

IAN CHARLES FISHER.

LINGUISTIC INDICATIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS IN THE VICTORIAN
NOVEL.

This study sets out to examine the effects of social class on colloquial English from about 1830 to 1880. It is based largely on the evidence provided by dialogue in the novels of the period, but other sources such as books of etiquette and manuals of pronunciation are also considered.

Though some reference is made to uneducated English, the main concern is less with substandard speech than with the often subtle class variations which can be discerned in what would ordinarily be thought of as Standard English. The speech of the upper-class is considered at some length, and is contrasted with the language of less socially elevated speakers of the middle classes. Attention is given to the effects of the pursuit of refinement brought about by social aspiration, and in particular to the changing currency of certain words which this produced.

Later sections deal variously with the features associated with the speech of dissenters, the rôle of slang in upper-class speech, and the way social class is reflected in modes of address and reference.

LINGUISTIC INDICATIONS OF SOCIAL
CLASS IN THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

BY

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION.

This study, as its title suggests, is concerned with the way in which social class was reflected in language in the nineteenth century. The account of this which it presents is based largely on the evidence provided by the dialogue of novels of the period for, taken together, these provide what is probably the most extensive record available to us of Victorian colloquial English. My main area of interest is, however, rather more restricted than this suggests. It is not my intention to examine in detail the markedly substandard or dialectal speech of the uneducated, but rather the more subtle variations which can be detected in what would generally be thought of as standard English.

It might be said that I am concerned with the differences between the speech of the upper and middle classes and, indeed, this approaches the truth. However, these conventional social categories are not altogether appropriate here. A more useful distinction for our purposes is that drawn by Professor Alan Ross in an article in a Finnish periodical¹ where, to facilitate a discussion of twentieth-century class dialect, he coined the terms 'U' and 'non-U', for, while 'U' is an abbreviation of 'upper-class', many people, who would in the ordinary way be thought of as middle class, would in Ross's terms, unquestionably be 'U-speakers'. Indeed, in seeking to define the limits of our subject, it would be hard to better Ross's own words when he says, 'the line of demarcation relevant to this study is, often, a line between, on the one hand, gentlemen and, on the other,

1. 'Linguistic class-indicators in Present-day English', Neuphilologische Mitteilungen, 55, 1954, pp. 20-56. Afterwards referred to as Ross.

persons who, though not gentlemen, might at first sight appear, or would wish to appear, as such' (Ross, p.24). Though Ross was concerned with present-day English, this formulation is a particularly appropriate one to the Victorian period for, in talking of lines of demarcation between gentlemen and would-be gentlemen, we come very close to one of the central preoccupations of that age. A Victorian would not have used the word 'U-speech', but he might well have spoken of 'the language of gentlemen,' and he would have meant much the same thing.

One or two other aspects of this study call for a word of explanation. The title seems to promise an account of the 'Victorian novel', but it will be found that, in the main, I confine myself to the work of the better-known writers of the period, and that the period in question does not coincide exactly with the sixty-four years of the Queen's reign. In fact, I begin my survey a little before 1837 with Bulwer Lytton's Pelham (1828), and I look at only a few novels published after the death of Trollope in 1882. I have excluded the last two decades of the century in the belief that the fifty years from, say, 1830 to 1880 have sufficient homogeneity to make some general observations possible. Though such judgements are likely to prove contentious, I take some comfort from the fact that writers on the literary and social history of the nineteenth century tend to agree on this point. Richard Faber in his book on social class in Victorian fiction² concentrates on the same half-century, while Michael Sadleir in his account of Trollope³

2. Richard Faber, Proper Stations, London, 1971.

3. Michael Sadleir, Trollope : a commentary, London, 1927.

begins with the observation that 'When Anthony Trollope died, there passed not only the mid-Victorian novel but a social epoch also' (p.13). It is certainly true that the novels we think of as characteristically 'Victorian' belong to the middle decades of the century. What follows often seems to belong to a different world and exhibits a different tone and temper.

It would, however, be wrong to give the impression that the language did not undergo a number of changes in this period; it did and I have, wherever possible, suggested the direction which these changes followed. This is not always easy. Although one might with a fair degree of confidence differentiate the colloquial language of Regency and Victorian England, or even the language of 1840 and 1870, there was no time at which one could be said to have replaced the other. Even if we concentrate on a single linguistic feature, the difficulty of dating its disappearance is almost as great. The truth is that the features characteristic of the earlier age became progressively more infrequent as the century progressed, but survivals and innovations must have co-existed throughout; older speakers tending to conservatism, the young displaying a fondness for change. Indeed, the variety of speech which could be found even within the same social class at the same time is something which needs to be stressed, and something which I hope the following chapters represent faithfully. My aim has been to steer a course between, on the one hand, presenting the language of the period as an unclassifiable chaos of disparate features and, on the other, as a group of oversimplified and rigid class dialects. Probably the greater danger lies in the temptation of excessive precision in an area where there are few, if any, universally applicable rules.

Another question which needs to be considered concerns the nature and reliability of the evidence we shall be using. How far can it be assumed that the dialogue of novels presents an accurate representation of the way in which Victorians actually spoke ? G.L. Brook, at least, feels that it is an assumption we should not make too readily :

There are dangers in the use of speeches in novels and short stories as evidence of the kind of colloquial language that was in use at the time when they were written. A novelist is not a philologist, and we are not entitled to assume either his ability or his intention to record the speech of his contemporaries.⁴

The strength of this objection must be acknowledged. Fiction obeys its own laws and owes no allegiance to scholarship, and we all know that there are literary conventions in every age which, to say the least, it would be naive to mistake for reality. In this respect a novelist's intention to record the speech of his contemporaries faithfully cannot be taken for granted and, as Professor Brook reminds us, not only his intention but his ability to do so must be questioned. There are many elements in the spoken language - pronunciation and intonation are the most obvious examples - which can be only partially and imperfectly recorded in written dialogue.⁵ When we turn our attention to class dialects, we must remember that few novelists had an equally close knowledge of the manners of all levels of society; their trade did not grant them an entrée into the world of high fashion, for example. This is a point made in Pelham, where a dowager remarks on the strange fact that 'of all the novels on society with which we are annually inundated, there is scarcely one

4. G.L. Brook, The Language of Dickens, London, 1970, Ch. 3, p.99. Afterwards referred to as Brook.

5. Norman Page in his interesting book, Speech in the English Novel (1973), gives a lucid account of these limitations. See especially chs. 2 and 3.

which gives even a tolerable description of it! ' To this
Clarendon replies,

Not strange ... if your ladyship will condescend to
reflect. Most of the writers upon our little great world
have seen nothing of it: at most, they have been occasionally
admitted into the routs of the B.'s and C.'s of the second,
or rather the third set. A very few are, it is true,
gentlemen; but gentlemen who are not (sic) writers, are as
bad as writers who are not gentlemen. (Ch. 67).

We should also remember that many novelists, including some
of the greatest and most influential - Dickens is a good example -
disliked the aristocracy and, in consequence, tend to be
disparaging about the speech of its members. Favourable comment,
in contrast, is something of a rarity, and an account which is
based, as this one is, on the evidence of fiction can hardly help
but present fashionable speech as affected, effete and vacuous.
The danger of distortion here is only too evident and, while I
have tried to avoid its worst pitfalls, I can scarcely venture
to hope that I have been completely successful.

I believe, however, that despite these difficulties, rather
indeed if we remember them and exercise the caution they make
necessary, the evidence provided by fictional dialogue does remain
admissible. Good novelists - and this is particularly true of
those of the nineteenth century - have always been esteemed for
their capacity to observe the world shrewdly and to record their
impressions with fidelity. It may well be true that the novel
cannot present a wholly undistorted image of reality, but it can
hardly afford to distort to the point where the reader's suspension
of disbelief is forfeited.

There is another safeguard open to us. It is possible to

check findings against other, non-fictional sources : books of etiquette are especially helpful here, though these, too, are not without their dangers. Prescription and practice by no means always coincide. However, when the novels and such handbooks of manners agree - and often they do - we can proceed with a fair degree of confidence.

The primary aim of this study, then, is to afford some insight into the changing currency and usage of words in the nineteenth century, but I hope its interest may prove wider than this. Since a knowledge of these linguistic conventions is indispensable to an appreciation of many of the finer nuances of dialogue of that class-haunted age, the following chapters may help towards an enriched reading of what remains our golden age of fiction.

CHAPTER I.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE UPPER CLASS.

Who constituted the Victorian upper class ? One of the clearest answers to this question is provided by Trollope when, in The Way We Live Now (1874-1875), he gives an account of the increasingly modest matrimonial ambitions of Georgiana Longestaffe :

At nineteen and twenty and twenty-one she had thought that all the world was before her. With her commanding figure, regular long features, and bright complexion, she had regarded herself as one of the beauties of the day, and had considered herself entitled to demand wealth and a coronet. At twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-four any young peer, or peer's eldest son, with a house in town and in the country, might have sufficed. Twenty-five and six had been the years for baronets and squires; and even a leading fashionable lawyer or two had been marked by her as sufficient since that time. (Ch. 60).

We have here a useful map of upper-class society which ranged, as this shows, from peers, through baronets and the landed gentry, to the more successful professional men. Numerically it was small; very small indeed if we confine ourselves to the most fashionable denizens of metropolitan society. In the sequel to Tom Brown's Schooldays, Tom Brown at Oxford (1861), St. Cloud explains to Mary Porter that 'it is not at all necessary to have a memory to know everybody in society by sight; you meet every night almost; and altogether there are only two or three hundred faces to remember' (Ch. 38). In Can You Forgive Her ? (1864), Trollope puts the number of this most exclusive of clubs, 'the very big people indeed', at a thousand and talks of 'the Upper Ten Hundred', but there is little doubt that the upper class as a whole was more extensive than this and, when its less fashionable members are taken into account, the number

becomes 'the Upper Ten Thousand of this our English world' (Ch. 1),¹ an estimate which is rather confirmed by Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe (1861) where we hear of 'somewhere about 10,000 people', who, after a winter of shooting and hunting, return to London,' swarming into the West End of it, and making it what is called full' (Ch. 32).

Though today Victorian society strikes us as rigidly hierarchical, it would be a mistake to overestimate the importance of the formal structure of rank and precedence. In the case of contemporaries, to have done so would have been the mark of an outsider. Lady Dawton in Pelham is amused by 'the great distinction which novel-writers make between the titled and the untitled' which simply shows their ignorance of the fact that 'a commoner, of ancient family and large fortune, is very often of far more real rank and estimation, and even weight, in what they are pleased to term fashion, than many of the members of the Upper House' (Ch. 67). Clearly, the word fashion was itself becoming vulgarised by its association with those who did not possess the quality but were desirous of doing so. One such commoner, who possesses the necessary 'weight' in terms of 'land, and family title-deeds, and an old family place, and family portraits, and family embarrassments, and a family absence of any usual employment', is Mr. Longestaffe, the father of Georgiana, and he, we are told, 'was beginning even to look down upon peers, since so many men of much less consequence than himself had been made lords' (The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 13).

1. A popularly accepted number which seems to have given its name to a publication called The Upper Ten Thousand : An alphabetical list of all members of noble families. It was published under this title between 1875 and 1877, and then as Kelly's Handbook of the Upper Ten Thousand.

The really important division in Victorian society did not fall between peer and commoner, the titled and the untitled, nor exactly between an upper and a middle class defined in economic terms, but between the gentleman and the man who was not a gentleman - though this all important line could, in practice, be very difficult to draw. In this chapter we shall be mainly concerned with identifying the linguistic features which undoubtedly provided some of the most important clues as to which side of this divide a particular individual belonged. However, before we begin to consider this, it would be helpful to look more closely at the divide itself : what did the Victorians mean when they called someone a gentleman ?

The answer to this question turns out to be somewhat complex, but undoubtedly the most secure claim one could lay to being a gentleman was dynastic.² A gentleman in this sense came from an old established family; he was of 'good blood', to use a genetic metaphor which was popular in the Victorian period. Sometimes the parallel with a pedigree animal is drawn explicitly. The slang-loving undergraduate, James Crawley, his tongue loosened by his cousin Pitt's wine, is unguarded enough to express his views on the subject more openly than many would have cared to have done:

... there is nothing like old blood; no, dammy, nothing like it. I'm none of your Radicals. I know what it is to be a gentleman, dammy. See the chaps in a boat-race;

2. The word was originally used simply to designate a certain rank in society : 'one who is entitled to bear arms, though not ranking among the nobility' (O.E.D. gentleman 1). The word gentle ultimately derives from the Latin gentilis meaning 'of the same family or race'. The process by which it came to signify high birth may be clarified by comparing the English phrase, a man of family (i.e. good family).

look at the fellers in a fight; ay, look at a dawg killing rats - which is it wins ? the good-blooded ones. (Vanity Fair, Ch. 34).

Most gentlemen were more reticent than this but nonetheless prized their inheritance highly. It could be created only by time, a precious distillation of the years. For Mr. Thorne of Ullathorne in Barchester Towers (1857) it is 'the one great good gift'; it enables him to dismiss 'a wide spread race whose name had received the honours of three coronets' as 'dirt' because 'the streams which ran through their veins were not yet purified by time to that perfection, had not become so genuine an ichor, as to be worthy of being called blood in the genealogical sense' (Ch. 22). Much the same view is adopted by the Tory, Squire Hamley of Hamley, in Mrs. Gaskell's Wives and Daughters (1864-66), who is contemptuous of the Whig magnates, the Cumnors, whom he describes as 'muck of yesterday'. His own family, he claims, dates its possession of the Hamley estates back to the Heptarchy, and he is in a position to remark, 'I should be glad to know where the Cumnor folk were in the time of Queen Anne' (Ch. 6).

Just as the thoroughbred animal might be known by certain physical characteristics, so too it was sometimes thought that the man of good family might be recognised by visible signs, though the novelists scarcely seem to agree on what these might be. Meredith is somewhat sceptical as to whether the aristocratic physiognomy betokens mental superiority. Laxley, a young aristocrat in Evan Harrington (1860), is presented as a good example of the breed :

He had what is popularly known as the nose of our aristocracy : a nose that much culture of the external graces, and affectation

of suavity, are required to soften. Thereto were joined thin lips and arched brows. Birth it was possible he could boast: hardly brains. (Ch. 12).

Trollope is in some ways more kindly disposed towards the physical characteristics of gentlefolk. Interestingly, in view of our earlier remarks, he contrasts an old family of commoners, the Greshams, with the newer, but ennobled, de Courcys. We learn that the Greshams had 'from time immemorial ... been handsome'. They are 'broad browed, blue eyed, fair haired', and have 'that pleasant, aristocractic, dangerous curl of the upper lip which can equally express good humour or scorn.' The de Courcys, in contrast, make up in loftiness of demeanour what they lack in breeding. Although there was 'too much hauteur, too much pride, we may perhaps even fairly say, too much nobility in their gait and manners, and even in their faces, to allow of their being considered plain', yet 'they were not a race nurtured by Venus or Apollo.' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 1).

Not everyone, however, accepted that the gentleman was born rather than made. Then, as now, the more radical inclined to the belief that nurture as well as nature played a part in the development of personal qualities. Hence, along with birth, education was sometimes regarded as an important element in gentility. Nevertheless, it is taken as axiomatic by most undergraduates in Tom Brown at Oxford that, in the periodic battles between town and gown, the 'nob' will defeat the 'snob' in a fair fight by virtue of his native superiority. Jervis, Captain of the St. Ambrose eight, causes a flurry of consternation by his advanced views when he departs from this accepted wisdom :

'I'm not crying down gentlemen,' said the Captain, 'I only say that a gentleman's flesh and blood, and brains, are just the

same, and no better than another man's. He has all the chances on his side in the way of training, and pretty near all the prizes; so it would be hard if he didn't do most things better than poor men. But give them the chance of training, and they will tread on his heels soon enough.' (Ch. 12).

Certainly, a passage through the accepted educational channels (public school and, perhaps, university) was an important element in the making of a gentleman. 'Boys,' said Thackeray, 'who learn nothing else at our public schools, learn at least good manners' (The Newcomes, Ch. 21), while Margaret Hale, exiled in the materialistic wilderness of Milton-Northern, explains to a puzzled Bessy Higgins that, despite the Hale's poverty, there is nothing strange in their meeting the wealthy mill-owner, Thornton, as equals :

... we are educated people, and have lived amongst educated people. Is there anything so wonderful, in our being asked out to dinner by a man who owns himself inferior to my father by coming to him to be instructed ? (Ch. 19).

The power of education, however, was generally regarded as fairly limited, and certainly it is unable to redeem the native deficiencies of a Roger Scatcherd. His father, we are told, had determined to 'make a gentleman of him' and, accordingly, 'had sent him to Eton and to Cambridge' but, as Trollope comments, 'even this receipt, generally as it is recognised, will not make a gentleman' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 10).³ Scatcherd's father is an extremely rich, though unquestionably vulgar,

3. We may contrast Ross' advice for inculcating the habits of 'U-speech' in the young : '... send him first to a preparatory school, then to a good public school. This method is one that has been approved for more than a century and, at the moment, it is completely effective' (Ross, pp. 47-8).

railway tycoon, a man who has risen in the world entirely by his own enterprise. Despite his knighthood, it is clear that he stands, like his son, disqualified from any claim to gentility. The reason is in his case primarily economic; his wealth is derived from commerce rather than from the possession of land, and one of the advantages of belonging to an old family such as the Thornes or Hamleys was that many purifying centuries stood between the acquisition of their estates and any unacceptable occupation.

To call a man a gentleman, then, was to invoke a variety of considerations about him : dynastic, educational and economic. These are far from easy to disentangle, and it is especially difficult to say how far pre-eminence in any one respect might compensate for deficiencies in another. The word gentleman was, however, further complicated in meaning by its tendency to acquire a strongly moral force, though in this it resembles a number of other words originally used to denote social status,⁴ and it would be quite wrong to suggest that this broadening of meaning took place in the nineteenth century - indeed, the earliest example of this usage in the O.E.D. (gentleman 3) is taken from Chaucer. Nonetheless, the word is often used in a moral context in the novels. At times, it seems to imply little more than that the person so designated satisfies the world's minimum standard of honesty and integrity, even when this is not very exacting. Archdeacon Grantly can be called a gentleman because 'he spends his money liberally, and does

4. This is a process which C.S. Lewis has called the 'moralization of status words' : 'Those implying superior status can become terms of praise; those implying inferior status, terms of disapproval. Chivalrous, courteous, frank, generous, gentle, liberal and noble are examples of the first; ignoble, villain, and vulgar of the second' (Studies in Words, Cambridge, 1960, p.21).

the work he has to do with the best of his ability' and because his aspirations are of 'a healthy, if not of the highest, kind' (The Warden, Ch. 20). On other occasions the word implies the attainment of this minimum and a little more. Paul Montague in The Way We Live Now declares that Roger Carbury is 'a gentleman all round and every inch' and goes on to enumerate his qualities :

He never lies. He never takes what is not his own. I believe he does love his neighbour as himself. (1, Ch. 38).

But the characteristic moral use of the word, and no doubt one of its great advantages, was its capacity to make a direct and powerful appeal to the emotions while making few demands on the intellect. It achieves this by expressing many complex attitudes and prejudices without exposing them to too much scrutiny, as we can see when Sir James Chettam objects to what he regards as the unseemly electioneering of Mr. Brooke : 'I do wish people would behave like gentlemen,' a formula which he feels to be 'a simple and comprehensive programme for social well-being' (Middlemarch, Ch. 38). Here we see the word being opened up to what, to borrow another term from C.S. Lewis, might be called 'tactical' uses⁵ : that is, the use of a word in argument in the knowledge that its associations will provide a powerful support to whatever case the speaker wishes to present. Another example of this is to be found in Wives and Daughters when Molly Gibson challenges Mr. Preston to give up some indiscreet letters which Cynthia Kirkpatrick has sent to him and now wishes to have returned. Molly tells him he has no right to keep them,

5. Studies in Words, p. 19.

and the following conversation ensues :

'No legal, or no moral right ? which do you mean ?'
 'I do not know; simply you have no right at all, as a gentleman, to keep a girl's letters when she asks for them back again....(Ch. 44).

In cases like this the word seems to have an almost talismanic power. The sharp-witted Preston tries to escape Molly's challenge by quibbling over different kinds of rights, but it is clear that the invocation of gentleman in some way by-passes prevarication of this kind. Its force comes from an emotional appeal coupled with a certain vagueness. It is at once more powerful and less well defined than the 'moral right' by which Preston seeks to justify himself. Another occasion on which we may suspect that the word is being used tactically occurs in Trollope's The Last Chronicle of Barset (1867). Archdeacon Grantly and the indigent Mr. Crawley confront one another as their families are about to be joined through the marriage of their children. Crawley is troubled by his poverty and expresses the wish that 'we stood on more equal grounds'; Grantly deftly defuses the embarrassing situation :

'We stand,' he said, 'on the only perfect level on which such men can meet each other. We are both gentlemen,' (Ch. 83).

These extensions of the word into the moral and tactical realm had the effect of democratising it. Clearly there are men, not in the original sense gentlemen, who, nonetheless, fulfil the moral criteria, and there are many, unquestionably gentlemen by birth, who do not. Mary Thorne, when weighing her fitness to marry Frank Gresham, is keenly aware of this contradiction. She asks herself 'those curious questions; what makes a gentleman ?

what makes a gentlewoman ?' and realises that there are two quite distinct answers :

Absolute, intrinsic, acknowledged, individual merit must give it to its possessor, let him be whom, and what, and whence he might. So far the spirit of democracy was strong within her. Beyond this it could be had but by inheritance, received as it were secondhand, or twenty-second hand. And so far the spirit of aristocracy was strong within her. (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 6).

More succinctly, the word might, in the words of Twemlow of Our Mutual Friend (1864-5), be used 'in the sense in which the degree may be attained by any man' (IV, 'Chapter the Last'). Here, as elsewhere, Dickens makes it clear that in his view gentility was 'la carrière ouverte aux talents'.

Perhaps the most pervasive influence on the way in which the word gentleman was used in the nineteenth century was the force of social change. Everywhere in the novels there is a sense of the old social barriers and distinctions breaking down. Lady Cumnor laments over 'the folly of people dressing above their station' and is nostalgic for 'my grandmother's days, when every class had a sort of costume of its own - and servants did not ape tradespeople, nor tradespeople professional men, and so on' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 50). Miss Thorne, when organising the Ullathorne sports, is faced with 'a dreadful line to be drawn' : the question of which guests should be entertained on the lawn and which confined to the paddock. In most cases these groups define themselves but, Trollope asks, 'where will you put Mrs. Lookaloft, whose husband though a tenant on the estate hunts in a red coat, whose daughters go to a fashionable seminary in Barchester, who calls her farm house Rosebank, and who has a pianoforte in her drawing-room' (Barchester Towers, Ch. 35). The phenomenon

these quotations reflect is the rising tide of social aspiration in which the old landmarks were becoming submerged. An anecdote told by Lord Marney in Disraeli's novel, Sybil (1845), is no doubt an amusing exaggeration, but the point of such a story must lie in its basis in a recognisable state of affairs :

'I suppose you have heard of Lady Vanilla's trip from Birmingham ? Have you not, indeed ! She came up with Lady Laura, and two of the most gentlemanlike men sitting opposite her; never met, she says, two more intelligent men. She begged one of them at Wolverhampton to change seats with her, and he was most politely willing to comply with her wishes, only it was necessary that his companion should move at the same time, for they were chained together ! Two gentlemen, sent to town for picking a pocket at Shrewsbury races'.

'A countess and a felon ! So much for public conveyances,' said Lord Mowbray. (Bk. II, Ch. 11).

When a pickpocket can seem to a countess 'a most gentlemanlike man', a more serious pretender to the title may prove very difficult to detect, and it is clear that the word must have a very uncertain future in the serious classification of human character and conduct.

There is good reason to suppose that this tendency to use the word indiscriminately was resisted by upper-class speakers, at least in the early years of the century. We find Sir Walter Elliot in Jane Austen's Persuasion (1818) confused, or professing to be confused, when the word is applied without due regard for its class significance : 'You misled me by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property' (Ch. 3), while the anonymous author of Society Small Talk, a handbook of polite conversation, published in 1879, warns his readers :

The terms 'ladies' and 'gentlemen' become in themselves vulgarisms when misapplied; and simple as they are in

themselves, yet the improper application of the wrong term at the wrong time ... makes all the difference in the world to ears polite. (Ch. 7, pp. 113-5).

The same point is made in the course of a conversation in Hardy's novel, A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873), between the socially naive Elfride Swancourt and her stepmother during a drive in Hyde Park :

'I have noticed several ladies and gentlemen looking at me,' said Elfride artlessly, showing her pleasure in being observed.

'My dear, you mustn't say "gentlemen", nowadays,' her step-mother answered 'We have handed over "gentlemen" to the lower middle class, where the word is still to be heard at tradesmen's balls and provincial tea-parties, I believe. It is done with here.'

'What must I say then ?'

'"Ladies and men" always.' (Ch. 14).

This coincides exactly with the advice given in Society Small Talk :

Speaking of people en masse, it would belong to a very advanced school to refer to them in conversation as 'men and women,' while it would be almost vulgar to style them 'ladies and gentlemen,' the compromise between the two being to speak of them as 'ladies and men.' (Ch. 7, p.114).

There is little doubt that gentleman in some of its applications had become a vulgarity and, in view of Mrs. Swancourt's references to 'tradesmen's balls' and 'provincial tea-parties', it is probable that it had become particularly associated with the false and over-strenuous refinement of middle-class society. The same conversation suggests that the word's decline may have taken place in the not-too-distant past. 'Nowadays' certainly suggests within the memory of Mrs. Swancourt and, as the date of the novel is 1873, Ross' assertion in 1954 that 'Forty years ago ... U-speakers made use of lady and gentleman without self-consciousness' (Ross, p.21) must clearly be treated with a certain scepticism. The word's loss of status is further

confirmed in The Last Chronicle of Barset, where Grace Crawley is highly dissatisfied with the tone of a letter she has written to Henry Grantly, releasing him from their engagement. She has written, 'I know that a gentleman ought not to marry any girl to do himself and his family an injury by it' (Ch. 36), and later she tells her mother the letter was 'terribly stiff, and all about a gentleman.' When pressed to explain, she makes clear her reluctance to use the word : 'Gentleman is such a frightful word to have to use to a gentleman; but I did not know what else to say' (Ch. 41).

