

VERSION ANGLAISE

Miss Sharp Begins to Make Friends

And now, being received as a member of the amiable family whose portraits we have sketched in the foregoing pages, it became naturally Rebecca's duty to make herself, as she said, agreeable to her benefactors, and to gain their confidence to the utmost of her power. Who can but admire this quality of gratitude in an unprotected orphan; and, if there entered some degree of selfishness into her calculations, who can say but that her prudence was perfectly justifiable? "I am alone in the world," said the friendless girl. "I have nothing to look for but what my own labour can bring me; and while that little pink-faced chit Amelia, with not half my sense, has ten thousand pounds and an establishment secure, poor Rebecca (and my figure is far better than hers) has only herself and her own wits to trust to. Well, let us see if my wits cannot provide me with an honourable maintenance, and if some day or the other I cannot show Miss Amelia my real superiority over her. Not that I dislike poor Amelia: who can dislike such a harmless, good-natured creature?—only it will be a fine day when I can take my place above her in the world, as why, indeed, should I not?" Thus it was that our little romantic friend formed visions of the future for herself—nor must we be scandalised that, in all her castles in the air, a husband was the principal inhabitant. Of what else have young ladies to think, but husbands? Of what else do their dear mammas think? "I must be my own mamma," said Rebecca; not without a tingling consciousness of defeat, as she thought over her little misadventure with Jos Sedley.

So she wisely determined to render her position with the Queen's Crawley family comfortable and secure, and to this end resolved to make friends of every one around her who could at all interfere with her comfort.

As my Lady Crawley was not one of these personages, and a woman, moreover, so indolent and void of character as not to be of the least consequence in her own house, Rebecca soon found that it was not at all necessary to cultivate her good will—indeed, impossible to gain it. She used to talk to her pupils about their "poor mamma"; and, though she treated that lady with every demonstration of cool respect, it was to the rest of the family that she wisely directed the chief part of her attentions.

William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (1848)