

Vanity Fair

It is the year 1815. BECKY Sharp and her richer, more ladylike friend, Amelia Sedley, are leaving Miss Pinkerton's Academy for young ladies in Chiswick. Amelia, loved and popular, will be sadly missed. Becky, a troublesome young woman, will not. She was taken on as an 'articled pupil' to speak French with the students and to receive her board and lodging. In this scene, the girls are on their way to Amelia's family where Becky has been invited to stay, before taking up a new post. They are in the carriage, having left Chiswick behind them.

BECKY: Thank God I'm out of Chiswick! Why, what's the matter, Amelia? Do you think Miss Pinkerton will come out and order me back to the black hole? I hate the whole house. I hope I may never set eyes on it again. I wish it were in the bottom of the Thames. O how I should like to see Miss Pinkerton floating in the water yonder, turban and all, with her train streaming after her, and her nose like the beak of a wherry... Hush, indeed, Amelia! Why, hush? Will the footman tell tales? He may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her with all my soul, and I wish he would. For two years I have had only insults and outrage from her. I have been treated worse than any servant in the kitchen. I have never had a friend or a kind word, except from you. I have been made to tend to the little girls in the lower schoolroom and to talk French to the misses, until I got sick of my mother-tongue. But talking French to Miss Pinkerton was capital fun, wasn't it? She doesn't know a word of French, and was too proud to confess it! I believe it was that which made her part with me; and so thank heavens for French. *Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!* It is no matter to me, Amelia, whether you should not have such wicked revengeful thoughts! Revenge may be wicked, but it's natural... and I'm no angel. I am most certainly not! Oh – there are too many deep carriage ruts on this road. I think the driver is going too fast! *(Pausing)* Are you looking forward to

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the future? You are very lucky Amelia. It must be delightful to have a family. Parents – kind, rich, affectionate parents who give you everything you ask for; and their love, which is more precious than all! My papa could give me nothing, and I had but two frocks in all the world! *(Smiling)* And then, to have a brother, a dear brother! Oh, how you must love him! Why, you are laughing! What! Don't you love him? You, who say you love everybody? I know you were only a little child when he went away. Isn't he very rich now? They say all Indian nabobs are enormously rich. And is your sister-in-law a nice, pretty woman? *(Pausing)* Not married? Not married! Ah, I had rather imagined that he would be. I mean, a man in his position would be expected to have a wife, wouldn't he?

(Aside) Maybe I can look forward to the future too! If Mr Joseph Sedley is rich and unmarried, why should I not marry him? I have only a fortnight, to be sure, but there is no harm in trying!

by William Makepeace Thackeray, adapted by LAMDA