It should be emphasized⁵ that the prohibition applies mainly to one particular use of the word : that is, in contexts when it is a needless elaboration of the simpler man. It may well not apply to Grace Crawley's second use of the word, where a particular rank and the qualities associated with it are being alluded to. Nor does it seem to apply to some uses in address and reference in the case of individuals for, in another of Trollope's novels, Can You Forgive Her ?, Alice checks George Vavasor angrily when he talks of John Grey's house as 'that man's house', a phrase which he quickly agrees to amend : 'Let me say that gentleman's house; - for he is a gentleman' (1, Ch. 5). This lends further support to the idea that upper-class speakers tended to reserve the title for those who merited it.⁶ This condition is not met and the vulgarity of false refinement is, in contrast, very much present when, in Our Mutual Friend,

6. Servants, when speaking to their superiors, would, of course, be forced to use the word in reference even when the person in question evidently lacked any real gentility. In the same novel, a parlour maid informs Alice that a 'gentleman' is in the hall, and Trollope comments, 'We all know the tone in which servants announce a gentleman when they know that the gentleman is not a gentleman' (Can You Forgive Her ?, II, Ch. 60).

Mrs. Wilfer is asked by Mrs. Boffin if 'you have a lodger' and she replies, 'qualifying the low expression', by saying, 'A gentleman ... undoubtedly occupies our first-floor' (Bk. 1, Ch. 9), while a further insight into the word's decline can be gained from a remark of Mr. Dorrit to his daughter while in the Marshalsea. Here, the degree of misapplication is clearly extreme :

Amy, my dear, I have been trying half the day to remember the name of the gentleman from Camberwell who was introduced to me last Christmas week by that agreeable coal-merchant who was remanded for six months. (Little Dorrit, 1, Ch. 8).

In contrast, the word lady seems to have remained more freely interchangeable with its counterpart woman, though lady, too, could be overused. According to Society Small Talk, 'a man would far oftener term a woman "a woman" than he would term her "a lady"' and, equally, readers of the book were advised, 'Ladies, when speaking of each other, usually employ the term "woman" in preference to that of "lady"' (Ch. 7. pp.113-5). However, there were occasions when, for reasons of chivalry, the word lady was difficult to avoid, especially, as Ross points out, when prefixed by the adjective old (Ross, p.21), though an advanced thinker, like Richard Mutimer of Gissing's novel, Demos (1886), might, at least in theory, disapprove of such feudal vocabulary :

How often he had spoken scornfully of that word 'lady' ! Were not all of the sex women ? What need for that hateful distinction ? Richard tried another experiment with his imagination. 'I had dinner with some people called Waltham last Sunday. The old woman I didn't care much about; but there was a young woman - - ' Well, why not ? (Ch. 8).

The question is, of course, answered by the very terms in which it is put.

It is less easy to be sure about the fate of gentlewoman, though a note of false refinement does at times seem to attach to it. This can be discerned fairly clearly in the advertisement placed by Miss Briggs, the companion to Miss Crawley in Vanity Fair, when she is seeking a new position. She describes herself as a 'Gentlewoman of agreeable manners, and accustomed to the best society' (Ch. 40). The word is a particular favourite of hers for, on another occasion, when Miss Crawley expresses her surprise that her humble retainer should have received a visit from Lady Southdown, she replies with the pride that defensively apes humility that she hopes 'there could be no harm in a lady of rank taking notice of a poor gentlewoman' (Ch. 34).

Two alternative adjectives derive from gentleman : gentlemanly and gentlemanlike, and to use the former was to run the risk of suggesting that one lacked the quality so described; gentlemanlike, on the other hand, was favoured by upper-class speakers. In one of Meredith's short stories, 'The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', which is much concerned with class dialect, the Lady shows considerable signs of distress when the General commits this solecism. He refers to his house as 'a gentlemanly residence' which provokes in Lady Camper 'a contraction of the brows, as if in pain' (Ch. 2); later, after 'another mention of his idea of the nature of the residence', Lady Camper interrupts him :

For his own sake, she begged him to cease. She dreaded to hear of something 'gentlemanly', (Ch. 3).

The class significance of this word has persisted into the present century, for Agnes Grove, writing in 1907 in The Social

Fetich, a useful source of information on Edwardian class usage, remarks,

Those persons ... who have very little idea what the word means from which the expression is derived will be continually talking about what is 'gentlemanly', whereas, if the expression be used at all, 'gentlemanlike' is the word to use. (p.11).

This distinction tends to be preserved in dialogue, at least by the more fastidious novelists. In The Newcomes (1853-5), Ethel tells Laura how, on the termination of her engagement, Lord Farintosh 'forgot all respect and even gentlemanlike behaviour' (Ch. 59), while the more fortunate Alice Vavasor of Trollope's Can You Forgive Her ? is complimented by Lady Midlothian on gaining a husband who is 'one of the most gentlemanlike looking men I ever saw' (II, Ch. 79). Yet there are other novelists who fail to sustain this distinction. Thomas Hughes, for example, invariably has gentlemanly both in the dialogue of his upper-class characters and in his own narrative, while in East Lynne (1861), Mrs. Henry Wood seems to suggest that gentlemanlike is the usage of the very grand and self-consciously exalted. The inverted commas in the following quotation seem to indicate that it is a word in some way characteristic of the Earl of Mount Severn. His son at school at Eton recalls that his father is 'a great stickler for the boy's always being "gentlemanlike"' (III, Ch. 12).

Certainly a mark of vulgar speech which the educated would have avoided were the phrases quite the gentleman and quite the lady. This can be seen from two quotations which come respectively from Trollope's The Vicar of Bullhampton and Mrs. Oliphant's Salem

Chapel :

'Quite the gentleman,' was the Captain, according to the waiter, and one of the 'handsomest gents as ever he'd set his eyes upon.' (Ch. 29).

Phoebe ... who looked, in her pink wreath and white muslin dress, 'quite the lady,' at least in her mother's eyes. (Ch. 34).

Earlier in the century, however, a very similar phrase seems to have been quite unexceptionable, and is used by Frank Churchill in Jane Austen's Emma (1816) with no suggestion of vulgarity. He describes Jane Fairfax as having 'a most distinguishing complexion! - So peculiarly the lady in it !' (Ch. 54).

The formula seems to have become declass   at some time between the Regency and Victorian period, but in this it resembles a number of other words and phrases. Probably the best example of this is provided by genteel which had all but disappeared from educated speech by the early years of Victoria's reign. This situation may again be usefully compared with that found in the novels of Jane Austen where the word is evidently quite acceptable. For example, in Volume II Chapter 12 of Sense and Sensibility (1811), we are told that 'Lucy was certainly not elegant, and her sister not even genteel.' The O.E.D. is helpful in suggesting the chronology of the word's decline, and for giving an especially clear summary of the process involved, though it seems likely, in view of the evidence in some early novels - notably Pelham (1828) - that the decline had begun somewhat earlier than it suggests.

A few years before the middle of the 19th. c. the word was much ridiculed as being characteristic of those who are possessed with a dread of being taken for 'common people',

or who attach exaggerated importance to supposed marks of social superiority. In seriously laudatory use it may now be said to be a vulgarism; in educated language it has always a sarcastic or at least playful colouring.

By the early years of the present century something of the opprobrium in which the word was held can be gauged from the reaction of Agnes Grove to the suggestion by one of her critics that she had been guilty of using it :

I have never [she protests], either in the article or elsewhere, in my life spoken or written the word 'genteel' without inverted commas, as a word borrowed from the tea-cosyites ! (p. 21).

Tea-cosies (along with nightgown-cases) are for Lady Grove the epitome of what she calls 'middleclassdom'. Her reference to the use of the word genteel in inverted commas is also interesting, for this supports the O.E.D's evidence that an ironic use of the word persisted among the educated.

In the Victorian novel, the word is found in use almost exclusively by self-consciously refined middle-class characters, and it is almost universally associated with the most worldly manifestations of gentility. The sense we commonly have in Jane Austen that the word is related to a serious and considered set of social values is absent. Take, for example, Fanny Dorrit's account of her brother, Edward. Her concern is frankly with style to the exclusion of moral qualities :

Edward is frightfully expensive and dissipated. I don't mean that there is anything ungenteel in that itself - far from it - but I do mean that he doesn't do it well, and that he doesn't, if I may so express myself, get the money's-worth in the sort of dissipated reputation that attaches to him. (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 14).

A concern with outward trivia can also be seen in Wives and Daughters in Mrs. Gibson's judgement of a new servant she hopes to employ in place of the faithful family maid : 'Such a genteel girl ! - always brings in a letter on a salver !' (Ch. 15), while preoccupations of a similar kind can be detected in Middlemarch when Mrs. Plymdale seeks to impress Mrs. Vincy with the improvidence committed by Rosamond in rejecting her son, who has now acquired a desirable home for a girl of more realistic ambitions : 'Well, it is near the Church, and a genteel situation' (Ch. 64). But perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the word's decline is the part it plays in expressing the social aspirations of the lower classes. It is used by such characters as the landlady, Mrs. Blinder, in Bleak House, and by the industrial operatives of the city of Mowbray in Disraeli's Sybil. (Bk. II, Ch. 9). In these circumstances, it is not difficult to see why its use among the more fastidious quickly became impossible.

A number of other words underwent a similar loss of status, though generally they were not so comprehensively abandoned by the fashionable as was the case with genteel. Elegant, for example, seems to have been in danger of becoming vulgarised through indiscriminate use by the uneducated. Once again, Jane Austen's novels provide a useful contrast to much Victorian usage. We have already seen how the word is used in conjunction with genteel in Sense and Sensibility, while, in Emma, when the heroine judges Mrs. Elton to have 'ease, but not elegance' (Ch. 32), we feel that an attempt is being made to reach a precise definition of personal qualities. This is very different from the much looser application in the sales patter of the Middlemarch auctioneer, Borthrop Trumbull, in which he praises an 'elegant domino-box' (Middlemarch, Ch. 60). Inappropriate uses of this word seem

to have been particularly common in Ireland. Captain Costigan in Pendennis talks of an 'elegant mare' (Ch. 5), for example, and the anonymous author of The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected (1826), which, as its title suggests, is a book warning against various linguistic solecisms, drew the attention of his readers to this Hibernian trait :

In the Irish market every thing you bargain for is elegant, from the basket of eggs up to the corpses of a fresh slain hog; and we have no doubt that many of the people there would descant most warmly on an elegant dunghill or pigstye. (p. 17).

Examples from English characters almost as extravagant as this are sometimes to be found. Elegant, like genteel, has been taken up by the factory hands of Mowbray and, on one of his visits to the 'Temple', Dandy Mick offers some gastronomic advice in doubtful grammar to his companions :

Now, Caroline; here, Miss Harriet; don't take away your plate, wait for the mash; they mash their taters here very elegant. (Sybil, Bk. II, Ch. 10).

In the last of the O.E.D's quotations (elegant 6b), which is taken from George Eliot's Felix Holt (1866) : 'such a stock of ideas may be made to tell in elegant society' (Ch. 26), it is interesting to see an ironic quality beginning to appear. This, as we have seen, is a development which also took place in the case of genteel though, unlike that word, elegant has survived and remains possible in serious contexts today.

The same is true of superior, though this can hardly be used now to describe someone of personal refinement and good breeding. We should no longer be able to express Mrs. Weston's judgement on

Harriet Smith in the same terms : 'she is not the superior young woman which Emma's friend ought to be' (Emma, Ch. 5). Once again, the change in the currency of the word can be traced to the years between the Regency and Victorian period. In fact, its decline is registered in an interesting passage in Middlemarch in which Mrs. Vincy laments that her daughter has turned down offers of marriage from 'the most superior young men' in the town. Her son, Fred, who is a university man, objects to the phrase :

Oh, there are so many superior teas and sugars now.
Superior is getting to be shopkeepers' slang. (Ch. 11).

Certainly, in novels written after the middle of the century the word is found in such contexts only in the conversation of members of the aspiring middle class, and it almost always carries with it the implication of vulgarity. Fred Vincy's remark that the word is 'getting to be shopkeepers' slang' suggests that the association is a fairly recent one -though the question is somewhat complicated by the fact that the novel is set in the thirties, some forty years before its publication. The O.E.D., however, records the appearance of a tell-tale irony beginning to attach itself to the word from the sixties (superior a.7b). Such saving irony is not present, however, when Maria Hobson of The Newcomes (1853-55) introduces her children's governess to the Colonel :

'You have only arrived to-day, and you came to see me ? That was very kind. N'est-ce pas que c'était bong de Moseer le Colonel, Mademoiselle ? Madamaselle Lebrun le Colonel Newcome, mong frère.' (In a whisper, 'My children's governess and my friend, a most superior woman'. (Ch. 7).

As so often in Thackeray's dialogue, solecisms - here the suggested mispronunciation of French - are indicative of a

character's low status, and in this passage they serve to confirm the sense of false refinement in such a use of superior.

Interesting, too, is the fact that both Maria Hobson and Mrs. Vincy use the word with the superlative most. This, in a word which is already a comparative, strongly suggests that awareness of its real meaning has become blunted. The same objection might be made to the use of superior with the adverb very. This occurs in Bleak House (1852-53) when Miss Donny, Esther's school-mistress, describes Mr. Kenge, somewhat unexpectedly, as a 'very superior gentleman' (Ch. 3) while, to take a slightly different example from Dickens, there seems a characteristic deficiency of discernment on the part of Mr. Dorrit when he calls an equally unworthy object, Mrs. General, 'that - ha - superior woman' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 19).

It is very possible that all the words we have been considering, which began their downhill path at roughly the same time, were affected by the same social conditions. They seem to suggest that upper-class speech was itself affected by the linguistic behaviour of the class below, and that, when certain words, hitherto in general currency, were taken up by the socially aspiring and used by them with a marked lack of discrimination, they acquired unpleasant associations which caused the more fastidious, either to drop them altogether, as in the case of genteel, or at least to use them selectively within certain limits, as happened with gentleman, elegant and superior.⁷

7. Language of this kind with debased or uncertain status is discussed by Joan Platt in her article 'Colloquial Idiom in the 18th century' (Review of English Studies, 2, 1926, pp.70-81). She regards such language as a product of 'the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' when, she believes, it intruded into a much simpler speech system on which the effects of social class were less marked, and in which 'the most selective form of speech was that used by scholars' (pp.78-9). Hence, no doubt, Fred Vincy's assertion that 'correct English is the slang of prigs who write history and essays' (Middlemarch, Ch. 11).

A passage very much concerned with the vocabulary of déclassé refinement is to be found in Bulwer Lytton's Pelham. In it, the hero, during a visit to Cheltenham, attends what is clearly a rather second-rate ball and becomes engaged in conversation with one of his fellow guests. In the course of their discussions, a variety of idioms are used which the novelist clearly regards as marks of vulgarity, and which in many cases he italicises for emphasis. Pelham enquires about the quality of Cheltenham society :

'Oh, very genteel,' replied the man, 'but not so dashing as it used to be.' (Oh ! these two horrid words ! low enough to suit even the author of '-'.)

'Pray,' asked I, glancing at Messrs. Ritson and Smith, 'do you know who those gentlemen are ?'

'Extremely well !' replied my neighbour; 'the tall young man is Mr. Ritson; his mother has a house in Baker Street, and gives quite elegant parties. He's a most genteel young man; but such an insufferable coxcomb.'

'And the other ?' said I.

'Oh ! he's a Mr. Smith ! his father was an eminent brewer, and is lately dead, leaving each of his sons thirty thousand pounds; the young Smith is a knowing hand, and wants to spend his money with spirit. He has a great passion for "high life," and therefore attaches himself much to Mr. Ritson, who is quite that way inclined.' (Ch. 40).

We have already discussed genteel and elegant, but among the other vulgarisms suggested by this passage dashing, and high life in particular call for comment. All, perhaps, express an excessive enthusiasm for things which polite society would take for granted. It is possible to be unfashionably preoccupied with fashion as the narrator seems to realise on leaving the ball with its 'motley mixture of the fashionably low and the vulgarly genteel !' where Ritson slavishly follows his misguided conception of the requirements of polite society :

'No, Smith, 'pon honour !' answered Mr. Ritson; 'it is so overpoweringly hot: no fashionable man dances now; - it isn't the thing.' (Ch. 40).

George Eliot reminds us in chapter 14 of Daniel Deronda that 'the best society' is that where 'the advantages of the world are taken with that high-bred depreciation which follows from being accustomed to them', while General Ople of Meredith's short story is another character who lacks the required degree of aristocratic nonchalance. He recalls his 'dashing days' (Ch. 2), and contrives positively to gush about the beauty of the park which he describes as 'sweetly pretty' (Ch. 5). This phrase earns him a stern rebuke from the censorious Lady Camper who orders him, 'Never say that before me.' Phoebe Tozer in Salem Chapel also stands in need of such correction for, when talking of Lady Western, she exclaims, 'Oh, she is so sweetly pretty' (Ch. 15). In both cases the phrase seems to represent a species of ostentatious sentiment which, though supposed by some to be refined, was quite untypical of the best speakers. One is reminded a little of the attitude which leads Mrs. Lookaloft to rechristen her house, formerly called 'Barleystubb Farm,' 'Rosebank' (Barchester Towers, Ch. 39), while in the present century Ross has noted ~~that~~ the non-U preference for the pretentious sentiment of home over the plainer house (Ross, p.44). No doubt, similar considerations underlie General Ople's reference to his 'residence' ('The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', Ch. 2).

The idea that the speech of the upper class is in some way grander than that of less exalted mortals is one of the most widespread misconceptions prevalent among those who are intent on the pursuit of refinement. A particularly clear example of a character who habitually makes this mistake is presented by Louisa, 'The Countess' of Meredith's Evan Harrington, who devotes much of her energy to suppressing the fact that her father has kept a tailor's shop. When her sister becomes the object of the Duke of

Belfield's amorous (and adulterous) attentions, Louisa remains convinced that, because of the Duke's high rank, his courtship will be conducted in unusually elegant language. Of this idea, however, she must be disabused. Her sister reports on the nature of the Duke's gallantries :

'He said, if he might clear them [her sad looks] he should be happy.'

'In exquisite language, Carry, of course.'

'No; just as others talk.'

For a moment Louisa is disappointed, her dreams of aristocratic refinement shattered, but she quickly persuades herself that such plain speaking cannot but be the result of a deliberate stratagem on the part of the Duke. On reflection, she puts it down to a wish 'to seem business-like - the commerciality of the English mind' (Ch. 21).

She is wrong. If anything, upper-class speakers were notable for their plain language. In Pelham, the advice which Clarendon offers to those who would faithfully represent the tone of polite society is this :

... let him consider that 'dukes, and lords, and noble princes,' eat, drink, talk, move, exactly the same as any other class of civilized people - nay, the very subjects in conversation are, for the most part, the same in all sets - only, perhaps, they are somewhat more familiarly and easily treated with us than among the lower orders, who fancy rank is distinguished by pomposity(Ch. 67).

Neither was plain speech and commercialism a necessary equation, for some business men, like Borthrop Trumbull of Middlemarch, favour inflated language. Such idioms are also found lower in the social hierarchy wherever the necessary conditions for aspiration occur. They are particularly common among upper domestic

servants, for example, who seem to have been especially conscious of their status. This is well exemplified by the speech of Parkes, the nurse at Cumnor Towers, who is put in charge of the young Molly Gibson during her stay at the house, and who tells her, 'I ... will let you know when it is time for me to arrange your hair, preparatory to luncheon.' Interestingly, her stiffy formal language is contrasted with that of her former aristocratic charge, Lady Harriet, who does not share this self-conscious refinement :

For if Lady Harriet used familiar colloquialisms from time to time, she certainly had not learnt it from Parkes, who piqued herself on the correctness of her language. (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 57).

In this Lady Harriet resembles some other upper-class young women, like Trollope's Miss Dunstable and Glencora Palliser, who offends her exacting husband with such colloquialisms as 'the long and the short of it' (Can You Forgive Her ? Ch. 49). They have the assurance necessary to risk the use of slang. It was no part of aristocratic language to speak after the fashion of a self-conscious grammarian. Indeed, the speech of the upper class is often characterised by a relaxed informality. A particularly good example of this is to be found in the account of Esther's stay with Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt (1866), George Eliot proving, as she so often does, one of the most intelligent and perceptive observers of what we should now call class dialect. Esther has come from a home where the earnest and unpolished Hebraisms of nonconformist speech abound; with Mrs. Transome she is lulled by a seductive and easy grace :

... it was entertaining at present to be seated on soft cushions with her netting before her, while Mrs. Transome went on with her embroidery, and told in that easy phrase, and with that refined high-bred tone and accent which she possessed in perfection, family stories that to Esther were

like so many novelettes....

George Eliot then gives a summary of these 'family stories,' and we become aware of a subtle effect : a sense of a seamless but by no means formless dialogue, a relaxed urbanity of tone :

... what diamonds were in the Earl's family, own cousins to Mrs. Transome; how poor Lady Sara's husband went off in a jealous madness only a month after their marriage, and dragged that sweet blue-eyed thing by the hair; and how the brilliant Fanny, having married a country parson, became so niggardly that she had gone about almost begging for fresh eggs from the farmers' wives, though she had done very well with her six sons, as there was a bishop and no end of interest in the family, and two of them got appointments in India. (Ch. 40).

How can one characterise the flavour of this paragraph which is clearly offered as a representative sample of upper-class speech ?

In some ways it is easier to say what it is not. It avoids extremes : it is neither full of brash neologisms nor idioms which are conspicuously old-fashioned; it is not stiffly correct, nor slovenly in its informality; the vocabulary and syntax is neither banal in its simplicity, nor affectedly pretentious. It does have to a marked degree what Robert Bridges has called 'the grace of negligence'.⁸

There is another quality on which George Eliot insists and that is quietness. The first thing which strikes Esther in Mrs.

8. The passage from which this phrase is taken is, perhaps, worth quoting at greater length. In it Bridges, writing in 1919, suggests one of the characteristics of the best speakers : 'This carelessness or ease of speech will vary naturally in all degrees according to occasion, and being dependent on mood and temper will never go wrong. It is warm and alive with expression of character, and may pass quite unselfconsciously from the grace of negligence to the grace of correctness, for it has correctness at command, having learned it, and its carelessness has not been doctored and bandaged.' (S.P.E. Tract II, 1919, p.41). The passage is quoted approvingly by R.W. Chapman in 'Oxford English', S.P.E. Tract XXXVII, 1932, p.554.

Transome is her 'high-bred quietness' (Ch. 38), while a description of the drawing-room at the abbey in Daniel Deronda reveals that it was 'stilled', partly it is true by the 'deep-piled carpets', but also 'by the high English breeding that subdues all voices' (Ch. 35). This evidence is corroborated elsewhere. The narrator of Pelham, for instance, makes the point very clearly :

I have observed that the distinguished trait of people accustomed to good society, is a calm, imperturbable quiet, which pervades all their actions and habits, from the greatest to the least : they eat in quiet, move in quiet, live in quiet, and lose their wife, or even their money, in quiet; while low persons cannot take up either a spoon or an affront without making such an amazing noise about it. (Ch. 1).

This quietness can sometimes prove disconcerting to those who are not used to it. The narrator of Mrs. Gaskell's My Lady Ludlow (1858) recalls how, as a child, on being introduced by a maid, she was 'sorely alarmed at the silence, the hushed foot-falls of the subdued maiden over the thick carpet, and the soft voice and clear pronunciation of my Lady Ludlow' (Ch. 1). Similarly, at Thornfield, Jane Eyre is impressed, despite herself, by the fine ladies who are visiting Rochester and she notices that they speak 'in a low but clear tone which seemed habitual to them' (Jane Eyre, Ch. 17). In both of these two last examples clarity, presumably of enunciation, is mentioned as the accompaniment of quietness. There is no mumbling indistinctness.

A breach of this convention of quietness could provoke strong disapproval as the reaction of Plantagenet Palliser to one of Glencora's impulsive outbursts shows :

There was something in this, - a tone of loudness, a touch of what he called to himself vulgarity, - which made him very angry. (Can You Forgive Her ?, II, Ch. 49).

Loudness, however, was not the only feature to be deprecated by good society. The necessary quietness went hand in hand with a certain lightness of tone and this, too, had to be preserved. Language suggesting undue earnestness was regarded as a sign of low breeding and this led to the avoidance of any markedly contentious subject - for example, matters of religious belief - though an obtrusive display of emotion on any subject seems to have been frowned upon. In The Mill on the Floss (1860), while discussing Maggie's period of religious fervour, George Eliot makes this distinction between the tone of fashionable and unfashionable society very clearly and also goes some way towards accounting for these differences :

In writing the history of unfashionable families one is apt to fall into a tone of emphasis which is very far from being the tone of good society, where principles and beliefs are not only of an extremely moderate kind, but are always presupposed, no subjects being eligible but such as can be touched with a light and graceful irony. (Bk. IV, Ch. 3).

This 'tone of emphasis', so unacceptable in the best society, George Eliot sees as a natural concomitant of straitened circumstances. The more extreme manifestations of piety are a necessary consolation in the face of unrelenting poverty. The 'something that good society calls "enthusiasm"' is, she goes on, 'something that will present motives in an entire absence of high prizes'. The easy manners of good society floating 'on gossamer wings of light irony' are, it is suggested, very much the product of easy circumstances.

A similar point can be seen to underlie a scene in Mrs. Henry Wood's novel, East Lynne, in which Barbara Hare is deeply shocked by the 'vehemence' of Lady Levison's attack upon her corrupt husband. Barbara meets this with complete incomprehension and Mrs. Wood remarks,

... Barbara might be thankful that she could not understand it. All Lady Levison's native gentleness, all her reticence, as a wife and a gentlewoman, had been goaded out of her. (III, Ch. 18).

Following this, we are told that Lady Levison expresses her resentment 'as vehemently as any poor woman in the humblest walk of ~~light~~^{life} might have done'. Turbulent emotion and extreme unhappiness were, like poverty and nonconformist piety among the lower classes, the enemy of the insouciance required by the upper-class code of refinement.

There were some aristocrats who, conscious of their high station, power and prestige, cultivated a certain stateliness, even pomposity of manner. We are very conscious of such an Olympian utterance, de haut en bas, in Sir Leicester Dedlock's stiffly patrician address to Mr. Jarndyce in Bleak House :

I assure you, sir, it has given - Me - pain - to learn from the housekeeper at Chesney Wold, that a gentleman who was in your company in that part of the county, and who would appear to possess a cultivated taste for the Fine Arts, was likewise deterred, by some such cause, from examining the family pictures with that leisure, that attention, that care, which he might have desired to bestow upon them, and which some of them might possibly have repaid. (Ch. 43).

