginning of his career he was all vice and, towards the end, he is purified through love. Before marriage he has been shown to be a wild youth of loose manners. After his marriage with Becky he was changed altogether. He was devoted to his wife and fond of his son. He forsook all his previous wild friends and hot joints, and was completely domesticated. This character develops with the progress of the story, and we think better of him later than when we meet him first.
As far as morality is concerned, Jos Sedley was totally indifferent to it. Thackeray does disapprove him but he had shown a temperamental shakiness in Jos which saved him from doing things truly bad. Besides, he never did anything which can be called highly moral. His own interests were the foremost consideration before him without his being immoral – this certainly is an unattractive quality.

George Osborne is also of this type. It is true that he was unfaithful to Amelia but we can not group him among Thackeray's 'bad' men. He was not inherently bad; all his faults were due to his being over - indulged at all stages of his life. He developed a superiority complex and thought that others existed to carry out his wishes. This made him selfish and vain. Often and again, he realised his mistakes and in the end he repents of his neglect of Amelia.

In Arthur Pendennis, Thackeray has tried to portray a real man with a mixture of virtues and vices. In his college days, he was wild and was extravagant beyond his means. He was without any principles in dealing with women. He was ensnared by many of them.
but was saved by some inherent though dormant goodness. Thackeray, being a Victorian, could not make his hero immoral. Though he was often tempted he came out successfully without losing his moral integrity or "honor". In short, Pen was inherently good and being youthful and energetic he succumbed to temptations and repented later of his follies. In the character, Thackeray seems to stress good intentions and basic goodness of heart, overlooking minor faults of conduct (cf. Tom Jones).

Major Pendennis of Pendennis is a typical member of fashionable London society. He was not a good man but his weaknesses are not that of the flesh. Those are concerned with social recognition and worldly attainments. His worldly philosophy of right and wrong was based simply on material gain and loss.

From Esmond, Lord Castlewood, Isabella and Frank Esmond come under this head. None of them was specially moral, but neither had done any great harm to anyone. Thus, these characters are mixture of virtue and vice, or, simple type of ordinary people.
As in Rawdon, we see two contrary phases in Ethel's life. In the beginning she has been shown to be haughty, imperious and worldly, but she learns a lesson from the elopement of her brother's wife, and changes altogether. Before Ethel we have Becky, Amelia, Blanche, Laura, Helen, Beatrix and Lady Castawood - in all of these, Thackeray seems somewhat certain about their virtues and vices. But in the case of Ethel he has not clearly drawn out virtues and vices, and we must think of her as a mixed character.

Lord Kew is a critic within the class. If in some of his behaviour he represents the weaknesses of his class, his attitudes (and commas) are clearly critical of the upper classes, especially their snobbery. He seems half in and half out of his class - as much a detached observer as a conventional member.

We may turn next to The Virginians. Madame Edmond Warrington is a character which is the combination of natural good and bad traits. She had not any remarkable virtue or vice. She had her faults. She comes out in her worst colours in her treatment of George, but she improves later on.
Another character is Harry Warrington, the younger of the twins. The foremost trait of his character is his extreme credulity. This proved to be his ruin as he was cheated by his own cousin at cards. He was pleasure-loving and frivolous, and indulged in enjoyments which cannot be called very innocent. His simplicity led him to many mischiefs. All his weaknesses and vices are the outcome of his ignorance of the way of the world. He was not virtuous like his elder brother, but also not bad like his English relatives.

In Philtre we do not have any notable example of this sort of characters. All the major characters are either good or bad.

This kind of classification of characters, broadly into virtuous, wicked and mixed may have its limitations, but it seems to be an approach relevant to our purpose. Thackeray himself seems to have been quite conscious of this kind of distinction, as may be seen in his treatment of the characters and this is reflected in such devices of characterisation such as the names, the physical description, or the language
used by the author in speaking about the character.
Other factors undoubtedly play a part such as whether a
class is a major one or a minor one, merely filling
in the background or contributing to the general
atmosphere. But the moral aspect has apparently had
considerable influence on Thackeray's own approach to
his characters. This must justify such an approach on
our part in a study of Thackeray's characterisation.
References and Notes.