But Dedlock, despite a certain resemblance to General Tilney of Northanger Abbey, is not typical. A speaker's awareness of his status may be communicated in ways more subtle than this. Indeed, the speech of the grandest persons - Dukes seem especially prone to this - is often marked by the antithetical quality : a definite taciturnity. Disraeli's Lord Monmouth, for example, is a man of very few words, while Pendennis and the Major must make do with the barest of acknowledgements when they meet the Duke of Wellington while walking in Green Park :

'How do, Pendennis ? - fine day,' were his Grace's remarkable words, and with a nod of his august head he passed on

After this the susceptible Major, we are told, began to 'imitate him unconsciously' and we find him 'speaking with curt sentences, after the manner of the great man' (Pendennis, Ch. 36). Yet the most silent of fictional dukes may well be the older Duke of Omnium whose very brief note to Plantagenet Palliser on the news of Glencora's pregnancy is described as 'probably the longest that Mr. Palliser had ever received from the Duke' (Can You Forgive Her? II, Ch. 73). Glencora describes him as 'one of those people who never talk' (I, Ch. 22) and, lest we should doubt the power of this weapon of silence, she confides in a letter to Alice Vavasor, 'He is quite awful when he says a word or two, and more awful in his silence' (II, Ch. 80).

Taciturnity is not the monopoly of dukes, however. It is also present in those of less exalted rank. Sir Maximus Debarry of Felix Holt demonstrates this for, when moved by Esther's testimony, he expresses his intention of reversing the court's judgement on Felix with explosive brevity :

Confound it ! what's the use of mewing him up for four years ! Example ? Nonsense. (Ch. 47).

Choleric ejaculations of this kind are not infrequent among country squires and baronets, but they are different in flavour from the brevity of the Duke of Omnium. They point rather to an engaging, if intemperate, warmth of heart very far from the frigidity of the silences which strike terror into Glencora.

Yet a further distinction needs to be drawn between this

and the brevity which marks the speech of certain old ladies of the upper class. A number of them show this trait. Miss Crawley of Vanity Fair springs to mind, but Lady Bellair of Disraeli's Henrietta Temple (1837) perhaps illustrates the quality most clearly. When she gives Ferdinand permission to visit her, she displays what is, perhaps, best described not so much as brevity as a staccato imperiousness :

You must come and call upon me. You may come every day if you like. Do not leave your card. I hate people who leave cards. I never see them; I order all to be burnt. I cannot bear people who leave bits of paper at my house.
(Bk. VI, Ch. 5).

If we are tempted to make generalisations about the speech of the upper-class, it is salutary to compare the sentence structure of Lady Bellair with that of Sir Leicester Dedlock. Yet beneath their very different language lies an essential similarity; in both cases their words convey a strong sense of power and prestige. We should never forget what is, perhaps, the central fact about the Victorian aristocracy : its members were, in a very real sense, a ruling class and their language is often a medium by which they express this authority. At times it can do this in very direct ways. A complete lack of graciousness marks Lady Bellair's treatment of the servants on her arrival for a visit to Ducie :

Here ! where's the butler ? I don't want you, stupid (addressing her own servant), but the butler of the house, Mister's butler; what is his name, Mr. Twoshoe's butler ? I cannot remember names. Oh ! you are there, are you ? I don't want you. (Bk. IV, Ch. 3).

No doubt we see here something of the 'happy frigidity and insolence of demeanour' which Thackeray detects in the manners of the great

(Vanity Fair, Ch. 28), and often it is an 'insolence' which manifests itself even in dealings with equals. Lady Bellair shows a blunt forthrightness in her expression of opinions and preferences which indicates how foreign a habit of mind deference is to her. At times, such frankness can be disconcerting : 'I knew you when you ate pap,' she tells Mr. Temple (Henrietta Temple, Bk. VI, Ch. 6), while in Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe, old Lady Ascot is capable of a similar outspoken directness. She greets Charles Ravenshoe, 'You were quite tolerable as a boy, my dear; but you've got very coarse, very coarse and plain indeed' (Ch. 9).

There is some reason to suppose that such a manner was held to be appropriate, at least when addressing members of the lower classes. Mrs. Gaskell's Lady Ludlow, giving an account of the doctor who treated the émigrée, Madame de Créquy, notes, 'He had that kind of abrupt manner which people get who have much to do with the lower orders' (Ch. 5), while on a visit to a show-piece factory Lord de Mowbray reveals the shortness of his pedigree by being 'profuse in praise and compliments' :

His lordship was apt to be too civil. The breed would come out sometimes. To-day he was quite the coffee-house waiter. (Sybil Bk. III, Ch. 8).

In this quotation the use of the word civil is a significant indication of the inappropriateness of Mowbray's behaviour. As the O.E.D. points out, 'Courteous is ... more commonly said of superiors, civil of inferiors' (civil 12). This idea is supported by Ross when he writes that civil 'is used by U-speakers to approve the behaviour of a non-U person in that the latter has appreciated the difference between U and non-U' (Ross, p. 42). This is well illustrated when Mrs. Merdle seeks

to exonerate the landlord of a continental hotel who has allowed her to make use of rooms reserved for the Dorrit family :

Edmund... I hope you have explained ... to the satisfaction of this gentleman and his family that the civil landlord is not to blame ? (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 3).

Occasionally, on the other hand, the word is used to express a grudging politeness by a member of the upper class to an inferior who has no right to expect such treatment as a matter of course. This can be seen in Meredith's Evan Harrington :

'The Cogglesbys are sons of a cobbler, Rose,' said Lady Jocelyn. 'You must try and be civil to them.' (Ch. 17).

This is also the meaning intended by Pelham's mother who uses the associated noun, civility, when advising her son on the difference between French and English manners :

This a little civility will easily do; nobody (as I before observed), except in England, ever loses by politeness; - by the bye, that last word is one you must never use, it is too Gloucester Place like. (Pelham, Ch. 26).

The association of politeness with Gloucester Place - an unfashionable address - is interesting, though we should probably be wise not to take the words of a foolish and snobbish old woman too seriously. The word does not seem to be objected to elsewhere. What validity there is in her objections may probably be explained by a further reference to the O.E.D. which notes that civil is often used 'in the merely negative sense of "not (actually) rude"', while courteous and polite 'denote positive qualities'. Politeness and its associated adjective may lack a becoming note of condescension and, perhaps suggest a genuine deference foreign

to the patrician disposition. Possibly, too, the words were associated with the society of the eighteenth century and may simply have come to seem démodé.

This use of civility also suggests that the upper class had more subtle weapons in their armoury than autocratic rudeness, and that they were inclined to favour government by consent rather than despotism. An insight into this aspect of relations between the classes can be gained from Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe. In this novel the hero, Charles Ravenshoe, attempts to sink himself into obscurity by assuming the role of a groom. However, old habits die hard, and when a policeman tries to prevent him entering a slum dwelling on an errand of mercy, something which Kingsley calls 'the old Oxford insolence' reasserts itself, though the nature of this insolence is interesting :

'Pooh ; pooh ! my good sir,' said Charles; 'stuff and nonsense. Don't assume that tone with me, if you will have the goodness.'

This tone, which is not exactly rudeness, gives the sense of options being kept open. Inferiors do, after all, have to be lived with, and it may prove wise, in the words of the adage, to treat an enemy as though he may become a friend - hence the saving phrase which tempers the discourtesy, 'if you ~~will~~ have the goodness'. At all events, the strategy works. Charles' tone of voice is immediately recognised by the police inspector, who at once becomes much more deferential, and this acknowledgement of social positions opens a vein of courteous, if condescending, magnanimity in Charles :

'Sir, if gentlemen disguise themselves they must expect the

police to be somewhat at fault till they open their mouths'....

'By Jove !' said Charles, 'do you know that you are a deuced good fellow ? I am sorry that I was rude to you, but I am in trouble, and irritated. I hope you'll forgive me'. (Ch. 60).

A related point is developed more explicitly by Lord Saltire in the same novel. He seems to feel that rudeness to servants signifies a certain lack of gentlemanlike generosity when he remarks, 'I don't like to be peevish to my servants, because it is unfair; they can't answer one' (Ch. 58), while Thackeray tells us that Lord Kew 'showed no difference in his conversation with men of any degree, except, perhaps, that to his inferiors in station he was a little more polite than to his equals' (The Newcomes, Ch. 30).

Clearly it would not be wise to generalise too far. Individuals must have differed widely in their habits in this respect. While it is clear that some of the 'polite' group are motivated by a genuine concern for their inferiors, not all are so generous in their intentions. When Plantagenet Palliser discovers that the man with whom he is in conversation is a gentleman, a change comes over his manner - but it is at first sight a curious one :

'My name is John Grey,' said the stranger.

Then the smile was dropped, the look of extreme courtesy disappeared, the tone of Mr. Palliser's voice was altered and he put out his hand. He knew enough of Mr. John Grey's history to be aware that Mr. John Grey was a man with whom he might permit himself to become acquainted. (Can You Forgive Her ? II, Ch. 70).

In this case the pseudo-politeness which is dropped is, evidently enough, a device to keep at a distance those with whom Palliser does not wish to be on familiar terms. Politeness, as well as its reverse, can be a way of keeping social fences in good repair.

Behind this politeness of Palliser a deep reserve is discernible, and such reserve has a significant effect on upper-class habits of speech. There is, for example, a great reluctance to discuss the whole question of social class, a subject with which, in contrast, the aspirant tends to display an excessive and explicit preoccupation. In Doctor Thorne Frank Gresham is typical of his class in his refusal to speak of his gentle birth :

He loved it dearly, though he seldom spoke of it; - as men of good family seldom do speak of it. It is one of those possessions which to have is sufficient. A man having it need not boast of what he has, or show it off before the world. (Ch. 30).

Reticence is also exhibited by Lady Ludlow who, we are told, 'rarely spoke out her feelings', and it is evident that this reticence is adopted quite consciously on her part as according with her social position : 'she was of rank : and I have heard her say that people of rank do not talk about their feelings except to their equals, and even to them they conceal them, except on rare occasions' (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 3). Like Palliser, Lady Ludlow also uses this reticence as a device to remind an inferior of the distance he is expected to keep, and it can prove an infuriating and impenetrable barrier. When the clergyman, Mr. Grey, tries to engage her in plain-speaking over a matter about which he feels grave concern, he quickly comes to feel how 'those ceremonies and forms which are, I suppose, the etiquette in your ladyship's rank of life ... seem to hedge you in from any power of mine to touch you', and he goes on to compare her behaviour with that to which he has been accustomed in his own sphere where 'it has been the custom to speak plainly out what we have felt earnestly' (Ch. 10).

The possession of high status and power seems to have given rise to a number of characteristically upper-class idioms. The word person in some contexts provides an example of one of these. Lady Harriet, in conversation with Molly Gibson in another of Mrs. Gaskell's stories, Wives and Daughters, recalls how one of her aunts looked down on 'Any one who earns his livelihood by any exercise of head or hands'. All these she calls 'persons' and, Harriet tells Molly, 'would never in her most slip-slop talk accord them even the conventional title of "gentlemen"' (Ch. 14). In the same way, people, especially when accompanied by a possessive adjective, could express a sense of almost proprietorial power over dependents. This is also noticed by Harriet in the same conversation. She goes on to remark how her aunt 'takes possession of human beings, "my woman," "my people"' (Ch. 14). The last phrase is clearly Lady Welter's habitual mode of reference when speaking of her servants :

... The Viscountess Welter dashed up to her elegant residence in St. John's Wood ... and, when 'her people' came and opened the door and let down the steps, lazily descended.... (Ravenshoe, Ch. 37).

But, as an extract from Trollope's The Vicar of Bullhampton (1869) shows, at least among the very great, this sense of ownership of dependents could extend beyond household servants. The Marquis of Trowbridge thinks of Mr. Gilmore, a small squire, as 'a man not big enough to have his tenants called his people' (Ch. 17). The word is used more offensively by Mrs. Gowan in Little Dorrit where it is associated with the disrespectful verb, to pick up, which reduces people to the status of things. Talking of her son's meeting with the Meagles family, she asks, 'He picked the people up at Rome, I think?' This, we are told, gives Clennam 'mortal offence' since he is a close friend of the family

so designated, and the following conversation ensues. Clennam initially reacts by affecting incomprehension, and ends by substituting a phrase of excessive formality :

'Excuse me, I doubt if I understand your expression.'
 'Picked the people up,' said Mrs. Gowan 'Came upon them. Found them out. Stumbled against them'.
 'The people ?'
 'Yes, The Miggles people.'
 'I really cannot say,' said Clennam, 'where my friend Mr. Meagles first presented Mr. Henry Gowan to his daughter.'
 (I, Ch. 26).

Used in a different sense, people was capable of expressing the kind of dynastic considerations which, naturally enough, were important to an hereditary aristocracy, and it is often found used by members of the upper class with the meaning family. An example of this is to be found in Tom Brown at Oxford. When St. Cloud meets Mary Porter at a Mayfair ball he is attracted to her, but, nevertheless, asks his friends, 'Do you know her people ? Who is her father ?' (Ch. 38). A man of his rank must be circumspect.

Another characteristic of upper-class speakers is to use certain words in such a way as to suggest that all those who occupy a position below a certain level in society are beneath notice altogether. The world is one such idiom, when it is used to mean, in C.S. Lewis's words, 'a particular set, but a set which regards itself as the norm ... in a word, Society with a capital S'.⁹ The arrogance implicit in such a usage sometimes draws ironic protests. An exchange in Henry Kingsley's Leighton Court (1866) shows this very clearly :

9. Studies in Words, p.265.

'My dear, he knows the world !'

'He knows the peerage,' said Laura peevishly (Ch. 5).

Kingsley goes on to offer a comment of his own on this reply of

Laura Seckerton :

Laura, you see, did not believe in the grand monde.

She believed that the real great world was the wide world the sailors and soldiers told her of.

A very similar point is made in an article on slang in Household Words¹⁰ in which the author suggests the parochialism of 'Society with a capital S' : 'If, he writes, 'you were to talk to him [a well-bred Frenchman] of the beau monde, he would imagine you meant the world which God made, not half-a-dozen streets and squares between Hyde Park Corner and the Chelsea Bun House' (p. 76). Whether, in fact, such a well-bred Frenchman would have been so confused seems doubtful, for C.S. Lewis believes that the English expression the world 'is not a native English development but an attempt to render French le beau monde (or simply le monde).'¹¹

Much the same in tendency is a characteristic upper-class use of everywhere. It occurs in Disraeli's novel Endymion (1880), where we learn that Mr. Ferrars, a 'new man,' after obtaining the appropriate introductions 'soon found that he was what is called "everywhere"' (Ch. 47). This kind of omnipresence is clearly to be achieved simply by the expedient of visiting those places above a certain level of fashion.

10. 'Slang', Household Words, VIII, September 24, 1853, pp.73-78.

11. Studies in Words, p.266.

Of course, aristocratic power on a national scale was exercised through the business of legislation and government from Westminster and, like most restricted social groups, parliament seems to have been rich in a vocabulary and idiom peculiar to itself, familiar at any rate to those who were close to the task of 'carrying on the Queen's government'. This last phrase seems to have been something of a pious cliché in parliamentary circles. It is used, not without an ironic comment from Trollope, in Framley Parsonage (1861) as the end of Lord Brock's administration draws near :

'How the Queen's government is to be carried on, that is the question now,' Harold Smith repeated. A difficulty which had not caused him much dismay at that period, about a month since.(Ch. 23).

Smith has, in fact, been only very recently elevated to a ministerial post and, when in the same chapter Sowerby asks him how he has reacted to 'your governor's statement', we see another example of the vocabulary of government, for here we are to take governor, not in its more usual colloquial sense of father, but rather as prime-minister. Another idiom which had acquired a special meaning in the world of politics was the prepositional verb to shell out. In general usage this was the equivalent of to pay up, but when, on the anticipated death of William IV, a Whig secretary tells Tadpole and Taper, 'Our great men mean to shell out' (Sybil, Bk. 1, Ch. 6), he is anticipating, not a settlement of debts but the resignation of the government. Such a resignation might be forced on an administration if a sufficient number of its supporters were moved to rat, another parliamentary usage (O.E.D. rat v. 2 : 'To desert one's party, side or cause, esp. in politics'). This is a fate which Tadpole and Taper fear will overtake Sir Robert Peel since they suspect that 'there are several religious

men who have wanted an excuse for a long time to rat' (Sybil, Bk. IV, Ch. 12). If such a dissolution resulted in an election, a party would need to find a cry. This the O.E.D. (cry sb. 9b) defines as 'a political or electioneering watchword; a legislative proposal or scheme designed as a rallying cry for the members of a party in a contest'. It seems to have been current through most of the century, and the examples of its use quoted by the O.E.D. run from Burke (1779) to Gladstone (1884). It may also be illustrated from the conversation of the rather less illustrious Taper, who is thrown into consternation by the thought that his electoral opponents have 'the young Queen for a cry' (Coningsby, Bk. V, Ch. 2). His own party has, as yet, no answer to this and, we are told, 'A dissolution without a cry, in the Taper philosophy, would be a world without a sun.'

Once an election was underway various strategies were possible. One might try to take a constituency by bounce, a usage illustrated and explained by Trollope in The Way We Live Now :

... Melmotte's supporters began the battle with an attempt at what the Liberals called 'bounce,' - to carry the borough with a rush by an overwhelming assertion of their candidate's virtues.... (1, Ch. 44).

This seems to be a specialised use of the word derived from its more general meaning 'A loud or audacious boast; a boastful falsehood' (O.E.D. bounce sb. 4). Like Rigby's agent in the election at Darlford, one might poll all the 'dead men' (Coningsby, Bk. V, Ch. 4), or again supporters might be persuaded to give plumpers : that is, to give all votes to one candidate when there was a right to vote for two or more (O.E.D. plumper 2).

This obsolete practice is discussed by Harold Transome in a

conversation with his agent in Felix Holt :

As it appears that many who vote for Debarry are likely to split their votes in favour of Garstin, it is of the first consequence that my voters should give me plumpers. (Ch. 16).

So, too, Lady Tippins, rallying support for Veneering in his attempt to win the borough of Pocket-Breaches, urges one of her friends in a way which suggests a certain vagueness in her knowledge of the details of the electoral process to 'be sure you promise me your vote and interest and all sorts of plumpers for Pocket-Breaches' (Our Mutual Friend, II, Ch. 20).

Those successful in being returned to the House for another term might be consigned to various categories. There are the sneaks, 'men who are afraid of a dissolution' (Sybil, Bk. IV, Ch. 12) who might be useful in consolidating a majority; there are high-flyers, like Rigby, who can expect to hold office, and the plodders who cannot and whom Tadpole, in a conversation with Taper, professes to detest (Coningsby, Bk. V, Ch. 3). However, even a plodder like Tadpole might do the state or at least his party some service in being given charge of some great man to cook : that is, to woo in the hope of gaining his support. Tadpole leaves Taper in front of the house of the Duke of Fitz-Aquitaine and remarks :

This gentleman is my particular charge. I have been cooking him these three years. (Sybil, Bk. IV, Ch. 12).

It was not only the business of government, of course, but pleasure too, which drew the upper-class to London, and many families had their town house in which they spent at least the months of

the Season. London, as it had been in Jane Austen's day, was still widely referred to as town. Margaret Hale's fashionable Aunt Shaw on a visit to the distant Milton-Northern expresses the hope that she can be of some service to Mrs. Thornton, if, as she puts it, 'you and your husband ever come to town' (North and South, Ch. 43). Major Pendennis tells Pen how Lord Dorking's guests 'bow1 back to town again' after their visit to him in the country (The Newcomes, Ch. 28), while Mrs. Oliphant describes Carlingford, the scene of her Chronicles, as 'a pretty place - mild, sheltered, not far from town' (The Rector, Ch. 1). It seems quite clear from these examples that the usage was quite widespread among fashionable speakers and there is no hint of the vulgarity with which, by the end of the century, it was felt to be contaminated. This decline is registered very strongly in Agnes Grove's The Social Fetich (1904) in which she expresses her disapproval of the idiom and comments on 'People who ... go up "town", or leave "town", as the case may be, the town in question, the existence of which is thus uniquely recognised, not being, as one might suppose it to be, Birmingham, but London' (pp.10-11). Perhaps the word had been appropriated by the daily commuter.

The activities which might be engaged in in London society also left their mark on upper-class vocabulary. One might, for example, go to a crush, the meaning of which, 'a crowded social gathering' (O.E.D. sb. 4b), is made clear by Sophia Longestaffe who, while having grave doubts about the propriety of entertaining the Melmottes at Caversham, the family's country house, nonetheless, 'can understand going to a crush at their house in town' (The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 13). This seems to have been a colloquialism which enjoyed something of a vogue in the later nineteenth century, the first quotation in the O.E.D. dating from

1832. Doubtless a similar social gathering is in the mind of Lord Farintosh when he talks of things to Lady Ann, telling her that she has been missed in London society which expected her to give 'two or three things this season' (The Newcomes, Ch. 42). This may seem simply an example of a not untypical indolence on the part of an upper-class speaker (see p. 68), but a similar use of the word in a specimen of conversation in Society Small Talk suggests that it was quite acceptable, and was evidently quite widely used to refer to fashionable parties : 'You don't know Mrs. A., I think ? I must introduce you to her, she gives so many amusing things....' (Ch. 3, p.29).

In his article, Ross draws a firm distinction between the names given by different classes to meals. 'U-speakers,' he writes, 'eat lunch in the middle of the day ... and dinner in the evening ... Non-U speakers ... on the other hand, have their dinner in the middle of the day' (Ross, p. 43). This variation in usage seems to have been a mark of the classes at least as early as the nineteenth century, as we can see from the arrangements which Miss Thorne makes for her guests at the Ullathorne sports in Barchester Towers :

The quality ... were to eat a breakfast, and the non-quality were to eat a dinner. Two marquees had been erected for these two banquets....(Ch. 35).

The implication is clear : the 'quality' are 'breakfasting' because they will dine later in the day; for the lower orders this midday meal is dinner. The matter could be of great importance to those who were intent on rising in the world, and who were anxious to show that their habits coincided with those of the best society. In Wives and Daughters, for example, Mrs. Gibson is very upset

when, on a midday visit to Cumnor Towers, Lord Cumnor suggests that a meal which she is offered may be her dinner, and she is quick to try to re-establish her position :

In vain she piped out in her soft, high voice, 'Oh, my lord ! I never eat meat in the middle of the day; I can hardly eat anything at lunch.' Her voice was lost, and the duchess might go away with the idea that the Hollingford doctor's wife dined early....(Ch. 25).

Later, when Lady Harriet, the daughter of the Cumnor family, visits Mrs. Gibson's house at midday and asks if she may share a meal with the doctor's household, poor Mrs. Gibson is equally anxious to avoid any misunderstanding. Harriet explains that she is happy to fall in with the family's usual arrangements :

Oh, I only want a little bread and butter, and perhaps a slice of cold meat - you must not give yourself any trouble, Clare - perhaps you dine now ? let me sit down just like one of your family.

Mrs. Gibson is happy to agree to this suggestion, but not without explicitly disclaiming the idea of a midday 'dinner' :

Yes, you shall; I won't make any alteration.... But we dine late, we only lunch now. (Ch. 32).

Tea, when it involved more than very light refreshment, was a decidedly unfashionable meal and seems to have been particularly associated with non-conformists. In Mrs. Oliphant's novel, Salem Chapel, Mrs. Vincent, the mother of Arthur, the minister of the chapel, affects surprise when her son receives an invitation to dinner : 'I thought your people only gave tea'. But the invitation has come, not from a member of Arthur's congregation, but from 'one of the great people in Carlingford,' Lady Western (Ch. 12).

Mrs. Gibson is, rather as we might expect, averse to 'tea-drinkings' with the womenfolk of Hollingford.

By the end of the nineteenth century the phrase to take tea was objected to as vulgar, perhaps because it sounded unpleasantly predatory. Indeed, Agnes Grove objects to the verb take in this and other similar contexts. 'It requires a very slight stretch of the imagination,' she writes, 'to suppose that those who are guilty of inviting you to "take" food or drink would be quite capable of taking your umbrella' (The Social Fetich, p. 10). However, somewhat earlier we find such phrases used without any suggestion of vulgarity. Even the influential Manners and Tone of Good Society has such examples as 'It is not usual for a lady to take more than one cup of tea' and 'If a lady does not take tea' (p.111).

In general, it seems that the more fashionable the family, the later they dined, and there was certainly a tendency for London dinners to be at a later hour than those in the country. In Trollope's Can You Forgive Her?, we learn that dinner at the remote Vavasor Hall in Westmoreland is at five, a time which more metropolitan visitors regard as a 'vexatious hour' (1, Ch. 31), while in Evan Harrington, Meredith notices a similar variation in the habits of town and country: 'The dinner-hour, six, would no doubt be full seven in Town' (Ch. 13).

There seems little doubt that one of the reasons why the young at least attended the various social gatherings of the London season was the hope that they might be introduced to a suitable marriage partner. It is noticeable that upper-class idiom tends to present marriage as a dynastic affair, the union of families being very much to the fore. One such word, which seems in the

Victorian period to have been used more or less exclusively for marriages between important people, is alliance. No doubt this explains Mrs. Grantly's pleasure when Lady Lufton uses the word on the occasion of Griselda's engagement :

'I trust that the alliance' - the word was very agreeable to Mrs. Grantly's ear - 'will give unalloyed gratification to you and to her father.' (Framley Parsonage, Ch. 30).

It is worth noticing, however, that the word did not always have this flavour of social exclusivity. Earlier in the century, in the novels of Jane Austen, the word could be used of much lowlier matches. Mr. Elton, in Emma, for instance, exclaims, 'I need not so totally despair of an equal alliance, as to be addressing myself to Miss Smith !' (Ch. 15). Even here, however, it is possible that the word expresses something of Mr. Elton's social pretensions.

Connection seems to have been reserved for less advantageous unions. It is used by Mrs. Gowan in Little Dorrit when she regrets her son's engagement to Miss Meagles :

Henry might have done much better; there is scarcely anything to compensate for the connection....

When, however, Mrs. Gowan looks at the marriage from the point of view of her son's fiancée, whom she supposes to be a calculating social climber, alliance seems the appropriate word to use :

Don't tell me. I know such people will do anything for the honour of such an alliance. (1, Ch. 26).

Established seems also to have been an upper-class usage.

As Trollope observes, once again with reference to Griselda Grantly's

engagement, 'ordinary young ladies are merely married, but those of real importance are established' (Framley Parsonage, Ch. 11). When Mrs. Grantly uses this word of her daughter, she is implying that after her marriage she will assume a place among the leading families of the district, and possibly, too, that she will be the mistress of something worthy the name of an 'establishment'.

Also associated with the metropolis was a kind of speech, consisting of various linguistic features, which seems to have been peculiar to fashionable women. It is what Thackeray in Pendennis calls 'that darling London jargon, so dear and indispensable to London people, so little understood by persons out of the world' (Ch. 63). The staple of such conversation seems to have been topical allusions, fashionable name-dropping and much transient gossip, the whole liberally larded with French borrowings, and one can well see why it was often scarcely intelligible to those outside the magic circle.¹² This jargon is amusingly parodied in the article on slang in Household Words :

But, save us, your ladyship, there are thousands of Englishmen who might listen to your ladyship for an hour without understanding half-a-dozen words of your discourse. When you speak of the last faux pas, of poor Limberfoot's sad mésalliance, of the Reverend Mr. Caudlecup's being 'so full of soul,' of the enchanting roulades of that ravishing cantatrice Martinuzzi, of your dinner the day before being recherché, of your gens being insolent and inattentive, how shall plain men refrain from staring wonderstruck at your unfathomable discourse ? (Household Words, VIII, p.76).

12. One is reminded a little of Swift's warning to Pope about the assumptions made in The Dunciad : 'The notes I could wish to be very large in what relates to the persons concerned, for I have long observ'd that twenty miles from London no body understands hints, initial letters, or town facts and passages....' Letter of 16th July 1728, Correspondence of Jonathan Swift (ed. Williams), 1963-65, III, p.293.

As the inclusion of this topic in an article on slang seems to acknowledge this 'jargon' was an acceptable alternative to the kind of slang in use among men but which women, for the most part, tended to avoid. Indeed, in Bleak House (the novel of Dickens which was contemporary with this number of Household Words) slang is the word used to describe such language when it is used by Lady Dedlock's friends on hearing of her disappearance. The scandal is, we are told, discussed 'with all the genteelest slang in vogue, with the last new word, the last new manner, the last new drawl, and the perfection of polite indifference' (Ch. 58). Like slang, too, women's 'jargon' could incur disapproval, perhaps because it suggested an unpleasant ostentation. A glimpse of such a feeling can be caught in the reaction of Laura Pendennis to the affectations of Ethel Newcome after the break-up of her engagement to Lord Kew. Laura brings back this report to her husband :

Ethel had been crying when I went into the room....I knew she had; but she looked up from some flowers over which she was bending, began to laugh and rattle, would talk about nothing but Lady Hautbois' great breakfast the day before, and the most insufferable Mayfair jargon; and then declared it was time to go home to dress for Mrs. Booth's déjeuner, which was to take place that afternoon. (The Newcomes Ch. 50).

There are several interesting points here. The first is the explicit association of 'jargon' with Mayfair, while the use of the Gallic déjeuner is also noteworthy as an example of French vocabulary used, rather characteristically, in speaking of the trivial doings of the world of fashion. But equally important is Laura's distaste; this kind of language is 'insufferable', even though Ethel's motive for using it seems to be the quite innocent one of wishing to hide her unhappiness behind a cloak of cheerful and

inconsequential chatter. How far, however, the unsophisticated and pious Laura reflects the more fashionable taste of the age is very much open to question, though Thackeray does seem to be in agreement with her. Sometimes the speaker is more shamelessly affected. Blanche Amory, for example, is dismissed as 'an extraordinary little piece of conceit' and her 'Gallicised graces and daring affectations' render her 'not fit for well-bred English girls to associate with' (Pendennis, Ch. 59). Here we touch one of the paradoxes of our subject : the extremes of fashion often come surprisingly close to vulgarity.

The friendship between Laura Pendennis and Ethel Newcome illustrates another characteristic of the speech of upper-class women. This is their tendency to use frequent and open expressions of endearment which, as Thackeray, half-regretfully, half-patronisingly, points out, is in marked contrast to the coolness of upper-class men in their dealings with friends and even relations (The Newcomes, Ch. 59). This tradition goes back at least as far as the Regency, for in Emma Jane Austen remarks on the greetings which pass between Mr. Knightley and his brother as being 'in the true English style, burying under a calmness that seemed all but indifference, the real attachment which would have led either of them, if requisite, to do everything for the good of the other' (Ch. 12). A Victorian example of the same trait is to be found in Mrs. Oliphant's ^{The} Perpetual Curate, where an unexpected meeting between Frank and his brother, ^{old} ~~George~~, produces 'only such a modified expression of surprise on the part of the younger brother as was natural to a meeting of English kinsfolk' (Ch. 35), while Thackeray himself talks of 'the rough cordiality which young Englishmen use to one another' which, nevertheless, is seen to conceal 'a great deal of warmth and kindness under

its rude exterior' (Pendennis, Ch. 69). In all these cases the Englishness of such manners is stressed and there is, perhaps, an implied distrust of continental effusiveness.

Practice among English ladies seems to have been quite different. Pendennis describes how Laura and Ethel could be found 'in daily communication, and "my-dearesting" each other with that female fervour which, cold men of the world as we are ... we surely must admire' (The Newcomes, Ch. 59). Though Laura is homely enough, there are strong indications that this habit was particularly associated with the world of fashion. Lady Bellair, welcoming Lady Maxbury to her home - in Mayfair - displays the same trait, though it is strongly coloured by her own inimitable eccentricity :

'Dear, good creature !' exclaimed Lady Bellair, 'you are the dearest creature that I know. And you are charming,' she continued, addressing herself to Lady Selina; 'if I were a man, I would marry you directly.' (Henrietta Temple, Bk. VI, Ch. 5).

These endearments could, on occasions, be directed towards men. They are a mark of what to-day would be called the 'fan-mail' which Charles Honeyman receives from some members of the congregation of his West End chapel :

'Oh, dear Mr. Honeyman,' writes Blanche, 'what a sermon that was ! I cannot go to bed to-night without thanking you for it.' 'Do, do, dear Mr. Honeyman,' writes Beatrice, 'lend me that delightful sermon.' (The Newcomes, Ch. 11).

This, perhaps, represents nothing more objectionable than a rather precious affectation; but endearments of this kind could also be hollow and hypocritical. Thackeray tells of the 'conversazione-women' who 'salute each other, calling each other "My dear Lady

Ann" and "My dear good Eliza," and hating each other, as women hate who give parties on Wednesdays and Fridays' (The Book of Snobs, Ch. 18), while the feelings of another 'conversazione-woman', Mrs. Proudie, are mollified towards her rival, when Mrs. Grantly's ambitions of a bishopric for her husband are dashed, and the bishop's wife is able 'to talk of poor dear Mrs. Grantly' (Framley Parsonage, Ch. 40).

Like slang, oaths were generally avoided by women, though some, like Lady Jocelyn of Evan Harrington, were prepared to tolerate them when used by men in their presence. 'Swear, Tom, if it relieves you,' she tells Tom Cogglesby, 'I think it bad to check an oath or a sneeze' (Ch. 28). Even so, the exasperation of women was generally relieved by other means. In another of his novels, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Meredith remarks on the 'delicate vituperations gentle ladies use instead of oaths' (Ch. 32), and these can be identified with some certainty as a group of adjectives which are frequently and indiscriminately used by upper-class women to express their pleasure or the reverse. In his non-fictional England and the English (1833), Bulwer Lytton observes 'Nice and dear are the great To Prepon and To Kalon of feminine conversational moralities' (Bk. II, Ch. 2), and to those might be added the expressions of dislike : horrid, shocking, dreadful and, in some ways most characteristic of all, odious. A number of these occur in Lady Ann Newcome's conversation when she contrasts the lodgings offered by Martha Honeyman with her own domestic establishment :

Why do we have those odious French cooks, my dear, with their shocking principles - the principles of all Frenchmen are shocking - and the dreadful bills they bring us in(The Newcomes, Ch. 10).

Odious, or rather its related adverb, occurs again in the speech

of Mrs. Gowan of Little Dorrit, who describes her home as 'this odiously inconvenient place' (I, Ch. 26) and there is some reason to suppose that horrid was used in a similar way. It is a particular favourite with the two Longestaffe sisters, Georgiana and Sophia in The Way We Live Now : 'Horrid, horrid people ... you and papa must not be surprised if I take some horrid creature from the Stock Exchange' (I, Ch. 21), is Georgiana's comment when she realises that a visit to the disreputable Melmotte provides her with her only hope of a London season. In the same novel, Lady Monogram also expresses her distaste for Melmotte in the same terms, describing his grand ball as 'a horrid affair' (II, Ch. 65).

The frequent use of such words perhaps explains the mention of adjectives in a rather puzzling remark by Meredith in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel when he notes that upper-class speech is typified by 'an instinctively lavish use of vowels and adjectives' (Ch. 34), and certainly these give a markedly hyperbolical colouring to much of the language of fashionable women. This is often heightened by the use of intensive adverbs like so and awfully to which the more fastidious sometimes objected. In a letter of 23 April 1854, Mrs. Gaskell commented on her husband's dislike of this tendency :

I did so like your good long handsome note four or five days ago. I do so thank you for your kindness. There ! there are two sentences with 'so' in them not followed by 'as' as Mr. Gaskell says they ought to be. (Letters of Mrs. Gaskell, Ed. Chapple and Pollard, 1966, p.281).

But hyperbole in a more general sense is a widespread feature of women's speech. It is often used to suggest the power of the feelings to which they were, or claimed to be, susceptible -

enthusiasm and sensibility being more acceptable in women than men. Adelaide of Ravenshoe describes herself in a letter to Charles as being 'in agony about what aunt may have said to you' (Ch. 21), while in Scenes of Clerical Life (1858), the precious and affected Miss Assher, Captain Wybrow's fiancée, discusses her taste for music in similarly extravagant terms :

O, I assure you, I doat on it; and Anthony is so fond of it; it would be so delightful if I could play and sing to him....('Mr. Gilfil's Love Story', Ch. 5).

This trait is parodied in the article on slang in Household Words :

And when your ladyship does condescend to speak English, it is only with a delightful mincingness of accent and a liberal use of superlatives. The Italian singer you heard last night was a 'divine creature'; if you are slightly tired or dull you are 'awfully bored' or 'devoured with ennui'; if your face be pale you vow you are a 'perfect fright'; if a gentleman acquaintance volunteer a very mild joke he is a 'quizzical monster' - a dreadful quiz, he is so awfully satirical.... (VIII, p. 76).

These last examples refer to a species of arch flirtatiousness which is, in fact, very common and which, as the passage suggests, has its own special vocabulary with horrid, wicked, droll and satirical being particularly frequent. Lady Ann Newcome adopts this mode of conversation when she is shown Clive's room in the Colonel's house, and remarks to the young man : 'You horrid young wicked creature, have you begun to smoke already ?' (The Newcomes, Ch. 19). Clearly language of this kind is to be regarded as an ironical compliment to the sophistication of the man of the world, but the habit could be carried to irritating lengths. The narrator of The Book of Snobs records an abortive attempt to engage a young woman at a fashionable party in conversation :

You go up (with your usual easy elegance of manner) and talk to Miss Smith in a corner. 'Oh, Mr. Snob, I'm afraid you're sadly satirical.'

That's all she says. If you say it's fine weather, she bursts out laughing; or hint that it's very hot, she vows you are the drollest wretch ! (Ch. 18).

This is, no doubt, an exaggerated case, but it does show how the clichés of what Thackeray calls 'jargon' could at times threaten to swamp real conversation almost entirely.

When in the same passage, Mr. Snob talks of his 'easy elegance of manner' he is describing the required demeanour for a man of fashion. In contrast to women, in whom a tendency to gush was not thought unbecoming, a man was expected to cultivate a certain air of nonchalance since expressions of enthusiasm were felt to be incompatible with masculine good breeding. Pelham's mother, that indefatigable authority on class mores, contrasts Anglo-Saxon and Gallic manners when warning her son that in England 'the least appearance of feeling or enthusiasm is certain to be ridiculed everywhere; and that to display such emotions is to risk being regarded, at best, with suspicion :

You know that in England, if you seem desirous of a person's acquaintance, you are sure to lose it; they imagine you have some design upon their wives or their dinners (Pelham, Ch. 12).

It is also interesting to see how nonchalance might be used to exclude the social aspirant. In The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Richard's aristocratic friends contrive to eclipse the 'sense of self-esteem', of the socially inexperienced Ripton by means of what is described as 'the high-bred indolence in their aspect' (Ch. 36). Trollope, too, regarded such 'high-bred indolence' as

one of the essential characteristics of the gentleman :

It is the practice of the time (he writes) to treat all pursuits as though they were only half important to us, as though in what we desire we were only half in earnest. To be visibly eager seems childish, and is always bad policy.... (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 22).

It was 'bad policy', perhaps, since nonchalance seems to have been regarded as an outward manifestation of a freedom from involvement in commerce while, conversely, to appear to take life too seriously was regarded as vulgar and 'shoppy'. Mrs. Merdle asks her husband, the financier, to make himself fit for polite society 'by being more dégagé, and less preoccupied.' There is, she tells him, 'a positive vulgarity in carrying your business affairs about with you as you do,' and, shortly afterwards, Edmund Sparkler confirms that his step-father's manner has acquired a doubtful reputation among the young man's fashionable circle of acquaintances :

Fellers referring to my Governor ... say the Shop sits heavily on him. Say he carried the Shop about, on his back rather - like Jew clothesmen with too much business. (Little Dorrit, 1, Ch. 33).

There were some members of the middle class who did find it possible to acquire something of this essentially aristocratic insouciance, though the attempt sometimes produced an uncomfortably divided existence. Barnes Newcome is just such a person and, as a wealthy City banker and heir to a baronetcy and country estate, probably occupies a position on the social scale close to the meeting point between the upper and middle class. As he commutes each day between his City desk and West End club, his manners change and he has two modes of language to suit these different worlds. Both are displayed in a conversation which he has with

Colonel Newcome at Mrs. Newcome's 'r  union' in which they discuss the Indian 'prince', Rummun Loll, the proprietor of a diamond mine. They begin by talking of the quality of the society present and Barnes comments,

Oh, of course. It's very good society and that sort of thing - but it's not, you know - you understand. I give you my honour there are not three people in the room one meets anywhere, except the Rummun.

However, when the conversation moves to the Indian's wealth, the quality of Barnes Newcome's language also changes :

But has he got the fortune ? He keeps a large account with us, and, I think, wants to have larger dealings with us still. As one of the family we may ask you to stand by us, and tell us anything you know.

Thackeray is explicit about the nature of this change: 'The young man of business had dropped his drawl or his languor, and was speaking quite unaffectedly, good-naturedly, and selfishly' (The Newcomes, Ch. 8).

The tendency to drawl seems to have been very common among upper-class men, especially the dandified. There are many references to it. Disraeli in Henrietta Temple records that the speech of a 'young man', an anonymous acquaintance of Count Mirabel, was 'drawled out' (Bk. VI, Ch. 15); in Pendennis, a speech of the feckless Sir Francis Clavering is described as being 'drawled out to a young lady who was visiting him' (Ch. 22), while the hero of Bulwer Lytton's Pelham adopts what he describes as his 'drawing-room drawl' (Ch. 48) when affecting a foppish simplemindedness. Since this is, in fact, done to persuade a group of sporting men that he is green and inexperienced, we may

infer that the characteristic was not a universal one, but rather an affectation of the effete dandy.¹³ Readers of Society Small Talk received a stern warning against adopting such habits of speech :

It is a very erroneous idea to suppose that men and women in 'fashionable society,' or what is termed the 'best society,' or 'good society,' speak with a lisp or a languid drawl, or with any mannerism whatever....

The modulation of the tones of the voice is also a great point with the well-educated; and this it is which gives rise to the voice the slow measured ring which the uninitiated endeavour to imitate by assuming an affected drawl ... as foreign to the genuine voice of the well-bred man or woman as is the dialect of the Lancashire operative. (Ch. 1, pp.7-8).

Doubtless, the 'uninitiated' did adopt such a drawl, but the evidence of fictional dialogue should make us treat the suggestion that it was confined to them with a great deal of scepticism. As we have seen, examples of it are widespread among unquestionably upper-class speakers, though even in them it is widely regarded as an affectation and is inclined to disappear at moments of powerful emotion. James Harthouse of Hard Times (1854), for example, becomes 'positively agitated' when Louisa fails to keep their assignation, and we learn that he 'several times spoke with an emphasis, similar to the vulgar manner' (Bk. III, Ch. 2). Another instance of emotion displacing the aristocratic drawl is to be found in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel when Lord Mountfalcon begins an earnest declaration of love to Lucy :

Lord Mountfalcon had never spoken in this way before. He spoke better, too. She missed the aristocratic twang in his

13. In the same scene, this quality is quite absent from the animated greeting of Dartmore, one of Pelham's sporting friends: "Hollo, my good friend; how are you ? - d-d glad to see you in England," vociferated a loud, clear, good-houmoured voice, one cold morning...! (Ch. 48). Dartmore, we are told, is 'still gloriously redolent of Oxford'.

voice, and the hesitation for words, and the fluid lordliness with which he rolled over difficulties in speech. (Ch. 39).

Phonetically, this frequently mentioned drawl seems to have been produced by an alteration in the length and sometimes the quality of vowels and diphthongs. It is this, perhaps, which Adrian Harley has in mind when, discussing the aristocratic speech of Lord Mountfalcon, he talks rather obscurely of 'an instinctively lavish use of vowels'. Indeed, the likelihood that he does have this habit of drawling in mind is made to seem rather greater when he goes on to say that the nobleman's language has 'lost its backbone, and is limp, though fluent' (Ch. 34).

The effect of drawling is often produced by the lengthening of a usually short vowel. This appears to have taken place when the young James Crawley in Vanity Fair talks of a 'little dawg' (Ch. 34) in which the normal [ɔ] seems to have been lengthened to [ɔ:]. This lengthening may affect the quality of the vowel. The implied shift of [e] to [e:] in this conversation between Lord Ingram and Blanche in Jane Eyre is of particular interest since the association with drawling is made explicitly :

'Theodore, do you remember those merry days ?'
'Yaas, to be sure I do,' drawled Lord Ingram. (Ch. 17).

A rather similar effect is produced when normally short vowels become diphthongized. An example of this can be found in the word devil, which in the speech of the 'debilitated cousin' of Bleak House is rendered 'dayvle' (Ch. 40). Here the normal [e] has apparently become [ei]. This implied pronunciation is not at all uncommon in this class of speaker and it can be observed in the

related adverb which in the speech of both Arthur Pendennis (Pendennis, Ch. 63) and the Major (Ch. 55) is spelt 'dayvlish'. Slightly different is the case suggested by the spelling su - ah (sure) which occurs in the speech of another of Thackeray's characters, Sir Barnes Newcome (The Newcomes, Ch. 13). In this case the sound [ʊə] has undergone a change in which the diphthong appears to have acquired a long second element, something like [ʊə:]. In turn, this may be compared with the sound indicated by the spelling queeah (queer) in the conversation of an anonymous lord in the same novel (Ch. 25). This seems to suggest that the usual centring diphthong [iə] may have become [iə:].

The passage from Society Small Talk quoted above mentions lisping as a characteristic of affected speech, but the novels do not provide much evidence to support this, though Lord Viscount Cinqbars in Thackeray's A Shabby Genteel Story does exhibit this trait : 'Hullo, here'th a go ... cuth me, there'th only one man !' (Ch. 9). Much more frequently associated with dandified speech is the characteristic mispronunciation in which [r] becomes [w]. It seems inherently improbable that a real speech defect should have an uneven distribution among social classes, and one is tempted to think with Professor G.L. Brook that this is a convention 'of the English stage and novel' (The Language of Dickens, p.55); there may, however, have been more foundation in speech habits for such fictional pronunciations than this would suggest. In C. Woodham-Smith's history of the Charge of the Light Brigade, The Reason Why, there is a reference to the existence of just this trait among the officers of the more fashionable regiments (p. 140). However this may be, the feature is associated by Thackeray with the aristocratic drawl. We are told that a member of 'a certain dragoon regiment', the significantly-named

Lieutenant Colonel Snobley, 'lisped, drawled, and left the "r's" out of his words' (Book of Snobs, 'Prefatory Remarks'). Later in the same book, when Thackeray is commenting on the characteristics of the English snob, the same feature is allied to an arrogant insularity :

'Gwacious Gad !' what stories about 'the Twish' these young dandies accompanying King Richard must have had to tell, when they returned to Pall Mall, and smoked their cigars upon the steps of 'White's'! (Ch. 17).

A second characteristic of dandified speech, often found alongside the drawl, is the tendency to use incomplete sentences. This is almost certainly what Meredith means by the 'hesitation for words' which he suggests usually characterises Mountfalcon's speech and the same trait is exemplified in the speech from The Newcomes, quoted earlier (see p. 64) in which Barnes Newcome shows the tendency to trail off into such vague gestures as that sort of thing, you know and you understand. Another character who often appears to lack the interest or energy to finish a sentence he has begun is James Harthouse. This is the result of 'a certain air of exhaustion' arising 'from excessive gentility' and it is conspicuous in his reply to Mrs. Sparsit's assertion that she is resigned to life in Coketown :

'Very philosophical,' returned the stranger, 'and very exemplary and laudable, and - 'It seemed to be scarcely worth his while to finish the sentence, so he played with his watch-chain wearily. (Hard Times, Bk. II, Ch. 1).

In the speech of some other characters we find that words inessential to comprehension are lost, with articles and subject pronouns particularly likely to suffer such a fate. This produces a distinctive speech rhythm, highly suggestive of effete languor.

It requires an extract of some length to illustrate this fully, but the speech of Jack Spiggot in The Book of Snobs sounds the note clearly enough :

Sold out when the governor died. Mother lives at Bath. Go down there once a year for a week. Dreadful slow. Shilling whist. Four sisters - all unmarried except the youngest - awful work. Scotland in August. Italy in the winter. Cursed rheumatism. (Ch. 33).

Perhaps it is not surprising to find this ellipsis deplored in the etiquette book, The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected (1826), where it is described as 'a slovenly habit' which is 'frequently affected for the purpose of showing off the independent indifference of the speaker, who wishes it to be understood that he is above the trouble of using all the words employed by other people in expressing himself' (pp.63-9).

It would, however, be a mistake to think that such broken sentences are always the mark of urbane ease and confidence. In Samuel Warren's Ten Thousand a Year, the nouveau riche Mr. Titmouse visits the Earl of Dreddlington in Grosvenor Square, and it is the nobleman who speaks in measured periods. The disjoined^t utterance of Titmouse reflects his embarrassment and inexperience :

'It gives me pleasure, sir,' commenced his lordship, 'to see that you are punctual in your engagements. I am so, too, sir; and owe to it no small portion of any success which I may have had in life. Punctuality, sir, in small matters, leads to punctuality in great matters.' This was said deliberately, and with a sort of freezing grandeur.

x 'Oh yes, my lord ! quite so, your lordship,' stammered Titmouse ... 'to be sure - wouldn't have been behind time for a minute, my lord; uncommon bad manners, if it please your lordship' - (Bk. IV, Ch. 1).

Doubtless, the writer of The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected

would have taken an equally unfavourable view of the loss of unstressed syllables which was also undoubtedly a feature of dandified pronunciation and which often accompanied incomplete sentences. In an extreme example, such as that provided by the cousin of Sir Leicester Dedlock who lives 'in a state of extreme debility', the combination of these features can lead to the limits of intelligibility. The debilitated cousin's conversation is well represented by his expression of his political philosophy : 'it's - sort of thing that's sure tapn slongs votes - giv'n - Mob' (Bleak House, Ch. 40).

Inarticulacy in a man of business might be due to rather different and more weighty reasons. In the case of Sir Barnes Newcome a concern, possibly excessive, for the confidentiality of his affairs is no doubt paramount :

'Hobson,' in a low voice, 'you saw about that hm. I am sorry about that hm - that power of attorney - and hm and hm will call here at twelve about that hm. (The Newcomes, Ch. 6).

The line between the affectation of nonchalance and the affectation of boredom is a fine one and the word bore itself is very widely used by young men of the period. James Harthouse is once again a good example, for it will be remembered how all the careers and pastimes which he has tried have ended in ennui. He has, we learn, 'tried life as a Cornet of Dragoons, and found it a bore; and had afterwards tried it in the train of an English minister abroad, and found it a bore; and had then strolled to Jerusalem, and got bored there; and had then gone yachting about the world, and got bored everywhere' (Hard Times, Bk. II, Ch. 2). Polite society itself often provokes professions of boredom.

This can perhaps be regarded as a consoling luxury, possible only for those inside the inner circle to which so many would like to gain admittance. So Sir Damask Monogram is irritated at the prospect of attending a grand ball to which the very best society has been invited :

It was a confounded bore. He hated emperors and he hated princes. He hated the whole box and dice of that sort of thing ! (The Way We Live Now, II, Ch. 61).

Both Mayfair jargon and the speech of dandies, which is in some respects its male equivalent, are essentially metropolitan in origin, but aristocratic power had its roots less in London than in the country and the possession of land, the land to which the shrewd and worldly cleric, Archdeacon Grantly, attaches such importance :

Land is the only thing that can't fly away. And then, you see, land gives so much more than the rent. It gives position and influence and political power, to say nothing about the game. (The Last Chronicle of Barset. Ch. 68).

The important consequence of this ownership of land was that many members of the upper class, even those who were the leaders of metropolitan fashion, had their 'place' in the country and were, in many respects, countrymen. The very word country, at least among older speakers, still carried a strongly local sense, as it had done in Jane Austen's day, and this was not unmixed with the pride of ownership. In Framley Parsonage, we learn that Lady Lufton 'liked cheerful, quiet, well-to-do people, who loved their Church, their country and their Queen', and Trollope goes on to explain what she understood by 'loving her country' :

She desired that all farmers round her should be able to pay their rents without trouble ... that the working men should be saved from rheumatism by healthy food and dry houses, that they should all be obedient to their pastors and masters.... That was her idea of loving her country. She desired also that the copses should be full of pheasants, the stubble-field of partridges, and the gorse covers of foxes; in that way, also, she loved her country. (Ch. 2).

In the light of this, it is not hard to see why country should have acquired a social as well as geographical sense. In Jane Austen's Emma, we hear of a party which includes 'a proper unobjectionable country family' (Ch. 26) where the meaning is clearly a family of some consequence in the area.

A corollary of this is that some words associated with towns could come to indicate low social status, even vulgarity. One such is cockney, a 'derisive appellation for a townsman' (O.E.D. cockney sb. 3). In Coningsby, Disraeli talks of 'large tasteless lamps and tawdry chandeliers' which, though in a country house, are 'evidently true cockneys, and only taking the air by way of change' (Bk. IV, Ch. 9).