1. Cecil, David; *Early Victorian Novelists*, p. 102, i

2. Ibid.

3. 'It is very forced and absurd taste to elevate a murderer for money into a hero. The sentiments are very eloquent clap-trap. There is no new character (except perhaps the Corporal in Eugene Aram) and no incident at all - Aram's confession is disgusting, it would have been better, more romantic at least, to have made him actuated by revenge, hatred, jealousy, or any passion except avarice, which is at more variance with the character given him in the Novel, than were have been a hotter and a nobler passion - The book in fact is humbug when my novel is written it will be something better I trust.' - Thackeray, quoted by

4. *Gatherings in Days of Adversity*.

5. (a) 'public will hear of nothing........' quoted above.
(b) 'Surely our novel-writers make a great mistake in divesting their rascals of all gentle human qualities; they have such—and the only sad point to think of is, in all private concerns of life, abstract feelings, and dealings with friends, and so on, how dreadfully like a rascal is to an honest man.' 
*Catherine*; p. 32.5

(c) 'It is a very forced .......' quoted above under the reference No. 3.

(d) 'the solemn prayer to Almighty God that.......we may never forget truth.' Thackeray in a letter to Mark Lemon.

(e) 'If there is not (truth), there is nothing'—Preface to *Pandemonia*

(f) 'Since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art.......(yet) if truth is not always pleasant, at any rate truth is best, from whatever chair.' Preface to *Pandemonia*.
6. Catherine
7. ibid.
8. Barry Lyndon
9. ibid.
10. ibid.
11. ibid.
12. ibid.
13. Vanity Fair
14. Wethered, H.N.; Art of Thackeray, p. 108.1
15. ibid.
17. Pendennis
18. ibid.
19. The Newcomes
20. 'The mother-in-law, always selfish, grasping, interfering, snobbish, domineering, ruining the peace of her daughter's household, is a stereotype in Thackeray, and obsession in his mind. How often he is ridden by this bogey is evident, not merely from the long list of actual representatives — Mrs. Sham, Mrs. Cam, Mrs. Gasleigh, Mrs. Budge, Mrs. Cuff, Lady Southdown, Lady Kicklebury (replaced...
Mrs. Baker for Lovel the widower), Lady Stonehenge, in addition to the two most famous ones, Mrs. MacKenzie (the Campaigner) in *The Newcomes*, and Mrs. Beynes in *Philippa*, but from his *obiter dicta* also. — J.Y.T. Greig, *Thackeray — A Reconsideration*, p. 69.

'The mother-in-law of Thackeray's fiction is a woman who marches in, bag and baggage, to the undefended citadel of her daughter's house, and, once established there, takes possession; who insidiously assumes control, especially when the daughter is about to have a child; who harasses the servants, summons her own physicians and apothecaries, quarrels with the tradesmen, and raises the expenses of the household to a level far beyond the struggling husband's means; who disapproves of all Medicals, and nags at the husband for his private opinions; who patronizes or insults the husband's friends, and discourages them from coming any more to the house; who (if Irish) keeps on boasting
of her own ancient family; who insists on the husband's calling her 'Mamma', however he may dislike doing so; and, worst of all, who begins to cultivate suspicions of him in his wife's rather simple mind. And, if there happens to be another grandmother, there is everlasting friction in the handling of the children,' — Greig, J.Y.; loc. cit., p. 72.3

21. Stevenson, L.; 'It may be conceded that here he (Thackeray) has come out at least as near to depicting a perfect gentleman as Richardson did in Grandison.' — The English Novel, p. 297.3

22. Stevenson, L.; 'In this courageous and unworldly soldier Thackeray came nearest to fulfilling his ambition of depicting an ideal gentleman as he had previously attempted in Dobbin and Esmond.' — The English Novel, p. 310.3

23. Philo.