Later in the century, country in its localised sense was replaced by county. The Tillotsons in their edition of Vanity Fair (p. 435) note how 'Pitt was taking up his station in the country' is emended to county in editions later than 1853. This gives an unusually clear idea of the date at which the older usage was replaced by that still current today. This word, county, too can possess a suggestion of social exclusiveness. In Tom Brown at Oxford, Squire Brown, in a letter to his son at the university, looks forward to the time when he will have 'the opportunity of introducing you to my brother magistrates from other parts of the county' and, shortly after this, he goes on

to reflect that 'it is a good thing for a young man to know his own county well' (Ch. 29). The kind of knowledge the squire has in mind is clearly social rather than topographical. Tom himself uses the word in the same way when he is asked how successfully a party given by the Porters went off, and he replies, 'Very well; half the county were there' (Ch. 32). These uses are equivalent to the phrase county people which can again be illustrated from Tom's conversation this time when he comments on the increasing notoriety of the disreputable Wurley : 'The county people are beginning to look shy at him' (Ch. 33).

County did survive with the meaning of a particular locality but mainly as a specifically hunting usage. We are told, for example, that the same Mr. Wurley 'abused the country, and declared that it was not worth riding across' (Ch. 33). This is just one example of the large number of idioms which were associated with the sporting pursuits which went hand-in-hand with country life. This often takes the form of a kind of shorthand, immediately intelligible to those who share the same interests and way of life. When in Pendennis, Mr. Pynsent asks 'Pendennis don't preserve, then ?' (Ch. 25), he takes it for granted that he will be understood by this quasi-intransitive usage to be talking of preserving pheasants. Archdeacon Grantly shows his somewhat unclerical interests when he uses the same expression :

I'm quite sure that a man with a place like that does more good by preserving than by leaving it alone(The Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 22).

Similar features may be observed in connection with fox-hunting,

another popular sport among Victorian landowners, for here again the mutual familiarity of the context precluded the likelihood of misunderstanding. When young James Crawley of Vanity Fair tells how a 'brute of a mare of mine had fell with me only two days before, out with the Abingdon' (Ch. 34), he does not need to spell out that he has been riding with the hunt associated with that town.¹⁴

The kind of country house on which sporting activities were often centred was referred to as a place. Coningsby, asked by his grandfather about one of his Eton friends, identifies him as 'Sir Charles Buckhurst, sir, a Berkshire man : Shirley Park is his place' (Coningsby, Bk. I, Ch. 6), while Johnny Ludlow, giving an account of his father's house, writes ,

About three-miles' distance from the Manor was a place called the Court. Not a property of so much importance as the Manor, but a nice place for all that. (Johnny Ludlow, I, Ch. 1).

14. In the present century, Professor Ross has noted a similar phenomenon when he remarks that 'Horse-riding is non-U against U riding', and goes on to comment that from 'the non-U point of view the expression is reasonable, for to the non-U there are other kinds of riding' (Ross, p.44). Upper-class speakers, he implies, reserve the verb to ride for horses (and bicycles), and use drive for other forms of transport. He goes on to contrast the non-U 'to go for a motor-ride' with the U 'to go for a drive in a motor-car' (p.44). Earlier, Agnes Grove had made much the same point, noting that the middle-class 'would ... no doubt "ride" in a "trap", a carriage, a train, or a cab' (The Social Feticch, p. 14). In the Victorian period, when the horse was still the dominant form of transport, the distinction seems to have been between riding on horseback and driving in a carriage or similar conveyance. In Henry Kingsley's Leighton Court we learn that a character 'used to ride or drive over from Grimwood every day' (Ch. 30). There is, however, little reason to suppose that at this time the words had much class significance. In Great Expectations, even Magwitch understands the distinction when he insists that Pip shall have 'Horses to ride, and horses to drive' (Ch. 40). Later, however, the tendency seems to have been for upper-class speakers to resist a broadening of the application of ride even when the importance of the horse had become relatively slight.

But perhaps when Alice Vavasor remarks to her brother, George, 'On the whole I don't know that there is any kind of life better than that of an English country gentleman in his own place' (Can You Forgive Her ?, 1, Ch. 5), the essentially patrician flavour of the word is most fully conveyed. As the quotation from Johnny Ludlow suggests, the size and importance of a place influenced the choice of terms by which it was to be described. A grange ('A country house with farm buildings attached, usually the residence of a gentleman-farmer' : O.E.D. grange 2) was an essentially modest affair as a character in Trollope's Rachel Ray (1863) reveals describing his home :

Grange is just the name for it, as it's an upper-class sort of homestead for a gentleman farmer. We've lived there since long before Adam, but we've never made much of a house of it. (Ch. 26).

Even small details such as doors might be called by different names in houses of different sizes :

He had to reply to the private entrance; what we should call the back door in a smaller house. (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 4).

This is Mrs. Gaskell describing the duties of Lady Ludlow's footman.

Close involvement in country life meant that the speech of some upper-class characters was influenced by the dialectal features of the area in which they lived. This is particularly true of the less fashionable squires who were often attached to their own locality by roots of many centuries' growth. Probably the most extreme case of this in Victorian fiction is provided by Sir Pitt Crawley in Vanity Fair. It is little wonder that

on his first appearance (Ch. 7) he is taken for a servant, and there are occasions on which it seems that his notably uncouth speech is motivated by a desire to shock - particularly in his dealings with his priggish elder son - but the grossest South-Western features, such as the voicing of [s] to [z] and [f] to [v] are also to be found on the occasions when he is earnestly trying to recommend himself as, for example, in his proposal to Becky Sharp :

There ! will that zatusfy you ? Come back and be my wife. Your vit vor't.... You've got more brains in your little vinger than any baronet's wife in the county. (Ch. 14).

Although such markedly substandard forms may once have been more common among men of rank, Sir Pitt is clearly an exceptional case; a man in whom vulgarity of language is indicative of a degeneracy of character. More often the influence of regional dialect was slight, and George Uploft, of whom we are told that the accent of his county 'just seasoned his speech' (Evan Harrington, Ch. 20), is probably more typical. Moreover, squires of this class often display a species of bilingualism. Even Sir Pitt Crawley alternates between 'the coarsest and vulgarest Hampshire accent' and 'the tone of a man of the world' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 7), while Squire Hamley, who normally addresses his equals in quite unexceptionable English, can, when speaking to his tenants, adopt 'their own strong nervous country dialect' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 22). It is only at moments of very powerful emotion - especially in connection with his hopes and disappointments concerning his two sons - that forms like t'other (Ch. 59), frabbed ('troubled' O.E.D.) and moidered ('bewildered, confused' O.E.D.) (Ch. 31) creep into his speech. Another group of speakers who on occasions show the same trait

are country clergymen. The old vicar of Vavasor, 'a Westmoreland man', used, we learn, to adapt his services to the requirements of his flock and 'read the prayers and preached his one Sunday sermon in a Westmoreland dialect' (Can You Forgive Her ?, II, Ch. 53).

There is much evidence to suggest that these dialectal forms were on the decrease in the Victorian period among upper-class speakers. Neither of Hamley's sons exhibits any trace of provincialism, and the younger Pitt Crawley is a model of gentility in his speech, while his younger brother speaks not with a Hampshire accent, but with the sophistication of his fast metropolitan set. A growing refinement in language was making itself felt. The increasing number of squires who sent their sons to one of the public schools was no doubt an important cause of this, and one thinks of the young Tom Brown taken from his village playmates in *The Vale of White Horse* and transplanted to Dr. Arnold's Rugby, or of the possibly excessive care which, in Meredith's novel, Harry Richmond's father lavishes on the linguistic education of his son. (see p. 150).

Despite this, rural dialects seem to have retained a certain measure of prestige. Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe, set largely in Devonshire, provides some interesting evidence of this. When Jane Evans becomes the fiancée of William, she is sent to school in Exeter to acquire some of the accomplishments of a lady. It is, however, too late to do much about her accent, but Kingsley is inclined to dismiss the importance of this :

Had she a slight Devonshire accent ? Well, well ! Do you know, I rather like it. I consider it aqually so good with the Scotch, my dear. (Ch. 65).

Earlier in the novel, during his Oxford days, Charles Ravenshoe is familiar with a fellow Devonian, 'who never met with Charles without having a turn at talking Devonshire with him' :

'Where be gwine ? Charles Ravenshoe, where be gwine ?'
'We'm gwine for a ride on the watter, Jan Lee.' (Ch. 22).

Although these exchanges cause 'great astonishment' among 'the surrounding dandies', it is clearly an accent in which a little local pride was not inappropriate.¹⁵ Local pride is also in evidence in Margaret Hale,¹⁶ and her attachment to her native New Forest extends to its special forms of speech :

Its people were her people. She made hearty friends with them; learned and delighted in using their peculiar words(North and South, Ch. 2).

All these examples are rural in character and there is good reason to suppose that the dialects of the cities were regarded with much less favour. Indeed, when Margaret moves to the industrial Milton-Northern and adopts phrases such as 'slack of work', her mother begs her to avoid 'these horrid Milton words' (Ch. 29) which she is particularly anxious that Margaret's fashionable Aunt Shaw should not hear from her niece. Margaret tries to justify herself, but it is on the grounds of

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15. Johnny Ludlow, the narrator of Mrs. Henry Wood's collection of stories, is also familiar with, and prepared to make use of, dialect when it seems especially apposite. Calling a Mrs. Parrifer 'stuck-up', he remarks, 'It is one of our county sayings, and it applied to her' (Johnny Ludlow, 1, IV). How justly stuck-up can be called a 'county saying' seems doubtful. The stories are set on the borders of Warwickshire and Worcestershire.
16. This seems slightly unusual for it may be noticed that all the other examples are drawn from the speech of men. One of the very few upper-class women whose speech is dialectal is Lady Glenmire, the 'widow of a Scotch baron', who disappoints the ladies of Cranford with her 'broad Scotch accent' (Cranford, Ch. 8). But, doubtless, the Scottish dialect enjoyed a somewhat higher status than those of provincial England.

reason rather than tradition. She points out that Aunt Shaw was happy to hear her own daughter, Edith, use 'military slang,' but Mrs. Hale remains unconvinced, clearly regarding what she calls 'factory slang' in a very different light: 'I only know it has a very vulgar sound; and I don't want to hear you using it.' Margaret's final attempt to persuade her mother that all dialects are essentially the same ('If using local words is vulgar, I was very vulgar in the Forest') was one which would not have commanded wide assent.

The use of local dialect by country squires is one aspect of their more general attachment to tradition, and their linguistic conservatism also shows itself in their preservation of some archaic idioms. Hamley of Wives and Daughters, for example, sometimes retains the old second person pronoun thee. In one conversation with his son, Roger, he uses this three times, though this may be partly explained by the fact that the occasion is shortly after the death of his elder son, and the moment is one of great familial intimacy :

I thought I should find thee here, my lad ! We'll have the old room done up again before winter; it smells musty enough, and yet I see it's the place for thee ! I want thee to go with me round the five-acre. (Ch. 59).

In the case of Squire Uploft and his son, George, the form ye - found in both subject and object positions and still preserved in how d'ye do and goodbye - is sometimes found :

I'm one with ye, Sir George. (Evan Harrington, Ch. 13).

Haven't ye heard of him. (Ch. 20).

In matters of vocabulary, too, the speech of men of this class is often decidedly old-fashioned, and sometimes shows a stubborn refusal to adopt new forms. Squire Todhetley, who appears in Mrs. Henry Wood's Johnny Ludlow, continues to call the illness which assails the unfortunate pointsman, Lease, inflammation of the chest rather than bronchitis, and the narrator comments, 'the Squire never went in for new names, and never would' (I, 6).

The speech of some women from long-established country families must have seemed similarly old-fashioned to Victorian readers. Miss Thorne of Barchester Towers is one of these. She preserves the unabbreviated withdrawing-room, which the O.E.D. describes as 'archaic or historical', a quality which is conveyed clearly enough by its context in the novel :

Miss Thorne's drawing-room, or, as she always called it, withdrawing-room, was a beautiful apartment. (Ch. 22).

The same is true of her use of destroy in the sense of kill which she applies to the case of an individual human being, when warning Eleanor Bold about the doctor she has consulted for her child : 'take care he doesn't destroy your little boy' (Ch. 23). As the O.E.D. comments, the use of destroy in this sense is now limited to 'war, pestilence, intemperance etc., which destroy multitudes' and to 'noxious animals' and 'suicide'.

Usage also varied as to the name applied to a personal servant. Many upper-class speakers preferred the plainer and older titles. Lady Cumnor, for instance, uses the phrase own woman because 'she disliked the new-fangledness of "lady's maid"'

(Wives and Daughters, Ch. 9), while men often use own man and my man in preference to the Gallic valet. Lord Saltire congratulates Charles Ravenshoe after seeing his name mentioned in The Times as a member of the victorious crew in the University Boat Race : 'My man pointed it out to me' (Ch. 25). In Doctor Thorne we hear of 'the baronet's "own man"' (Ch. 34).

Scholarly and unworldly country clergymen formed another group of speakers whose language was characterised by its old-fashioned quality. One of these is Christopher Clutterbuck, who receives a visit from the hero of Pelham. Though Clutterbuck tells him that he had formerly 'dwelt in the western department of the metropolis, near unto the noble mansion of Somerset House, and consequently in the very centre of what the idle call Fashion,' his speech is in marked contrast to that of the fashionable society of his day. His 'formal and antiquated method of speech' can be seen in his occasional retention of the ending -eth in verbs in the third person singular : 'the fashion that seemeth best'; the absence of the pronoun one in such sentences as 'The boy is my nephew, a goodly child, and a painstaking'; and the use of grateful when we should today use gratifying : 'I own that there is much that is grateful to the temper of my mind in this retired spot' (Ch. 63). Very much like Clutterbuck in habits of speech is Josiah Crawley, the eccentric and impoverished vicar of Hogglegstock, in The Last Chronicle of Barset. He, too, occasionally retains the -eth ending with some verbs : 'It seemeth to me' (Ch. 68), and also uses archaic vocabulary such as nathless (Ch. 74) and thereanent (Ch. 83), while certainly very old-fashioned by the nineteenth century is his use of do as an auxiliary in unemphatic positive sentences: '... there seems to have grown up in the world a habit of greater familiarity than that which I think did prevail when

last I moved much among men' (Ch. 83).

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that old-fashioned language was to be found only in the country. There are, for example, a number of superannuated Regency dandies in Victorian fiction who retain what were clearly the fashionable idioms of their youth. Perhaps the best instance of such a character is provided by Major Pendennis. In his book, The Language of Thackeray (London 1978), K.C. Phillipps notes how the Major's language remains in many essentials that typical of the world of Jane Austen's novels (pp.41-2). We may cite his use of fact : '... what was the fact ?The young people had been married for three months before Lord Ferrybridge knew anything about it', in which the sense of the Latin factum (a thing done) is prominent. In explaining his ambitions for young Pen in the same chapter, he talks of having 'much higher views for you' (Pendennis, Ch. 8), where we should today be inclined to speak of prospects or intentions. Similarly old-fashioned is his reference to Pen's 'person and expectations' (Ch. 37), which he hopes will make possible a good marriage, and in which person refers to the 'bodily frame or figure' (O.E.D. person III 4).¹⁷ Elsewhere, he refers to Pen's 'good parts' (Ch. 59). This corresponds to O.E.D. (sb. 12), 'A personal quality or attribute ... especially of an intellectual kind', a usage which is regarded as 'archaic'.

The speech of Mrs. Gaskell's Lady Ludlow (who returns us once again to the country), if anything looks back even earlier to the eighteenth century, for she is already an old woman in the pre-

17. Though in this case the O.E.D. does cite one example from George Eliot as late as 1876 (Daniel Deronda).

Victorian period in which the story is set. She still retains a vivid recollection of Madame de Créquy, an émigrée she had helped to escape from the France of the Revolution. Indeed, the days of the ancien régime are perhaps recalled by her use of the word levée which she has to describe her weekly interview with her tenants (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 3), a usage which is clearly absurdly outmoded, and which she continues to retain in spite of the fact that the meetings are no longer held in the morning.

It is interesting to notice how a number of words and phrases which she uses have fallen sharply in status since her heyday and were, by the middle of the nineteenth century generally regarded as vulgarisms. The narrator recalls how Lady Ludlow's protégées talked of a 'beau-pot ... of pinks and roses' (Ch. 3), though a parenthetical ^{et} 'as we called it' doubtless indicates and excuses its archaic quality. This word the O.E.D. records as a misspelling of bough-pot (a large ornamental vase or a bunch of flowers) which, as it notes, is archaic and dialectal, and readers of Vanity Fair will recall how the variant bow-pot is censured by the fastidious Miss Pinkerton even in the Regency world of that novel (Ch. 1). Another of Lady Ludlow's phrases which had certainly fallen out of polite usage by the Victorian period was the phrase dish of tea. This occurs as she welcomes the narrator, then a young girl, into her home :

You are cold, my child. You shall have a dish of tea with me. (Ch. 1).

By the period of Tom Brown's Schooldays, the phrase is unusual enough to attract attention when it is used by a young schoolmaster at Rugby, though Hughes reminds us that in the days of 'our

grandmothers' it had been acceptable :

... their master, whose enjoyment in the shape of meals was his 'dish of tea' (as our grandmothers called it) in the evening; and the phrase was apt in his case, for he always poured his out into the saucer before drinking. (II, Ch. 8).

This practice was no doubt frowned upon as much as the word, which, in fact, had its origin, not in drinking from the saucer, but from the design of eighteenth-century tea-cups which had no handles. The usage, however, outlived the utensils that had given rise to it and, in Victorian novels, it is characteristic of such unfashionable households as that of Mr. Lyon in Felix Holt, who invites one of his guests to 'stay and have a dish of tea with us' (Ch. 5), while in Vanity Fair, it is used by the narrator, though, since this is during an account of the Sedley family's days of poverty, it is probably intended as a reflection of their fallen circumstances :

... this family of four people ... might manage to live in decent comfort through the year, and hold up their heads yet, and be able to give a friend a dish of tea still (Ch. 46).

Bow-pot and dish of tea are representative of a more general tendency for words and phrases to become first old-fashioned and then vulgar, the best speakers often seeming to follow a middle way between the outmoded idiom and the latest neologism. The best model is neither a Josiah Crawley nor a Mr. G.O.A. Head of Coningsby (see p. 126) and Pope's advice is very much applicable :

Be not the first by whom the new are try'd,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

Sometimes this kind of déclassé archaism takes the form of outmoded civility, a feature which is discussed by G.L. Brook in his The Language of Dickens (London, 1970). He draws attention to the fact that the 'one-time fashionable greeting' your servant continues to occur frequently in the 'mouths of unfashionable characters' (p. 54). Mr. Omer, the undertaker in David Copperfield (Ch. 21), provides one example of its use, while in Henrietta Temple Mr. Levison, a Jewish moneylender, has the same formula but with a spelling suggesting an equally démodé pronunciation : 'Your sarvant, Captin' (Bk. VI, Ch. 10).

Another misguided attempt to appear genteel is to be found in Mr. Guppy's inflated and excessively deferential language to Lady Dedlock in which he uses the word party :

Your Ladyship will remember when I mention it, that the last time I was here, I run against a party very eminent in our profession, and whose loss we all deplore. (Ch. 55).

Mr. Guppy is, of course, a very junior member of the legal profession, and the use of party for person was characteristic of legal documents, the O.E.D. (party sb. 14) regarding it in everyday contexts as 'shoppy, vulgar, or jocular', though it goes on to note that it had been 'formerly common and in serious use'. The fact that the usage had gone downhill is confirmed by contrasting the state of affairs reflected by The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected (1826), where the word is condemned as legal jargon, with that in Jane Austen's novels where there is no suggestion of vulgarity attaching to it. It occurs, for example, in the narrative of Sense and Sensibility (1811) : '... they all joined in a very spirited critique upon the party' (III, Ch. 1). By the middle of the century the word had become associated with office clerks

and even servants, since the vulgarly loquacious Mrs. Tooseypegs, Verdant Green's nurse, declares at the birth of the hero that she has 'nuss'd a many parties through their trouble' (The Adventures of Verdant Green, I, Ch. 1).

Partial underwent a similar decline, when used in the sense of 'having a liking for', which, in the O.E.D.'s last quotation (1889), reveals its status by being attached to 'cold sausage' (partial a. 1c). Once again, however, the word is found with no suggestion of doubtful status in Sense and Sensibility when Edward grows 'more and more partial to the house and environs' (1, Ch. 19). Another word which is now used only of food, and then colloquially, tasty, could, in the earlier years of the nineteenth century be applied more widely with the meaning 'tasteful, displaying good taste', though by the Victorian period this too had become clearly vulgar, as can be seen from its use by a commercial traveller who tries to sell what is evidently a quite tasteless iron table by describing it as 'the tastiest present for a gentleman to make to his lady' (Orley Farm, Ch. 6). In Bulwer Lytton's Godolphin (1833) the word is applied to the suburban villas of Brompton, of which we are told 'the windows were plate-glass, with mahogany sashes - only, here and there, a gothic casement was stuck - by way of looking "tasty"' (Ch. 49). The O.E.D. (tasty a. 2) illustrates the status of this word by an interesting quotation from Coleridge dating from 1821 :

I wish I could find a more familiar word than aesthetic To be sure, there is tasty; but that has been long ago emasculated for all unworthy uses by milliners, tailors and dandies. (Blackwood's Magazine, X, 254.)

The years between Jane Austen and the Victorian novelists

also saw a change in the currency of female which, when used as a mere synonym for woman, is now, in the words of the O.E.D., 'commonly avoided by good writers, except with contemptuous implication' (female sb. 2b). This word is one of the many which bring the wrath of Lady Camper upon the unfortunate head of General Ople. He rather gallantly describes her name, Angela, as a 'beautiful female name', only to be told, 'Spare me that word "female" as long as you live' ('The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', Ch. 4). When in Cranford, Miss Pole considers 'the feelings of delicate independence existing in the mind of every refined female' (Ch. 14), she is talking in the idiom of a by-gone age and unwittingly reveals the outmoded manners of her provincial circle. She is, nonetheless, quick to correct Martha, Miss Matty's servant, when she describes Lady Glenmire as 'a sharp, stirring sort of a body' (Ch. 8), and insists that she should be referred to as a lady. Body used in this rather reductive way was substandard and, since it had more than a suggestion of pity and condescension, it was particularly inappropriate when applied by a servant to a social superior. The O.E.D. regards the usage as dialectal, though it, too, had enjoyed better days and had been 'formerly ... exactly equivalent to the current person' (body sb. 13.). It seems to have undergone an earlier and yet more decisive decline than party or female.

Romance and courtship was another subject in which the fashionable usage of the Victorians differed subtly from that of the preceding decades. Again, Pendennis offers some examples of outmoded idiom. When expressing his reservations about Pen's youthful infatuation with the actress, Emily Costigan, Mr. Smirke, the curate, hopes it is 'no unworthy object ... which Pen had formed' (Ch. 6). This use of object in reference to a person was

becoming decidedly old-fashioned, and when the same idiom occurs in Trollope's Orley Farm (1861) it is evidently regarded as substandard :

I've had my object, and though she's been another's, still I've kept her image on my heart. (Ch. 43).

In Disraeli's Coningsby, the aging buck, Mr. Cassilis, and a friend discuss the likelihood of a forthcoming marriage between Beaumanoir and Edith Millbank, and the anonymous friend reports, 'I saw him very sweet on her last night' (Bk. VIII, Ch. 4). Sweet on her corresponds to the O.E.D's. definition 'to have a particular fondness or affection for (one of the opposite sex)' (sweet, v. 10b), and once again this is a phrase which was not to be found among good speakers a few years later. Indeed, in Wilkie Collins' Armada (1866), the idiom is deplored :

'He's sweet on her red hair,' was the elegant expression. How I hate the coarse ways of the lower orders. (Ch. 18).

Possibly from Regency English is the word booked which Cassilis uses after Edith and Beaumanoir have announced their engagement :
'So Beau, they say, is booked at last' (Coningsby, Bk. VIII, Ch. 4).

The French borrowing beau, meaning a male admirer, displays a pattern of changing currency which is by now familiar. It enjoyed a considerable vogue during the first decades of the century, though it is noticeable even in Jane Austen's novels that it is not used by the most refined characters. By the middle of the century this hint of vulgarity had become very marked indeed, and the word is hardly to be found except on the lips of servants. In Can You Forgive Her ?, Jeanette, Mrs. Greenow's maid,

discussing a quarrel between two of her mistress's suitors, remarks,

If I had two beaux as was a-courting me together, in course I should expect as they would punch each other's heads. (II, Ch. 47).

The word's fortunes have clearly fallen markedly since the days of the Steeles and, indeed, Mrs. Greenow, herself no paragon of delicacy, goes on to disassociate herself from it by asking, 'But you don't suppose that I want beaux, as you call them ?' Perhaps the reason for this decline of beau had to do with a changing ideal of masculine physique and fashion between the days of the Regency dandy and the muscular Christian. In her letters, Jane Austen could still refer to 'a beauty of my mother's' (Jane Austen's Letters, Ed. Chapman, 2nd. Ed., Oxford 1952, p.58), and it seems from a remark in Society Small Talk that, while beauty later became used to refer to one of the female sex (replacing the Regency belle), no Victorian equivalent of beau emerged :

'Beau' and 'Belle' are terms no longer in use; and for 'Beau' no equivalent has as yet been discovered, although the 'Beauty' has replaced the 'Belle'. (Ch. 7, p. 118).

The whole subject of love and marriage was difficult water to negotiate with delicacy and there were many occasions when upper-class speakers made use of French as a navigational aid. Sometimes this is because there seems genuinely to be no appropriate English word - how does one refer to the loved one before an engagement is announced ? - sometimes it is because the obliquity of French is preferable to the directness of English. Both these reasons, perhaps, account for the use of French vocabulary in the advice which Pelham receives from his mother before a visit he is to pay to Lady Roseville :

You must be particularly attentive to her; you will probably now have an opportunity de faire votre cour (i.e. pay court to someone).

After this she goes on to remind him, 'Nothing ... is like a liaison (quite innocent of course) with a woman of celebrity in the world. In marriage a man lowers a woman to his own rank; in an affaire de coeur he raises himself to hers' (Pelham, Ch. 4). Major Pendennis offers some similar examples; he tells the actress, Miss Fotheringay, 'I was not the only man épris (captivated) last night' (Pendennis, Ch. 11); he believes his nephew to be on the best of terms 'au mieux' with Blanche Amory (Ch. 37), and, at a dinner, notices that Jack Belsize's affections are still directed towards Clara Pulleyn, and that he is not, as is generally supposed, 'aux soins with (full of attention for) la belle Banquière' (The Newcomes, Ch. 49). French is also used by the General of Dobbin's regiment before they leave for Belgium and the campaign that will culminate at Waterloo. 'If you have any affaire là', he advises the good Captain, 'if you have any Phillis to console ... I recommend you to set about your business without delay,' and, taking his own advice to heart, he sits down 'to pen a poulet' (an amorous note)' to Mademoiselle Aménaïde of His Majesty's Theatre.' The General is, we are told, 'exceedingly vain of his French' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 24).

Niceties of social conduct called for expressions of a certain delicacy and here, too, French was found a useful resource. We find the Major talking of a 'wretched intrigue' (Pendennis, Ch. 9), who exposes his ignorance of the ways of the polite world, while in Sketches and Travels, Thackeray writes of an elderly Mr. Brown who, recalling his first 'entrée' into society in 1815, reflects that, though his family were always gentlemen, they

'had not always attained that haute volée of fashion' which has distinguished some of them subsequently. (A Word about Dinners).

It is very noticeable that all these examples have been taken from the speech of the older characters, particularly those who still retain the habits and attitudes of Regency England, and Victorian fiction gives the strong impression that French was most commonly used by speakers of this age-group. Very often their use of the language is racy and idiomatic, and suggests a slightly disreputable worldliness. One wonders, since it is so often used in connection with romance and dissipation of various kinds, whether one of its sources may not have been French novels. Miss Crawley, the 'old sinner' of Vanity Fair perhaps represents this quality most fully. She has, after all, a most un-Victorian enthusiasm for Voltaire and professes, at least in theory, an ardent republicanism. She calls her protégée, Becky, 'a perfect trouvaille' (godsend), and tells her that Rawdon is criblé de dettes (up to his ears in debt). (Ch. 11). On discovering that Becky has refused Sir Pitt's proposal of marriage, she rightly concludes that Becky's affections are already engaged, and Briggs is ordered to discover 'who is the objet' (compare the Regency usage, object see p. 67); while she determines to 'set him up in a shop' and 'dôter Becky' (provide her with a dowry) (Ch. 15).

The use of French seems to have become rather less common as the century went on, at least among young men, who often display a complete incomprehension in the face of these idioms. Thackeray, as one would expect of such a shrewd observer, registers these changing mores. Foker, for example, fails to follow the Major when they are discussing Pen's rivals for the affections

of The Fotheringay :

'And is Sir Derby Oaks,' the Major said, with great delight and anxiety, 'another soupirant ?'

'Another what ?' inquired Mr. Foker. (Pendennis Ch. 10).

James Crawley in Vanity Fair is in much the same position during his stay with Miss Crawley - 'in a house full of old women, jabbering French and Italian ... to him' - and he laments his plight in the undergraduate manner, 'Regularly up a tree, by Jingo !' (Ch. 34). Modern languages played no great part in a young man's education and Eton, where, according to Mrs. Henry Wood in East Lynne, 'There was one whole real live French tutor - and he an Englishman - for the eight hundred boys' (III, Ch. 21), may not have been untypical. The education of girls was very different in this respect. In many schools we hear of there being a teacher of French, and certainly a governess was expected to be proficient in the language. Mrs. General, tutor to the Dorrit sisters, in fact teaches both French and Italian as we learn from a letter which Amy writes to Arthur Clennam (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 4). The Newcome family engage a native speaker, Mme. Lebrun, to take charge of Fanny's education and we see the girl trying out words like méchantes in a conversation with the Colonel (The Newcomes, Ch. 7). This variation in the education conventionally offered to the two sexes no doubt explains why, in all but the oldest speakers, French is decidedly more common, in the language of women than men.

There is evidence that the nature of such borrowings was changing too. They ceased to be words appropriate to the 'fast' and disreputable, and became expressions of refinement and much

more self-conscious fashion. In Bleak House, the Dedlock s entertain a brilliant and distinguished circle of the 'élite of the beau monde' and, as the novelist comments, 'the fashionable intelligence is weak in English, but a giant refreshed in French' (Ch. 12), while the unsuspecting Jack Raikes of Evan Harrington, asking for an omelette at a country inn, brings upon himself the 'respectful antagonism' of 'the sons of Britain' when 'they hear foreign words, the familiarity with which appears to imply wealth and distinction' (Ch. 11).

The subjects for which French was used also changed somewhat, gastronomic matters figuring largely - as, of course, they still do today. According to The Book of Snobs, the cynical diner-out might suspect that 'the side-dishes of to-day are réchauffés (warmed up) from the dinner of yesterday', or seek to impress the company by declaring, 'Lady Jiminy's chef is the only man in London who knows how to dress - Filet en serpenteau - or Suprême de volaille aux truffes' (Ch. 19). Readers of Vanity Fair will also recall the memorable scene in which the younger Pitt Crawley tries to persuade his uncouth father to call Scotch broth 'potage de mouton à l'écossaise' and remarks, significantly, 'I believe it is the custom, sir, in decent society ... to call the dish as I have called it' (Ch. 8).

Such uses of the language tend at once to be more gratuitous and less idiomatic than those which had been current earlier in the century. These points were made in the article on slang from Household Words from which we have quoted before. This noticed how 'the slang of the fashionable world is mostly imported from France' and that 'an unmeaning gibberish of Gallicisms runs through English fashionable conversation, and fashionable novels,

and accounts of fashionable parties in the fashionable newspapers.' However, the writer asserts that much of this would be unintelligible to 'a well-bred Frenchman' :

The thé dansante would be completely inexplicable to him He might just understand what was meant by vis-a-vis, entremets, and some others of the flying horde of frivolous little foreign slangisms hovering about fashionable cookery and fashionable furniture; but three fourths of them would seem as barbarous French provincialisms. (p. 76).

We may suspect , too, that our 'well-bred Frenchman' might have been further confused by the pronunciation which these borrowings were given. Indeed, Becky Sharp, that shrewdest of social climbers, commits only one solecism in her convincing imitation of fashionable conversation : 'it was only from her French being so good that you could know she was not a born woman of fashion' (Vanity Fair, (Ch. 29)).

Perhaps, then, it is not so curious as it may at first seem to find the occasional example of older speakers objecting to the use of French by their juniors. They see in its needless use a mark of affectation. In East Lynne, Mrs. Vane, a heartlessly ambitious and hypocritical woman, declares that she likes to have her tea brought to her in the cup as she dislikes 'the embarras of making it'. Her grandmother, the aged Mrs. Levison, remarks :

Indeed ! ... and get it slopped over in the saucers, and as cold as milk ! You always were lazy, Emma - and always given to those French words. I'd rather stick a printed label on my forehead, for my part, 'I speak French,' and let the world know it that way. (1, Ch. 2).

The grossest examples of an indiscriminate use of the language tend to be found among the rising middle-class, where the standards of appropriateness are very lax. Louisa Harrington, the

admirer of 'exquisite language', is a case in point. She is very disappointed when Lady Jocelyn (who as a titled lady, she thinks, should know better) talks of a pic-nic. Louisa would have it termed a fete champêtre, and she gently upbraids Lady Jocelyn :

'Why do you denominate this a pic-nic, Lady Jocelyn ?
It is in verity a fête !'

'I suppose we ought to lie down à la Grecque to come within the term,... On the whole, I prefer plain English for such matters.' (Evan Harrington, Ch. 31).

Mrs. Gaskell clearly intends us to feel similar reservations about Mrs. Gibson's use of French. On one occasion she tries to protect the ornaments in her house from an impulsive outburst of dancing by her daughter, Cynthia, which places in 'imminent danger ... the various little tables' which were 'loaded with objets d'art (as Mrs. Gibson delighted to call them) with which the drawing-room was crowded' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 39). General Ople describes his 'gentlemanly residence' as a bijou, which Meredith describes as a word from 'the tongue of auctioneers' ('The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', Ch. 1), and he further compounds his crime by mispronouncing the word as Lady Camper, with her customary forbearance, does not neglect to tell him : 'Oblige me, General, by not pronouncing the French word as if you were swearing by something in English, like a trooper' (Ch. 4). Another man who uses this word and who is, in fact, an auctioneer, Borthrop Trumbull, shows even more clearly a discrepancy between the quality of the objects and the language in which they are described. He affects the air of an aristocratic connoisseur, and his professional idiom is liberally larded with French borrowings :

Now, ladies ... this tray contains a very recherchy lot - a collection of trifles for the drawing-room table ... but pass the tray round, Joseph - these bijoux must be examined, ladies. (Middlemarch, Ch. 60).

Some uses of French had clearly become very déclassé indeed by the last quarter of the century. But the suspicion of a latent vulgarity in such borrowings was not really new. As early as Pelham (1828), the hero is warned by his mother on this point, though she is, as we have seen, not always a faithful follower of her own prescriptive advice :

You will also be careful, in returning to England, to make very little use of French phrases; no vulgarity is more unpleasing. (Ch. 26).

In Jane Austen's Emma, too, the established families of Highbury are unimpressed by Mrs. Elton's fondness for the phrase caro sposo. Italian is occasionally, though not often, found in the dialogue of Victorian novels, and, like French, mainly on the lips of women. Perhaps it had a literary flavour, for it is used by Lady Carbury in the course of her attempt to persuade an editor, Mr. Alf, to give a favourable review to her latest book :

... it would sell five hundred copies at once, - that is if it were done really con amore. (The Way We Live Now, II, Ch. 89).

The education of young men was, of course, primarily classical but, despite this, most gentlemen were disinclined to introduce Latin into ordinary conversation or even to allude to the classical authors too overtly and, in an article in The Westminster Review entitled 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists',¹⁹ George Eliot talks with scathing irony of novels which misrepresent fashionable society in this respect; in one of these, Laura Gay, she notes how the heroine has 'a quite playful familiarity with the Latin classics - with the "dear old Virgil," "the graceful Horace, the humane Cicero, and the pleasant Livy"', and goes so far as

19. Reprinted in The Essays of George Eliot, Ed. Thomas Pinney, London, 1963.

to quote Latin 'at a pic-nic' :

It is (George Eliot goes on) as little the custom of well-bred men as of well-bred women to quote Latin in mixed parties; they can contain their familiarity with 'the humane Cicero' without allowing it to boil over in ordinary conversation; and even references to 'the pleasant Livy' are not absolutely irrepressible. (Pinney, pp. 305-6).

George Eliot's own fiction gives a rather different account of the upper-class's relationship with the Latin tongue than that satirised here. The bemused Tom Tulliver discusses the education he is receiving from Mr. Stelling with his fellow pupil, Philip Wakem :

'I can't think why anybody should learn Latin,' said Tom.
'It's no good.'
'It's part of the education of a gentleman,' said Philip.
'All gentlemen learn the same things.'
'What ! Do you think Sir John Crake, the master of the harriers, knows Latin ?' said Tom, who had often thought he should like to resemble Sir John Crake.
'He learnt it when he was a boy, of course,' said Philip. 'But I dare say he's forgotten it.'
'Oh, well, I can do that, then,' said Tom(The Mill on the Floss, Bk. II, Ch. 3).

When Latin does occur, it tends to be among professional men, especially lawyers, who often seem to be attempting to suggest learning and profundity by it. This can be seen in the case of Perker in Pickwick Papers who uses a number of Latin tags such as amicus curiae and ad captandum during the trial scene (Ch. 10), while a more sinister evasiveness, though not unmixed with a similar love of parade, is clearly at work in the conversation of the devious Matthew Jermyn in Felix Holt, where Latin occurs in conjunction with a marked hesitancy of speech. This is a feature of Jermyn's professional manner :

The essence of bribery is, that it should be legally proved; there is not such a thing - a- in rerum natura - a - as unproved bribery. (Ch. 17).

The fact that such language is affected rather than spontaneous can be established by the way in which it disappears whenever the lawyer's quicktemper is aroused. We are told that when 'Jermyn had the black cloud over his face, he never hesitated or drawled, and made no Latin quotations' (Ch. 35). Perhaps it is because he detects this element of affectation, that Harold Transome attacks Jermyn, all but accusing him of vulgarity. Jermyn has just delivered a particularly long Latin proverb (nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit) when Transome silences him :

'Speak for yourself,' said Harold. 'I don't talk in tags of Latin, which might be learned by a schoolmaster's footboy. I find the King's English express my meaning better. (Ch. 17).

A genuinely scholarly man, and indeed gentleman, Christopher Clutterbuck, the country clergyman of Pelham, is, despite the awkwardness of his manner, scrupulous in avoiding any such hint of ostentation :

Perhaps [reflects Pelham] he thought it would seem like an empty parade of learning in one who so confessedly possessed it, to deal in the strange words of another tongue, and consequently rejected them(Ch. 63).

Other scholarly clergymen do, however, slip at times into Latin and, though they are quite free from the taint of vulgarity which hangs over Jermyn, they do not escape the suggestion of pedantry and their tone is very far removed from that of fashionable society. Mr. Crawley, for example, of Trollope's Barchester novels reluctantly accepts, impecunious as he is, that he stands

in need of help of the lawyer, Mr. Toogood: 'In formâ pauperis I must go to him' (The Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 32). Like Crawley, Mr. Casaubon of Middlemarch finds it difficult to adapt his conversation to the requirements of informal or intimate society. He does not, we are told, have 'two styles of talking at command' and in the early days of his courtship he talks to Dorothea 'nearly as he would have done to a fellow-student'. He has, however, learned to make some concessions to the relative ignorance of his acquaintances for 'when he used a Greek or Latin phrase he always gave the English with scrupulous care'. This is because 'A learned provincial clergyman is accustomed to think of his acquaintances as of "lords, knyghtes, and other noble and worthie men, that come Latyn but lytille"' (Ch. 3). It is precisely this quality that Casaubon lacks, the ability to move up and down the linguistic register with ease and felicity, which distinguishes the fashionable speech of men and women of the world. It is a capacity possessed to a marked degree by a very different cleric, Archdeacon Grantly :

The archdeacon, who was a practical man, allowed himself the use of every-day expressive modes of speech when among his closest intimates, though no one could soar into a more intricate labyrinth of refined phraseology(The Warden, Ch. 5).

The emphasis on the classical languages in a gentleman's education sometimes left him unschooled in his native tongue. When Lord Ascot in Ravenshoe is asked by Adelaide about a point of grammar, he replies, 'I can't say, ... I was at Eton, and hadn't the advantage that you had of learning English grammar' (Ch. 50), and Eton is also blamed for weakness of spelling, a difficulty which troubles a number of upper-class characters. In Thackeray's Book of Snobs this is directly attributed to the school's stress

on classical subjects. Lord Gules accepts an invitation 'in a letter ... with a number of faults of spelling', and the narrator comments that, despite this, he 'may yet be a very fine classical scholar for what I know : having had his education at Eton' (Ch. 29). Other examples of this orthographic deficiency are provided by Rawdon Crawley, whom the ex-governess, Becky, is on hand to help when occasion demands - 'You old booby ... beseech is not spelt with an a, and earliest is' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 25) - and Jack Belsize in The Newcomes who, enjoying no such assistance, is forced to consult a written authority when composing his love letters to Clara Pulleyn : 'How many a time had he looked into the dictionary at White's to see whether eternal was spelt with an e, and adore with one d or two !' (Ch. 28).

It would be a mistake to think of upper-class speech as being invariably more correct than that of the classes below. True, it is generally free from the grossest solecisms, but it is certainly not governed by the dictates of bookish learning. It is, in the words of J.W. Clark, the language of those who are 'certain, not so much that they speak Standard English as that Standard English is what they speak' (The Language and Style of Anthony Trollope, p.38). This confidence is often based on centuries of tradition which can override the objections of the grammarians. Lord Monmouth, for example, ignores the conventional modern distinction between the verbs to learn and to teach when he gives the young Coningsby an aphoristic piece of advice when he is about to enter Parliament : 'Learn to know the House; learn the House to know you' (Coningsby, Bk. VIII, Ch. 3). Those in more humble positions could not afford such a cavalier attitude to English grammar. We have already contrasted Parkes and Lady Harriet in

Wives and Daughters, and a rather similar example can be found in Vanity Fair. In one of his conversations, Pitt Crawley remarks of one of his tenants, 'Him and his family has been cheating me on that farm these hundred and fifty years,' and Becky, who reports the solecism in her letter to Amelia, comments, 'Sir Pitt might have said "he and his family," to be sure; but rich baronets do not need to be careful about grammar, as poor governesses must be' (Ch. 8).

The upper-class in Victorian times also did not need to be careful about avoiding strong language. Indeed, they were noted for it,²⁰ and this seems to have been particularly true of country gentlemen. When de Florac in The Newcomes comes into a fortune and acquires an estate, he feels that it is necessary to adapt his language to meet his new situation :

In conversation with his grooms and servants he swore freely, - not that he was accustomed to employ oaths in his own private talk, but he thought the employment of these expletives necessary as an English country gentleman. (Ch. 57).

A similar view is taken by Mr. Standish, a Middlemarch lawyer.

20. This may have been part of a long-standing distinction between aristocratic and bourgeois manners; certainly Shakespeare in I Henry IV seems to be alluding to something of the kind when Hotspur is made to object to his wife's mild oath in good sooth. He tells her, 'Heart, you swear like a comfit-maker's wife' and goes on,

Swear me, Kate, like a lady as thou art,
A good mouth-filling oath, and leave 'in sooth'
And such protest of pepper gingerbread
To velvet guards and Sunday citizens.

(III)

who 'had been so long concerned with the landed gentry that he had become landed himself' and feels that he owes it to himself to use strong language. He declares Miss Brooke to be 'an uncommonly fine woman, by God !' and we are told that he used that oath 'in a deep-mouthed manner as a sort of armorial bearings, stamping the speech of a man who held a good position'. Significantly, the non-conformist commercial man, Bulstrode, responds to this with only a cold bow since he 'disliked coarseness and profanity' (Middlemarch, Ch. 10). A rather similar situation is to be found in My Lady Ludlow where Lady Ludlow's agent, Captain James, (a gentleman by birth) earns the disapproval of the neighbouring land-owner, a baptist baker from Birmingham, who 'did not cease blaming him for not succeeding, and for swearing' (Ch. 13). Perhaps the two things are not unconnected in the Protestant ethic.

It would be wrong to suggest that this fondness for swearing was confined to the squirearchy and landed gentry. It was also found much higher in the aristocracy. The Marquis of Farintosh, for example, garnishes his conversation 'with the usual expletives which adorned his eloquence when he was strongly moved' (The Newcomes, Ch. 59); Lord Steyne responds to Wenham with 'one of his usual oaths' (Pendennis, Ch. 14), while Lord Mountfalcon in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, described as 'intensely communicative, but inarticulate', has, on falling for the charms of Lucy, no other vocabulary in which to express his feelings :

Good round oaths had formerly compassed and expounded his noble emotions. They were now quite beyond the comprehension of blasphemy, even when emphasized(Ch. 39).

This is, however, to present an oversimplified picture. Some fictional gentleman did disapprove of swearing and, far from seeing it as a token of rank, censured it as a symptom of

vulgarity. When Tom Brown visits the sporting land-owner, Mr. Wurley, he is offended by 'the frequent oaths with which he garnished his conversation' (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 33), and finally rounds on him angrily :

I am sorry to have wasted a day in the company of a man who sets up for a country gentleman with the tongue of a Thames bargee and the heart of a Jew pawnbroker. (Ch. 33).

Perhaps this fastidiousness is just the mark of the muscular Christian, though Lord Kew, who has not had the benefit of Dr. Arnold's influence, is brought to see the error of his ways after he has narrowly escaped death in a duel and shows his new moral earnestness by repudiating his old profanities. He now swears 'by Jupiter!' and remarks, 'I intend only to swear by the heathen gods now' (The Newcomes, Ch. 38). This rather bears out a remark in The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected (1826) which suggested that swearing was in decline in fashionable company :

The only oath which I can recollect of lately meeting with, in circles that have any pretention of fashion, is by Jove! an old heathenish oath, which like the ancient Roman oaths 'by Hercules' and 'by Jupiter,' are sometimes picked up at the classical schools or the Universities. (p. 97).

This is almost certainly an overstatement of the degree to which profanity disappeared from educated conversation, but there was one limitation on its use which was pretty generally observed. It was confined to male company. The fact that Lord Steyne swears freely in Becky's presence is almost certainly an indication of the low morals of both parties and would, no doubt, have confirmed in the mind of the contemporary reader, the essential impropriety of their relationship (Vanity Fair, Ch. 37). Direct references

to this prohibition are common. When Archdeacon Grantly permits himself 'to use very strong language in his allusion to the bishop's wife' - he calls her 'that she-Beelzebub' - Trollope defends him : 'It must be recorded on his behalf that he used the phrase in the presence only of the gentlemen of the party he would not have ventured to use such words aloud in the presence of ladies' (Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 10). This is in contrast to Mr. Grandcourt of Daniel Deronda who reveals something of his degeneracy of character by talking of a 'damned place' in Gwendolen's presence : 'one of the freedoms he had assumed as a husband being the use of his strongest epithets' (Ch. 35). More often gentlemen are found to check themselves out of deference to the sex of their companions in the middle of what is clearly an habitual oath. Modesty of this kind seizes Squire Uploft :

'If you mean to say that cricket's a - ' the old squire speaking ... remembered the saving presences, and coughed - 'good thing, I'm one with ye, ...' (Evan Harrington, Ch. 13).

Though some women are sufficiently broad-minded to tolerate such a breach in etiquette - Lady Jocelyn in the same novel is one - most insist on the conventional proprieties being observed. When Lady Carbury hears strong language from her dissolute son, Felix, she responds sharply, 'If you speak to me in that way, Felix, I must leave the room' (The Way We Live Now, I, Ch. 7), while later in the novel the same oath (devil) earns a rebuke for Dolly Longestaffe from her ^{is} sister, Sophia : 'Dolly ! ... do remember where you are' (I, Ch. 13).

As one would expect, the use of profanity by women is very rare. Indeed, Becky Sharp, with a delicacy more conventional than real,

in her letter to Amelia from Queen's Crawley refuses to repeat the language actually used by Sir Pitt :

'Yes, hang it' (said Sir Pitt, only he used, dear, a much wickeder word)(Vanity Fair, Ch. 8).

In fact, one of the few examples of the use of strong language by a woman is a comic one. Miss Galindo tells how she has attempted to overcome the anti-feminist prejudices of Mr. Horner whose clerk she has been appointed :

... I don't mind telling you that I have said 'Confound it!' and 'Zounds!' I can't get any farther. For all that, Mr. Horner won't forget I am a lady ... and if it were not to please my Lady Ludlow, Mr. Horner and his books might go hang (see how natural that came out!). (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 10).

Here she is trying to put herself on an equal footing with a man by a deliberate use of, admittedly mild, oaths.

CHAPTER II.

VULGARISMS AND THE PURSUIT OF REFINEMENT.

When, in Disraeli's Sybil, the heroine strays into what is clearly one of the poorest and most unsavoury areas of London, where the streets are aflame with gin-palaces and filled with 'a multitude ... sauntering in the mild though tainted air', her first reaction is one of alarm. Not a little of this is attributable to the language of the inhabitants who, we are told, are engaged in 'bargaining, blaspheming, drinking, wrangling; and varying ... their fierce strife and their impious irreverence, with flashes of rich humour, gleams of native wit, and racy phrases of idiomatic slang' (Bk. V, Ch. 6). Small wonder that such unrestrained linguistic licence should prove disconcerting to a young woman more used to the refinements of quiet domesticity than this indelicate, if vigorous, argot of the streets. But, interesting as Disraeli's account of the vernacular of the lowest stratum of Victorian society may be, it would be dangerous to generalise too far from it. To do so would be to risk underplaying the variety which existed in lower-class speech. It is true that, at one extreme, such language might be so strongly marked by substandard features - like the enigmatic 'fen larks' (i.e. no tricks) of Jo in Bleak House - as to be virtually incomprehensible to a more educated speaker - 'What does the horrible creature mean ?' exclaims Lady Dedlock (Ch. 16) - yet among the families of respectable artisans, at least in the rural tranquility of places like The Vale of White Horse, it was possible to find those who spoke in a way which approximated much more closely to the manners of polite society. In Tom Brown at Oxford, the somewhat idealised Harry Winburn, the son of a 'Journeyman blacksmith' is such a man. He has been educated at the village school until the

age of 14, is 'full of learning according to the village standard' and speaks 'his native English almost without an accent' (Ch. 17). Such correctness among young men of this class can, with a fair degree of certainty, be attributed to the growth of elementary education, for, in marked contrast to her son, Harry Winburn's mother speaks 'in broad Berkshire' (Ch. 18).

It is not my intention to give a detailed account of markedly substandard or dialectal speech, but there are some more general observations which may be made concerning the characteristics of lower-class language. Not surprisingly in view of the strength of the Victorian class-system, one of these seems to have been a habit of deference bordering on servility to social superiors. When Charles Ravenshoe disguises himself as a groom, he is quickly brought to realise what his fall from the rank of a gentleman will entail :

He was one of the lower orders now. He must learn his lesson; learn to cringe and whine like the rest of them. It would be hard, but it must be learnt. (Ravenshoe, Ch. 30).

Learning this lesson meant adapting one's language to be suitably respectful, as the usually rather outspoken Miss Galindo of My Lady Ludlow acknowledges, though in a somewhat backhanded way :

Now, if you were Sally, I should say, 'Answer me that, you goose !' But, as you're a relation of my lady's, I must be civil, and only say, 'I can't think how you can talk so like a fool !' (Ch. 10).

When speaking to a superior it was necessary to make claims of familiarity, or even acquaintanceship, with some discretion. We can see this when an old servant recognises John Eames in The Small

House at Allington and, rather tentatively, uses his Christian name prefixed with Mr. as, no doubt, he had done when Eames was a boy :

'Why, if that baint Mr. Eames !' said the gardener.

'Mr. John, may I make so bold !' (Ch. 54).

Here the apologetic formula if I may make so bold is evidently to forestall the charge of presumption.

One of the most obvious ways in which a speaker of the lower class might reveal his status was by referring to higher social groups in a manner which indicated that he was not of their number. A good example of this is to be found in Mrs. Henry Wood's East Lynne where Richard Hare is compelled to sink himself in obscurity in order to escape arrest for a crime of which he has been wrongfully accused. During one of his clandestine meetings with his sister, he describes two men he has encountered during his attempts to prove his innocence as 'Great swells, both'. Here, however, he is clearly beginning to adopt the idiom of the class in which he has been forced to submerge himself, and Barbara is quick to respond to this new note in his speech :

Oh, Richard, don't use those expressions. They are not suited to a gentleman. (II, Ch. 17).

The stamp of vulgarity which the word swell clearly carried is also discernible when that rough diamond, Mr. Moss, the master of the spunging house in which Rawdon Crawley is temporarily confined, recalls with snobbish pride one of his previous inmates whose guests had included 'reg'lar tip-top swells, down from the clubs and the West End' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 53).

Also characteristic of lower-class speakers when talking of those of higher status is the idiom, the quality, a collective term for those of good family and position. The O.E.D. regards this as vulgar and dialectal, though Jane Austen was able to use the word quality without irony, for in her letters she writes of 'bold queer-looking people, just fit to be quality at Lyme' (Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R.W. Chapman, London, 1932, p. 142). However, a passage from Jane Eyre makes it clear that by the middle of the century the fortunes of this usage had declined. Colonel Dent reports to the assembled company the arrival of a gipsy in the servants' hall at Thornfield, who 'insists upon being brought in before "the quality", to tell them their fortunes' (Ch. 18). The inverted commas here clearly demonstrate that the phrase is not part of Colonel Dent's own vocabulary. Trollope, during the account of the Ullathorne Sports in Barchester Towers, is even more explicit about the word's status when he writes ironically of 'The quality, as the upper classes in rural districts are designated by the lower with so much true discrimination' (Ch. 35). The word is also used, without the article, in The Way We Live Now as Grandfather Ruggles speculates upon the whereabouts of the erring Ruby. After some deliberation, he lights upon Lowestoft as a likely location :

There's lots of quality at Lowestoffe a' washing theyselves in the sea. (1, Ch. 34).

The word gentry, while not so unquestionably substandard as quality, was, nonetheless, regarded with some unease by the upper-class. Wilkie Collins in The Woman in White was moved to call it a 'detestable word' :

I wish I could say the same of gentry - detestable word but I

suppose I must use it - of the gentry in the neighbourhood.
(~~Ch~~I, ch. 6).

More decidedly vulgar was the word nob, perhaps an abbreviated form of nobleman, though it is a contradiction rather characteristic of our subject that this word (like swell) was also found in colloquial contexts among fashionable dandies.¹ In Disraeli's Sybil, two tramps in a London park watch a party at a fashionable house and discuss with a patronising air the lot of the footmen who must spend their time 'a sitting on their boxes all the night and waiting for the nobs what is dancing' (Bk. V, Ch. 7), and later in the same novel the word is used by a factory girl, Julia, when expressing her electoral preferences to her friend :

If we can't have our own man, I am all for the Nobs against the Middle Class. (Bk. VI, Ch. 8).

The related adjective nobby also occurs. Inspector Bucket of Bleak House uses this in its superlative form as, with his customarily uncertain control over register, he wavers between pretentiousness and comic bathos. Discussing the secret of Lady Dedlock's past with her husband, he assures him that the police will 'endeavour to meet your wishes respecting this unfortunate family matter, and the nobbiest way of keeping it quiet' (Ch. 54).

Another rather different characteristic of speakers of the lower classes was probably the result of deficiencies in education.

1. It is, however, not at all unusual to find upper-class slang adopted from the vocabulary of lower social groups, often one suspects (though it is difficult to prove this) with a certain irony.

Coleridge, in one of his essays from The Friend, discusses the distinctions which may be drawn between the language of what he calls a well-educated man and an ignorant man. The former, he believes, can be distinguished by 'the unpremeditated and evidently habitual arrangement of his words, grounded on the habit of foreseeing in each integral part... the whole that he then intends to communicate ! In the case of the second, the ignorant man, he remarks that 'the objects and events recur in the narration in the same order, and with the same accompaniments, however accidental or impertinent, as they had first occurred to the narrator.' Rambling and unstructured discourse of this kind is, in fact, common among uneducated characters in the novels. In Felix Holt, for example, Esther learns to avoid asking questions of Lyddy, a maid servant, who habitually 'found an answer as she found a key, by pouring out a pocketful of miscellanies' (Ch. 15). Equally, examples are not hard to find of an associated trait which Coleridge, in the same essay, also discerns in the uneducated speaker :

The necessity of taking breath, the efforts of recollection, and the abrupt rectification of its failures, produce all his pauses; and with exception of the 'and then', the 'and there', and the still less significant 'and so', they constitute likewise all his connections.

The dialogue of Mrs. Fitz-Adam of Cranford is worth considering as an example of this. When she recounts her childhood memories of Miss Matty, her speech is notable for its fondness for the conjunction and, and its infrequent use of subordination :

2. The Friend, 2 iv, On Method, pp.297-8 (Edition of 1899).

But after she had passed, she turned round and ran after me to ask -oh, so kindly - about my poor mother, who lay on her deathbed; and when I cried she took hold of my hand to comfort me - and the gentleman waiting for her all the time - and her poor heart very full of something, I am sure; and I thought it such an honour to be spoken to in that pretty way(Ch. 14).³

In Charles Kingsley's novel, Two Years Ago (1857), a similar 'flood of eloquence' from Mrs. Heale leads the hero to declare, 'I'll lay my life the old dame knows her way to the laudanum bottle' (Ch. 5).

At its worst, speech of this kind can degenerate into idle gossip and come to display the quality which Molly Gibson notices in the Miss Brownings on her return from a stay at Hamley : 'the absence of interest in things, and their greediness of details about persons' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 13). In this they are offending against the 'Victorian Precept' which G.M. Young prefixed to his book, Portrait of an Age : 'Servants talk about People : Gentlefolk discuss things'. Indeed, reading her remarks one is inclined to think that she assumed this, or some similar adage, would be in her readers' minds. A weakness of the same kind is apparent in the talk of the ladies of Cranford who 'know all each other's proceedings' but are 'exceedingly indifferent to each other's opinions' (Cranford, Ch. 1).

When we look more closely at the structure of this loose prolixity, it is evident that it departs markedly from the

3. We may, in fact, see Mrs. Fitz-Adam as part of a long literary tradition of garrulous women. This stretches back at least as far as Chaucer's Wife of Bath ('A ha ! By God, I have my tale ageyn') from whom a line of descent can be traced, via Shakespeare's Mistress Quickly and Fielding's Mrs. Slipslop, to Miss Bates.

taciturnity which tends to be a characteristic of aristocratic speech. In particular, it shows a marked fondness for unnecessary repetition, especially in the form of pleonastic expressions, a trait singled out for censure in The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected where the author notes that the 'introduction of words which are of no use in explaining the thoughts of the speaker, must be considered out of place, incorrect, and consequently vulgar' (p.80). In fiction, possibly the most remarkable example of pleonasm is provided by the garrulous Mrs. Chivery of Little Dorrit, whose conversational style is well represented by an assertion which she makes to Arthur Clennam :

'Sir,' said Mrs. Chivery, 'sure and certain as in this house I am. I see my son go out with my own eyes when in this house I was, and I see my son come in with my own eyes when in this house I was(1, Ch. 22).

As is often the case with Dickens, the characteristic is exaggerated to such a degree that we seem to be dealing rather with an idiolect exploited for comic purposes than with a genuine feature of class dialect, but less extreme examples of pleonastic expressions are not uncommon. Elsworthy, an unpleasantly officious newsagent in Mrs. Oliphant's Perpetual Curate, telling of his daughter's behaviour, reports that, 'I've seen her with my own eyes go into Mrs. Hadwin's garden-door' (Ch. 36), while Lyddy in Felix Holt talks to her master of 'this very night as here is' (Ch. 13). In the same novel, Mrs. Holt is convinced that Felix, her son, has met his misfortunes as a judgement for 'being so certain sure about the Pills and the Elixir' (Ch. 37), while Mrs. Vincy of Middlemarch is fond of such phrases as 'as sure as I sit here' (Ch. 36) and needlessly repetitive formulae such as 'good as good' (Ch. 63). Rather similar in character is the almost meaningless

cliché, an instance of which is to be found in the dialogue of Mrs. Dollop, the barmaid, also of Middlemarch, who declares, 'I don't want to stand winking and blinking and thinking' (Ch. 71), while again the dividing line between such hackneyed idioms and the proverbial expression is also a fine one.

Proverbs were certainly considered by many to be marks of vulgarity, and consequently they are often introduced with an apology, even by speakers of no very marked refinement. In Wives and Daughters, for example, the Miss Brownings assure Roger Hamley that they are not offended by their exclusion from an invitation :

Oh, yes, we quite understand, Mr. Roger; and we fully recognise Mrs. Hamley's kind intention. We will take the will for the deed, as the common people express it. (Ch. 14).

This dislike of the proverbial goes back at least as far as Lord Chesterfield who, though fond of supporting his advice with traditional authority, always apologises for introducing 'a vulgar saying',⁴ rather as Miss Browning does, and the feeling is also echoed in the etiquette books of the Victorian period. Society Small Talk, for example, warned its readers that 'genuine small talk must not be confused ... with a string of platitudes and common-places, interspersed here and there with an old saw or vulgar proverb, savouring slightly of the servants' hall' (pp.37-8). In the novels, proverbs often indicate that a character who uses them is vulgar and perhaps even somewhat disreputable, Thornton, the villain of Bulwer - Lytton's Pelham, is a great user of proverbs and the quality which this lends to his speech is discussed

4. See, for example, his letter of 16 May, 1767 (The Letters of Chesterfield, ed. Dobrée, New York, 1932, vol. 6, p.2813).

by the narrator, the aristocratic Pelham :

There was, however, a singularity in his conversation which gave it an air both of shrewdness and vulgarity. This was ... a profuse inter-mixture of proverbs, some stale, some new, some sensible enough, and all savouring of a vocabulary carefully eschewed by every man of ordinary refinement in conversation. (Ch. 23).

The analogies which his expressions draw are certainly not notable for their refinement, and this deficiency, along with their triteness, seems to have been the main reason for the objections to the use of proverbs. As the author of The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected remarks, 'The coarse and vulgar ideas of pigs, hogs, dirt and dunghills, can make no part of the wisdom which is so much
 * lauded, but which, in its present form, must offend the taste of every polite and well educated mind' (p. 115). Thornton is certainly guilty of using the imagery of the farm-yard; he accuses Pelham of being 'the silent sow' who 'sups up all the broth' (Ch. 61) and, later in the same conversation, when he notices that it is threatening to rain, concludes with the remark :

'The devil will soon be basting his wife with a leg of mutton,' as the proverb says :- servant, Mr. Pelham.

The status of such phrases is confirmed by the final salutation. Your servant was itself déclassé by the date of this novel (1828), while here the abbreviation seems to carry an additional hint of insolence.

Idioms which the writers of the etiquette books would also doubtless have considered 'coarse and vulgar' are used by Mr. Johnson, Transome's agent in Felix Holt. He tells his principal, 'I've taken all the wind out of their sails'; warns him that

'Chubb would leave no stone unturned against you' and that he would 'egg on' his customers, finally concluding that 'it looks bad in the cleverest man to have to sing small' (Ch. 17).

George Eliot (who was not always averse to proverbial wisdom, and has herself some claim to being a notable aphorist) comments on this conversation and the suggestion once again is that the objection to such language lies in the homely nature of much of its imagery :

Mr. Johnson's argument was not the less stringent because his idioms were vulgar. It requires a conviction and resolution amounting to heroism not to wince at phrases that class our foreshadowed endurance among those common and ignominious troubles which the world is more likely to sneer at than to pity.

There seems little doubt that much the same objections are in Mrs. Gibson's mind in Wives and Daughters when Cynthia, her daughter, makes it clear that she has perceived how her mother is pleased for her to receive the attentions of Osborne Hamley but not those of his younger brother, Roger : 'In short, mamma, one man may steal a horse, but another must not look over the hedge.' To this Mrs. Gibson replies, 'Be quiet, child ! All proverbs are vulgar, and I do believe that is the vulgarest of all' (Ch. 28)⁵. However, later in the novel, when Molly Gibson talks about 'the apple of his eye', the objection is on slightly different grounds. It is not so much the coarseness of the expression as its lack of originality which attracts Mrs. Gibson's

5. Though it is interesting to find that the same proverb is used by the fastidious arbitress of linguistic propriety, Agnes Grove, in The Social Fetich (1907), p.25. However, as we have noticed before the security of wealth or rank might nullify the dictates of etiquette.

censure :

Molly ! Molly ! pray don't let me hear you using such vulgar expressions. When shall I teach you true refinement - that refinement which consists in never even thinking a vulgar, commonplace thing ! Proverbs and idioms are never used by people of education. 'Apple of his eye!' I am really shocked. (Ch. 60).

Yet Mrs. Gibson is not a wholly reliable witness, and there are certainly occasions on which she falls below her own standards. She is, in fact, rather given to using second-hand expressions which certainly border on the proverbial. Her description of Roger Hamley as 'steady as old Time' draws the ironic rider from Mrs. Gaskell 'as Mrs. Gibson called him, with her usual originality' (Ch. 31). Nevertheless, there is little doubt that she is right in principle in thinking that clichés, like proverbs, were frowned upon in polite society. 'Some persons,' warned The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected, 'have acquired the vulgar habit of seldom or never speaking without backing their assertions by trite comparisons' and these 'common, trite and meaningless phrases' are to be regarded as very similar in status to 'bye-words and proverbs' (p.121). Clichés might vary in character. They might be seemingly innocuous like the 'short and sweet' which Lady Harriet thinks is typical of the vulgar ex-milliner, Lady Babbleton (Pelham, Ch. 40), or pleasantly folksy such as 'Life's a tumble-about thing of ups and downs' uttered by the market-stall keeper, Widow Carey (Sybil, Bk. VI, Ch. 8); they might range from the half-baked self-justification of Ruby Ruggles, 'It's no good going against love' (The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 33), to the almost wholly vacuous exchange between Mrs. Pipkin and Mrs. Hurtle in the same book :

'There's no accounting for tastes, Mrs. Pipkin.'
 'And that's true, too, Mrs. Hurtle.' (II, Ch. 97).

Literary quotations seem to have escaped the taint of vulgarity and may have been an acceptable substitute for the proverb in polite society. No doubt this was because they owed their derivation to the library rather than the cottage. Mrs. Gibson is fond of these, though in her case, while their source is cited with some ostentation, their content is often so inconsequential and platitudinous as to be scarcely distinguishable from a proverb. This is certainly true of a quotation she addresses to Lady Harriet :

It is Sterne, I think, who says, 'Thine own and thy mother's friends forsake not.' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 32).

I have not been able to trace this in Sterne, but it may be a misquotation from Proverbs 27 10. Elsewhere we find her remarking, 'never less alone than when alone, as one of the great authors has justly expressed it' (Ch. 45). Here the 'great author' is Samuel Rogers and the source his 'Human Life', though the sentiment is an older one deriving ultimately from Cicero. The fact that Mrs. Gibson regards such quotations as a mark of social distinction is confirmed by her reaction to a line from Goldsmith's 'Traveller' when she is reflecting on the passion of one of Cynthia's admirers, Mr. Henderson.

... in one of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's letters, she said that poor Mr. Henderson was going into Switzerland for the long vacation, doubtless to try and forget Cynthia; but she really believed he would find it only 'dragging at each remove a lengthening chain.' I thought it such a refined quotation, and altogether worded so prettily. You must know aunt Kirkpatrick some day, Molly, my love; she is what I call a woman of a truly elegant mind. (Ch. 45).

Of course, an overemphasis on words like refined and elegant remind us that Mrs. Gibson's is essentially a false refinement springing from a snobbish imitation of aristocratic manners, and when she draws with equal ostentation on a rather less distinguished area of literature - '"There's no place like home," as the poet says' (Ch. 45) - the author's intention seems quite openly satirical.⁶ Interestingly, a quotation from a similar source can be found in Sybil, in the 'genteel' Temple of the Muses, a symbol of working-class aspiration where, according to Dandy Mick, 'they mash their taters ... very elegant' (Bk. II, Ch. 10). On the same occasion he urges his guests,

Come Caroline; drink to your partner's toast, Miss Harriet.
Money's the root of all evil, which nobody can deny.

This last sentence, which has no apparent connection with its context, sounds very like the refrain of a popular song which is here adopted as an almost meaningless toast.

Though toasts crossed class barriers, it seems possible that some hackneyed formulae, and perhaps the habit of proposing them with excessive frequency, were marks of vulgarity. Thackeray at least seems to have felt so, and he suggests that toasts of this kind - or rather 'sentiments' for, in view of their platitudinous character, his own word seems the more appropriate - were disappearing from polite society :

6. The poet in question is, in fact, J.H. Payne, the American dramatist and song-writer, and the line is from his popular song, 'Home, Sweet Home'.

I once shared a bottle of sherry with a commercial traveller at Margate who gave a toast or a sentiment as he filled every glass. He would not take his wine without this queer ceremony before it. I recollect one of his sentiments, which was as follows : 'Year is to 'er that doubles our joys, and divides our sorrows - I give you woman, sir,' - and we both emptied our glasses. These lumbering ceremonials are passing out of our manners, and were found only to obstruct our free intercourse. People can like each other just as much without orations (Sketches and Travels, 'On Some Old Customs of the Dinner-Table').

When any convention becomes viewed as a 'lumbering ceremonial' it has almost certainly travelled a long way on the road to vulgarity.

Many words had associations which led speakers of any real refinement to avoid them. Not a few of these are to do with the rather delicate subjects of courtship and marriage. Often, however, there seems to have been no acceptable equivalent and, perforce, even educated speakers have recourse to them when speaking to the lower orders.

Tom Brown, for example, trying to explain his romantic problems to Harry Winburn, an old village friend, is forced to hesitate before finding a word which will make clear to the plebeian Harry the nature of the attachment in question :

Why I haven't seen - I've scarcely heard of - of - well, of my sweetheart - there, you'll understand that - for this year and more. (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 40).

In The Mill on the Floss, Aunt Glegg seizes on the same word when it is used by her unsuspecting husband and, characteristically, its avoidance is made a matter of Dodson pride. She is, she says, convinced that 'respect and duty' are the motives which will keep

Maggie at home 'not sweethearts, if I'm to use such a word, though it was never heard in my family' (Bk. VI, Ch. 12). Since Mrs. Glegg herself, despite her fastidiousness, is a pillar of the bourgeoisie, it is fair to conclude that the word was confined to decidedly lower-class speakers.

Lady-friend was probably heard in rather higher places but, even so, the use of the expression provokes one of Lady Camper's more vituperative outbursts :

General Ople, I forbid you, as you value my esteem, ever - and I repeat, I forbid you ever - to afflict my ears with that phrase, 'lady-friend!' ('The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', Ch. 5).

Very definitely associated with the language of servants was follower. This is defined by the O.E.D. (follower sb. 2c) as 'a man who courts a maidservant; especially one who calls at the house to see her'. The word seems to have been very much a Victorian usage, the earliest quotation cited dating from 1838. The unpopularity of such unwanted callers with employers seems to have been a longstanding cause of friction between them and their servants. Kitty, a housemaid in Lawyer Dempster's house in Scenes of Clerical Life, complains to the cook about her mistress's objections :
'... and as for follayers, she's as cross as a turkey-cock if she finds 'em out' ('Janet's Repentance', Ch. 21), while in Cranford we are told that Lady Glenmire stays in a house 'her ostensible office being to take care that the maid-servants did not pick up followers' (Ch. 10). In the same novel, Miss Matty's servants are forbidden by the articles of their engagement 'to have followers' (Ch. 3) and Martha, complaining bitterly about the refusal to grant this indulgence, uses another phrase common among maidservants,

to keep company :

Why, it seems so hard of missus not to let me have any followers; there's such lots of young fellows in the town; and many a one has as much as offered to keep company with me(Ch. 4).

This is also used by the uneducated Ruby Ruggles of The Way We Live Now who, in a conversation with the dissolute Felix Carbury, contrasts his ways with those of the Squire, who 'don't come asking girls to keep him company' (1, Ch. 43). Similarly, in Hardy's novel, The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), we learn that, in her attempt to win the approval of Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane 'no longer said of young men and women that they "walked together", but that they were "engaged"' (Ch. 20).

These idioms are, of course, restricted to characters of this class because the courtship of upper-class girls was much more carefully supervised. This is made clear in the reminiscences of the Countess of Lovelace who, writing in the present century, remarked on the greater freedom which had been accorded to the young since her own youth :

For dinners and entertainments other than balls, apparently the girls now do not need any female protector whatever. They go about anywhere and everywhere with any male friend whom they choose. In fact, they 'walk out' and 'keep company' just as our friends in the servants' hall do.

In those circles where a man would not expect to keep a girl

7. 'Society and the Season', included in a collection of contributions to The Times, Fifty Years : Memories and Contrasts 1882-1932 (1932), pp.24-30.

company, he might, nevertheless, pay his addresses to her. This is an idiom which seems to have characterised the pretentious and aspiring. It is used by Lavinia Wilfer, who tells her sister, Bella, that 'George Sampson is paying his addresses to me' (Our Mutual Friend, III, Ch. 49), and it appears to be in favour among the eligible young men of Middlemarch who call upon Rosamond Vincy. Ned Plymdale, for example, is convinced that in his Keepsake he has found 'the very best thing in art and literature as a medium for "paying addresses"' (Middlemarch, Ch. 27). Very similar is the variant to pay attention. This occurs in Mrs. Oliphant's Salem Chapel, where the socially ambitious Arthur Vincent fears that he may be trapped in a lower-middle class world, the language of which he knows well :

To circulate among their tea-parties, and grow accustomed to their finery, and perhaps 'pay attention', to Phoebe Tozer; or, at least, suffer that young lady's attentions to him. (Ch. 2).

A number of idioms concerning marriage would certainly not have been used by upper-class speakers or, perhaps, by anyone of delicacy. When Mrs. Fitz-Adam of Cranford describes her brother's engagement as 'an understanding', Miss Pole is confirmed in her low estimation of the parties concerned. The word, no doubt, has an unpleasantly conspiratorial air :

'Understanding !' such a coarse word ! (Ch. 12).

In The Last Chronicle of Barset, Anne Prettyman, a rather shallow-minded woman, laments that Henry Grantly had not committed himself by a firm proposal to Grace Crawley before the allegations against her father came to light :

'If he had only popped,' Anne said to her sister, 'it would have been all right!' (Ch. 6).

This usage, however, rouses the prescriptive disapproval of her school-mistress sister :

I wish you would not talk about popping. It is a terrible word.

More decidedly ungracious in tone, since it reduces human relationships to a predatory level, is the verb to catch which Lavinia Wilfer uses when she insinuates that her sister owes her attractiveness to the beauty of her hair. She has, Lavinia claims, 'caught George Sampson with it', but this draws an angry retort from Bella :

You low little thing. Caught George Sampson with it ! Don't talk about catching people, miss, till your own time for catching - as you call it - comes. (Our Mutual Friend, 1, Ch. 4).

The reader is evidently intended to find particularly coarse the phrase used by the grasping Fred Bullock of Vanity Fair when negotiating the terms on which he will agree to marry Maria Osborne; he insists that half her father's property should be settled on her and, 'for a long time, refused "to come to the scratch" (it was Mr. Frederick's own expression) on any other terms' (Ch. 42). To come to the scratch is a sporting idiom borrowed, either from cricket, where it refers to a batsman taking up his position at the scratch or crease, or from pugilism, when it signifies the line drawn across the ring on either side of which the combatants engage in conflict. Its use in a matrimonial context unmistakably signals the vulgarity of Bullock's

mind. The phrase is used again in a similar context in Joe Mixet's inept and bucolic attempt to help the tongue-tied John Crumb, the bashful lover of Ruby Ruggles, to make his proposal :

'And you will expect Miss Ruby to come to the scratch ?'
'I sholl.' (The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 33).

An engaging, though certainly very vulgar character is the garrulous Mrs. Berry in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. It is certain that such phrases as the wife of his bosom and coupled, in the sense of married (Ch. 37) are reflections of her lack of refinement. Indeed, coupled, when used in this way, is an example of a word, regarded by the O.E.D. as obsolete, continuing in use in uneducated speech. In this case, the only example cited dates from 1400, though its use to signify coition, particularly among animals, is still current. Indeed, it is probably the sexual innuendo, which seems inescapable, which would debar the word from polite conversation.

Many words and idioms were vulgar through being contaminated by an association with commerce. We have already seen (see p. 79) how quickly Margaret Hale is taken to task by her mother for using 'factory slang' when she begins to move among the operatives of Milton-Northern. The two examples we are given of this language of the industrial North are the phrases slack of work and knobstick. The latter, which in fact Margaret has learned from Bessy Higgins (North and South, Ch. 25), was used to refer to employees who continued to work on their masters' terms during a strike or lock-out - in modern parlance a blackleg (O.E.D. knobstick 2).

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that 'factory slang' was confined to the industrial operative. It is also found among

their wealthy masters. Some interesting examples occur in one of Disraeli's novels when Coningsby on a tour of the industrial North-West encounters Mr. G.O.A. Head, a Staleybridge mill-owner (Coningsby, Bk. IV, Ch. 2). The most notable quality in Head's speech is the way in which its neologisms reflect his intoxication with the speed of industrial progress, and this is something which contrasts markedly with the conservatism and leisured ease suggested by much aristocratic speech. G.O.A. Head's highest term of commendation is high-pressure, a quality shared by the Manchester Bank (described as 'high-pressure to the backbone') and the towns of Bolton and Staley-bridge. Manchester, by way of contrast, though fondly regarded as 'a sort of mother', is 'behind the times' and 'gone-by', and can be dismissed as a 'booked place'. It is interesting to notice that this last phrase has a commercial origin. Hotten in his Slang Dictionary (1865) indicates that the term, which has the general meaning of 'fixed' or 'disposed of', is borrowed from book-keeping.

In fact, any idiom which savoured of the shop or accounts office was frowned upon in polite society. Even the apparently innocuous phrase quite so, which is used by General Ople, is roundly condemned by the absolute Lady Camper in Meredith's story. 'It reeks,' she declares, 'of the City of London' ('The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper', Ch. 5). Business Latin was also unacceptable. Inspector Bucket of Bleak House is guilty of this crime and talks of going 'per bus, a little ways into the country' (Ch. 54). This and similar usages received attention in some of the etiquette books of the period, The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected, for example, reminding its readers that the words "per" and "via" for "by" and "by way of" were instances of what it calls 'the mercantile pedantic' (p. 144). Into the same

category it places ditto in such phrases as 'She is the very ditto of her mother'. A fictional example of this occurs in Pendennis when Foker, the son of a successful brewer, agrees to his family's scheme of marrying him to Lady Ann Milton :

Well, sir, if Ann's agreeable, I say ditto. (Ch. 39).

Other words such as embargo, sundries, spec (speculation) and concern⁸ are also picked out as resonant of mercantile speakers.

The business of getting employment and earning a living was, with the exception of a few professions, not an upper-class activity. There are, in consequence, a number of words associated with employment that have a somewhat unfashionable air, and which seem to have been particularly common among minor clerks and the more genteel servants. Often these have a slightly defensive pretentiousness. This certainly seems to be the case with words like situation and prospects when Lavinia Wilfer, an epitome of false refinement, tells her sister, Bella, that the humble George Sampson, now her fiancé, has a new job :

George is in a new situation, and his prospects are very good, indeed. (Our Mutual Friend, Bk. III, Ch. 49).

8. It is interesting to find the commercial associations of this last word neatly exploited for satiric effect by Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy (1869) :

That beautiful sentence Sir Daniel Gooch quoted to the Swindon workmen, and which I treasure as Mrs. Gooch's Golden Rule, or the Divine Injunction 'Be ye Perfect' done into British, - the sentence Sir Daniel Gooch's mother repeated to him every morning when he was a boy going to work: 'Ever remember, my dear Dan, that you should look forward to being some day manager of that concern !' (Ch. 2).

The impression that situation has become somewhat déclassé is rather strengthened when we find it used in the same novel by the decidedly disreputable Silas Wegg on resigning from his 'post' with Boffin :

With the single exception of the salary, I renounce the whole and total situation. (Bk. IV, Ch. 53).

Here the phrase whole and total, which accompanies the evidently cocknified pronunciation of situation, seems to be a modernisation of the Regency expression whole tote which is condemned by W.H. Savage in his book, The Vulgarities and Improprieties of the English Language (1833), p.15. Another character, almost as unsavoury as Wegg, is the shiftless Leonards of North and South who, on meeting the Hale's servant, Dixon, tells her that he has obtained 'a confidential situation' (Ch. 31). He is, in fact, a railway porter. To a character of some refinement like Gwendoline Harleth, who is forced to contemplate earning a living when her family is ruined, 'taking a situation' is 'a phrase that summed up for her the disagreeable most wounding to her pride, most irksome to her tastes' (Daniel Deronda, Ch. 21).

It is more difficult to be certain about the status of character, a 'formal testimony given by an employer as to the qualities and habits of one that has been in his employ' (O.E.D. character sb. 14c), but my impression is that it was principally used in connection with fairly humble employment. This is borne out by the quotations cited in the O.E.D. which relate to such men as rascals, coachmen, grooms and sweepers. In the novels it is used by Thornton in North and South when he is approached by the union agitator, Higgins, who is hoping for a job:

I've a notion you'd better not send me to Hamper to ask for a character, my man. (Ch. 38).

It is found again in The Way We Live Now when Mrs. Pipkin, insisting that Ruby Ruggles go into service, offers to 'give [her] a character' (II, Ch. 80). It seems likely that similar associations attached to warning: that is, notice of resignation or dismissal from a post. This seems to have been used particularly freely to and by servants. In Cranford, for example, Martha wonders that her mistress, Miss Matty, 'could find in her heart to give me warning' (Ch. 14). However, when the word is used between landlord and tenant, it seems quite classless.

Another group of words was particularly associated with the retail trade and such language was, quite literally, 'shoppy'. A number of examples of this are provided by Mr. Trabb, the tailor in Great Expectations, who uses many idioms characteristic of his trade. He takes down a roll of cloth which he describes as 'a very sweet article' (1, Ch. 19). This use of article in the sense of commodity is exemplified in the O.E.D. (article sb. 14) by a quotation of 1804 in which it is described as a 'mercantile phrase'. Trabb then goes on to call the cloth 'extra super', and here two points call attention to themselves. The first is the proliferation of superlatives when recommending merchandise; the second is the word super itself. It is a contraction of superfine which the O.E.D. (super a. 2) again regards as a colloquialism associated with trade.

But perhaps the hallmark of shopkeepers' language is a note of obsequious deference which seems particularly evident in words and phrases like give satisfaction and patronize, esteem and oblige, all of which occur in Trabb's conversation with Pip when he orders

a suit of clothes before taking up his position as a 'London gentleman' :

I know, sir, that London gentlemen cannot be expected to patronize local work, as a rule; but if you would give me a turn now and then in the quality of a townsman, I should greatly esteem it. Good morning, sir, much obliged.
(1, Ch. 19).

Much the same tone may be heard in the language of another tailor, Mr. Schloss, of Tom Brown at Oxford. He tells Drysdale that he has 'some very beautiful new stuffs' which he begs to 'submit' and hopes that his previous order has 'been executed' to Mr. Drysdale's 'satisfaction' (Ch. 3). His manner which recalls that of Trabb, is described as 'half-servile, half-impudent', a paradox which reminds us that extreme obsequiousness can appear impertinent - doubtless the reason why an excessive use of titles was discouraged (see p. 217). Certainly this servility of shopmen is felt to be the antithesis of the open frankness of the gentleman.

What we seem to have in these cases is not so much language which is unconsciously substandard, but rather an inflated idiom suggesting a kind of déclassé refinement. It is rather reminiscent of Mrs. Vincy's most superior which, as we saw earlier (see p. 27) is associated by her son with 'shopkeepers' slang'. In fact, the conversation in which this occurs is such a central one in distinguishing the various kinds of vulgarity current in Victorian speech that it is worth quoting at some length. Rosamond declares roundly that she will 'not marry any Middlemarch young man', and her mother goes on,

'So it seems, my love, for you have as good as refused the pick of them; and if there's better to be had, I'm

sure there's no girl better deserves it.'

'Excuse me, mamma - I wish you would not say, "the pick of them".'

'Why, what else are they ?'

'I mean, mamma, it is rather a vulgar expression.'

'Very likely, my dear; I never was a good speaker. What should I say ?'

'The best of them.'

'Why, that seems just as plain and common. If I had had time to think, I should have said, "the most superior young men". But with your education you must know.'

'What must Rosy know, mother ?' said Mr. Fred

'Whether it's right to say "superior young men",' said Mrs. Vincy ringing the bell.

'Oh, there are so many superior teas and sugars now. Superior is getting to be shopkeepers' slang.'
(Middlemarch, Ch. 11).

This very interesting passage offers us three phrases to describe the kind of men whom Rosamond has 'as good as refused' and provides a gloss on each: the pick of them; the best of them and the most superior young men. The first and last of these are censured, clearly on class grounds, by one or other of Mrs. Vincy's children, and we have to remember that both of them are more highly educated (Fred has been to the University) than their amiable, if unrefined, mother. The censure is in each case for rather different reasons, however. Mrs. Vincy begins by using the phrase the pick of them; this evidently comes naturally to her, and it is not until Rosamond objects to it, clearly regarding the expression as 'low', that her mind is turned to the social register of her language at all. Her reaction on hearing the form preferred by Rosamond - the best of them - is especially interesting: she is surprised by the fact that her daughter, whose judgement on such matters she does not question, should choose a phrase which seems 'Just as plain and common'. Now that she is prompted to think of whether her language is socially acceptable - her phrase 'if I had had time to think' is important since it marks off what follows as language which is self-conscious rather than spontaneous - she substitutes the much grander 'the most superior young men', only

to be told by her son that this is an example of commercialese.

What seems to emerge from this is the existence of at least three levels of language, each of which is represented by one of the phrases we have been considering. The opposition between the acceptable best of them and the substandard pick of them is straightforward enough, but the third category, 'shopkeepers' slang' is more complicated. Nevertheless, it is this type of speech, very close to the essence of Ross' 'non-U', that is central to our subject and which constitutes one of the most important differences between the language of the upper and a large section of the middle class. What seems to have happened is that some members of the middle class, those whom Trollope calls 'uncertified aspirants to gentility' (Phineas Finn, 1, Ch. 21), sought more or less consciously to adopt linguistic features which, often mistakenly, they believed to be characteristic of aristocratic speakers. This tends to produce the self-consciously 'exquisite' language which Louisa Harrington expects from the Duke of Bellfield (see p. 31), but which, far from being typical of upper-class speech, was, as we gather from Fred Vincy, associated with shopkeepers and, one assumes, the commercial classes generally.

A commercial man who illustrates this self-conscious pursuit of refinement very clearly is the auctioneer, Borthrop Trumbull, whose professional idiom is marked by an absurd love of the grandiloquent. We have already mentioned his reference to an 'elegant domino box' (see p. 25), but he also talks of 'this characteristic fender' in 'the antique style ... very much sought after in high-quarters', an item which, he assures his customers, is notable for 'the chastity of the design' (Middlemarch, Ch. 60). The related adjective chaste occurs in Pendennis, evidently with

an ironical intention, when Pendennis and the Major are called upon to admire the confusion of styles in the furniture of the home of the somewhat vulgar Lady Clavering :

Pen and his uncle ... admired the dining-room with fitting compliments, and pronounced it 'very chaste', that being the proper phrase. There were, indeed, high-backed Dutch chairs of the seventeenth century; there was a sculptured carved buffet of the sixteenth ... there were old family portraits from Wardour Street, and tapestry from France, bits of armour, double-handed swords and battle-axes made of carton-pierre, looking-glasses, statuettes of saints, and Dresden china - nothing, in a word, could be chaster. (Ch. 37).

And, as if to confirm the association between the word and the tasteless nouveau-riche, we learn in the same chapter that 'the prettiest rooms in London ... Mrs. Hodge-Podgson's own, the great Railroad Croesus' wife, were not fitted up with a more consummate "chastity"'.⁹

Borthrop Trumbull does not confine language of this kind to the sale-room. He frequently introduces it in non-professional conversations. Talking of Sir Walter Scott's Anne of Geierstein, he remarks that it 'commences well', and George Eliot comments on the way things 'never began with Mr. Borthrop Trumbull: they always commenced, both in private life and on his handbills' (Ch. 32).⁹ But Trumbull is capable of yet more exalted flights. Mr. Featherstone's will becomes 'a most singular testamentary disposition' (Ch. 35) and, to confirm the fact that Trumbull's language bears all the marks of the self-consciousness which is

9. It is interesting to notice that in an essay entitled 'Company Manners', Mrs. Gaskell expresses her distaste for just this trait. She complains of people 'who say "commence" instead of "begin"' and who 'inquire if they may "assist" instead of asking if they may "help" you to anything.' Agnes Grove in The Social Feticch also discusses the ladies of 'middleclassdom' who 'will always "commence" when they ought to begin' (p. 14).

often the distinguishing feature of the 'genteel' middle-class, we learn that he was 'an amateur of superior phrases, and never used poor language without immediately correcting himself'. We frequently find him substituting for the plain language which springs most naturally to his lips some grander phrase. 'I hope some one will tell me so' is immediately rephrased as 'I hope some individual will apprise me of the fact' (Ch. 32), while in the same chapter a more marked example of verbal elaboration on an ascending scale can be seen in the following example :

'Oh yes, anybody may ask,' said Mr. Trumbull
'Anybody may interrogate. Any one may give their remarks an interrogative turn,' he continued, his sonorousness rising with his style.

And the complacent pride which he takes in this virtuosity emerges more clearly as he goes on :

This is constantly done by good speakers, even when they anticipate no answer. It is what we call a figure of speech - speech at a high figure, as one may say.

With this last remark, George Eliot is clearly drawing our attention to the commercial overtones of such speech. Exquisite language, it seems, is an investment which may be expected to pay good returns. Indeed, there is a moment when, in the light of a remark by Featherstone, one is inclined to wonder whether this is not simply an occupational dialect of auctioneers. When the old man receives a pompously worded letter from the banker, Bulstrode, he exclaims, 'He's as fine as an auctioneer ... bless my heart ! "property-accrue-demise !" ... He couldn't speak finer if he wanted to borrow' (Ch. 14). It seems much more likely, however, that he is thinking of auctioneers as representatives of a wider class of commercial men and certainly, since the grandiose

vocabulary puts him in mind of an application for credit, the association between fine language and financial affairs is once again strongly established.

A similar tendency to excessively flowery and punctilious language is found widely among those who, professionally or otherwise, feel the need to impress others with their refinement. It is common among school-mistresses and governesses, for example. We hear its note when Miss Pinkerton asks her sister, Jemima, if she has 'completed all the necessary preparations incident to Miss Sedley's departure' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 1), or when that epitome of false refinement, Mrs. General, asks Mr. Dorrit with her pedantic scrupulousness and 'a little touch of varnish', 'May we incline to the supposition ... that something is referable to the novelty of the position ?' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 5). Along with Mrs. General's taste for such idioms goes a stern disapproval of colloquialism in the speech of her charges, especially when these tend away from the Latinate and abstract towards the Anglo-Saxon and concrete. When in the same chapter Fanny Dorrit regrets how her uncle 'tumbled over' a subject, Mrs. General checks her and suggests a more suitable alternative :

My dear, what a curious phrase,' said Mrs. General.
'Would not inadvertently lighted upon, or accidentally referred to, be better ?'

She is also prone to syntactic constructions which produce an effect of frigid impersonality: perhaps she feels that to allow personal warmth would be to court 'lowness'. She addresses

Mr. Dorrit in the third person :¹⁰ 'Mr. Dorrit ... is ever considerate' (II, Ch. 15), and when approaching the embarrassing question of payment avoids the pronoun you with a practised obliquity :

It would therefore ... be necessary to add a third more to the payment ... which my friends here have been accustomed to make to my bankers. (II, Ch. 2).

It seems likely that it is language of this kind which Dickens has in mind when he describes Mrs. General's way of 'taking all the colour out of everything' (II, Ch. 15).

Another pedagogue given to using inflated idiom is Mrs. Wilfer. In her case this often takes the form of a defensive pretentiousness which covers the bitterness of her reduced circumstances. She apologises to her lodger for having 'no stipendiary girl' (Our Mutual Friend, II, Ch. 25), and, like Mrs. General, she too is quick to censure language which she regards as excessively colloquial, correcting her unregenerate daughter, Lavinia, for such idioms as brisk, which she regards as a 'low expression' (III, Ch. 37), and loll, an action which, she says, 'I hope ... I am incapable of' (IV, Ch. 66).

Closely associated with the belief of the would-be refined that 'good'speakers should dress common-place events and things in a studied 'superior' language is the feeling that anything

10. A habit rather in favour with another profession given to grandiloquence : doctors. Clump, the apothecary who attends Miss Crawley in Vanity Fair, tells Mrs. Bute Crawley that her patient should be allowed drives: 'They will restore the roses, too, to your cheeks, if I may so speak to Mrs. Bute Crawley' (Ch. 19).

painful or embarrassing should not be referred to at all.

Mrs. General puts it in her advice to Amy Dorrit, 'A truly refined mind will seem to be ignorant of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 5). Then, as now, those of a more radical disposition felt nothing but impatience with such indirectness and, in this matter, Felix Holt is true to his political convictions when dismissing Esther Lyons' linguistic fastidiousness with contempt :

O, your niceties - I know what they are.... They all go on your system of make-believe. 'Rotteness' may suggest what is unpleasant, so you'd better say 'sugar-plums,' or something else such a long way off the fact that nobody is obliged to think of it. (Felix Holt Ch. 5).

These expressions, which he describes as 'your round-about euphuisms' (sic), seem to him dangerous because they make it possible to 'dress up swindling till it looks as well as honesty', and he concludes by seeing this tendency as a question of class mores : 'I hate your gentlemanly speakers'. When he talks of 'gentlemanly speakers' (the word, as we have seen, had slightly pejorative suggestions), it seems very likely that Holt has in mind the would-be genteel who aspire to refinement, and certainly a marked squeamishness does seem to characterise the language of this group. Sometimes, indeed, the euphemisms which this squeamishness tends to generate are difficult to distinguish from the kind of inflated idiom we have been discussing, doubtless because such language by its very nature avoids the directness of simpler speech. Mrs. Vincy, a great user of euphemisms, illustrates this very clearly. She has the delicate task of warning Lydgate that his attentions to Rosamond may have the effect of prejudicing her daughter's chances of receiving an offer from a more seriously-

intentioned suitor. She advises him,

Where you frequent a house it may militate very much against a girl's making a desirable settlement in life

On reflection, she feels that she has discharged a difficult undertaking with notable success :

She felt that she had spoken as impressively as it was necessary to do, and that in using the superior word 'militate' she had thrown a noble drapery over a mass of particulars which were still evident enough. (Middlemarch, Ch. 31).

The questionable social status of the 'noble drapery' of euphemism is sometimes revealed in its use - often transparently unsuccessful - in an attempt to assert refinement by glossing over the degradations of poverty. There is a peculiarly dismal quality in the sadly ineffective mixture of pretension and evasiveness in the kind of newspaper advertisement which Thackeray mentions as a possible resource for Mrs. Sedley after her husband's ruin :

But Mrs. Sedley ... had not spirit enough to bustle about for 'a few select inmates to join a cheerful musical family', such as one reads of in The Times. (Vanity Fair, Ch. 38).

Here one is once again reminded of Mrs. Wilfer in her 'abode of conscious though independent poverty' (Our Mutual Friend, 1, Ch. 9) with its 'gentleman' occupying the first floor.

Money, or the lack of it, is one of the commonest subjects to give rise to euphemism. Such language is certainly one of Mr. Dorrit's strongest bulwarks in his defences against the

harsh realities of the Marshalsea. Reduced to begging assistance from Clennam, he displays the greatest reluctance to name the commodity he lacks :

'A - well - a - it's of no use to disguise the fact - you must know, Mr. Clennam, that it does sometimes occur that people who come here desire to offer some little - Testimonial - to the Father of place.... Sometimes,' he went on in a low, soft voice, agitated, and clearing his throat every now and then; 'sometimes - hem - it takes one shape and sometimes another; but it is generally - ha - Money. (Little Dorrit, 1, Ch. 8).

One suspects, too, that the phrase used by Mr. Dorrit to describe one of these testimonials in the same chapter, handsome action, is also tainted with vulgarity. Certainly, the similar to do something handsome is in use among the burghers of Middlemarch. Mrs. Plymdeale gloats over the fortune of her future daughter-in-law, Sophie Toller : 'Of course her father is able to do something handsome for her - that is only what would be expected with a brewery like his' (Middlemarch, Ch. 64), while Mrs. Vincy causes her daughter the gravest embarrassment by remarking to Lydgate with lamentable indelicacy :

I hope your uncle Sir Godwin will not look down on Rosy, Mr. Lydgate. I should think he would do something handsome. A thousand or two can be nothing to a baronet. (Ch. 36).

In response to this, and Rosamond's blushes, we are told that Lydgate 'went to the other end of the room to examine a print curiously, as if he had been absent-minded'.

Disease and death are also subjects which provoke euphemistic language. Here again, Mrs. Vincy provides a number of examples. Mr. Featherstone's malady becomes 'that inward complaint', while she expresses her expectation of his imminent death by the

hackneyed idiom, 'He can't be long for this world' (Ch. 11).

The Victorian tabu regarding the word trousers and the use of such euphemistic substitutes as inexpressibles and unmentionables is notorious and was regarded as risible among less fastidious contemporaries. On the same principle, the strenuously refined Mrs. Wilfer takes what seems excessively strong exception to the mention of under-petticoat by her daughter, Lavinia :

'Neither do I understand,' retorted Mrs. Wilfer, with deep scorn, 'how a young lady can mention the garment in the name in which you have indulged. I blush for you.'
(Our Mutual Friend, IV, Ch. 66).

When inflated language occurs among the uneducated, a device commonly used by novelists is to emphasise its vulgarity by making such characters commit some more or less gross solecism which contrasts ludicrously with the general pretentiousness of the dialogue. That archetypal social climber, Mrs. Lookaloft of Barchester Towers, provides a particularly clear example of this when she apologises to Miss Thorne for her husband's failure to attend the Ullathorne sports : 'In fact, he could't stir, or you may be certain on such a day he would not have absented hisself' (Ch. 36). This odd juxtaposition of the inflated absented and hisself neatly gives us the essence of the character. Similar incongruities could occur in the capital as well as in the bucolic peace of Barsetshire. When the junior lawyer's clerk, Mr. Guppy, tries unsuccessfully to press his suit with Esther Summerson, his oration is marred by a lost aspirate and an unattached participle :

Miss Summerson ... you will excuse the waywardness of a parent ever mindful of a son's appiness. My mother, though

highly exasperating to the feelings, is actuated by maternal dictates. (Bleak House, Ch. 38).

The gap between aspiration and performance is often especially great with invitations (and replies to them) in characters of this class, particularly when these are directed to a social superior, no doubt because on these occasions the character is conscious of being on his mettle socially and the self-consciousness which generally lies behind this kind of language is at its strongest. Thackeray, in particular, is fond of exploiting these situations for their humorous potential. In Vanity Fair, Chopper, old Osborne's clerk, is filled with a mixture of exhilaration and trepidation when he receives an invitation to dine with Captain Dobbin. The form of his acceptance is a matter of pride :

The invitation and the rough draft of the answer were shown to Mrs. Chopper and her daughters on his return to Somers Town that evening, and they talked about military gents and West End men with great exultation as the family sate and partook of tea. (Ch. 24).

This deft blending of the pretentious partook and the vulgar gents into the narrative is very typical of Thackeray's comic technique. The tone of Chopper's reply turns out to be a very formal note in the third person (especially in view of Dobbin's simple first-person response : 'I shall expect you at half-past five') but sadly he is let down by a solecism at the last - the abbreviation of the Captain's name :

Mr. Chopper presents his respectful compliments, and will have the honour and pleasure of waiting on Captain D.

Indeed, the use of the third person in invitations could be a cause of difficulty to the imperfectly educated. There is a strong

tendency to slip into the more natural and less formal first person after the fashion of Mrs. Goodenough of Hollingford :

Mrs. Goodenough's respects to Mr. Sheepshanks, and hopes he is in good health. She would be very glad if he would favour her with his company to tea on Monday. My daughter, in Combermere, has sent me a couple of guinea fowls, and Mrs. Goodenough hopes Mr. Sheepshanks will stay and take a bit of supper. (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 31).

As this letter shows, solecisms did not only accompany an over strenuous pursuit of refinement, they could be produced by it. In Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford, a difficulty of this kind seems to beset Miss Matty's spelling :

Writing she did well and delicately - but spelling ! She seemed to think that the more out-of-the-way this was, and the more trouble it cost her, the greater the compliment she paid to her correspondent; and words that she would spell quite correctly in her letters to me became perfect enigmas when she wrote to my father. (Ch. 14).

This is a phenomenon which may be conveniently called hypercorrection. It occurs when characters, fearful that their language will betray them socially, overcompensate for their supposed lack of refinement. The feature which distinguishes speech of this kind is that the effort involved has an inverse effect on the correctness of the language it produces. It is particularly likely to manifest itself in matters of pronunciation. Here the process seems to begin with the uneasy awareness that the loss of certain sounds may be regarded as vulgar, an awareness which results in their erroneous introduction in words where they are not found in standard English. Aspirates, for example, posed the ambitious but semi-educated an almost insurmountable problem, and certainly their correct use was widely regarded as a class shibboleth in the Victorian period. George Eliot indeed presents the aspirate as

assuming an almost dynastic significance, charting the rise and fall of families on the social ladder :

Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing : people denied aspirates, gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs (Middlemarch, Ch. 11).

In his Sketches and Travels, Thackeray discusses the case of one Tibbits who was able to pass as a gentleman on the Continent though not among his fellow countrymen.

... we English knew instantly that the man was not well bred, by a thousand little signs, not to be understood by the foreigner. In his early youth, for instance, he had been cruelly deprived of his h's by his parents, and though he tried to replace them in after life, they were no more natural than a glass-eye, but stared at you as it were in a ghastly manner out of the conversation, and pained you by their horrid intrusions. ('On Love, Marriage, Men, and Women', II).

This suggests the kind of confusion, which is found quite widely among such characters in the novels in which necessary aspirates are lost and redundant ones are introduced.¹¹ These difficulties seem to have been especially frequent among higher domestic staff, and this is well illustrated in The Book of Snobs when the narrator is shown around Castle Carabas by the housekeeper:

'The side entrance and All,' says the housekeeper. 'The halligator hover the mantelpiece was brought home by Hadmiral St. Michaels, when a Capting with Lord Hanson. The harms on the cheers is the harms of the Carabas family.' (Ch. 28).

Morgan, Major Pendennis' valet, experiences similar difficulties

11. The problem of the redundant aspirate must have been made the more intractable in the early years of the nineteenth century by the greater prevalence of a silent 'h'. Savage in his Vulgarisms and Improprieties of the English Language (1833) recommends this in harmonious, herbalist, horizon, hostile and many more. (pp.115-118).

despite the confident way in which he corrects Lightfoot, Clavering's man : 'Apinion, not apinium, Lightfoot, my good fellow' (Pendennis, Ch. 60). Earlier, he has informed the Major how 'Chevalier Strong ... came up and stopped the shindy - I beg pardon, the holtercation sir' (Ch. 36). Here, of course, the self-conscious substitution of the colloquial shindy for the grander and more euphemistic altercation neatly reinforces our sense of the struggle to achieve refinement which is responsible for the superfluous aspirate. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that such confusion was limited to servants. In Middlemarch we hear of a 'mercier of polite manners and superfluous aspirates' (Ch. 35), while in The Newcomes, Gandish, the master of a drawing school, talks to Clive and the Colonel of 'high art' and 'hancient Britons' (Ch. 17).

An associated feature of vulgar speech seems to have been the tendency to give aspirates undue emphasis, as well as introducing them unnecessarily. Perhaps this is what Thackeray has in mind when, in the passage quoted above, he speaks of h's staring 'in a ghastly manner out of the conversation'. Examples of this are by no means so common, but something of the kind seems to be implied by the doubling and capitalising of the letter in the speech of Nabdab, a singer, whom Colonel Newcome meets on his first return from India :

'Sir, you do me Hhonour,' says Mr. Nabdab ... 'and per'aps the day will come when the world will do me justice. May I put down your hhonoured name for my book of poems ?
(The Newcomes, Ch. 1).

Another pronunciation supposed by the half-educated to be vulgar was the use of [n] in place of [ŋ] in words ending in ing, a process commonly known as dropping the g. This may, in itself,

have been a mistaken notion for there is good reason to suppose that upper-class speakers favoured a pronunciation in [n]. Indeed, the present-day standard usage may well represent one of the triumphs of the pursuit of refinement over traditional habits of speech. However, the effect of hypercorrection was the appearance of [ɱ] in words where then, as now, it was wholly inappropriate. We have already met one example of this in the housekeeper of Castle Carabas who talks of a 'capting', a pronunciation she shares with Moss, the master of a spunging house in Vanity Fair, who talks with some pride of a former inmate 'the Honourable Capting Famish, of the Fiftieth Dragoons' (Ch. 53).¹² The error is, of course, a fairly gross one and it is found among those social aspirants whose level of education has not been high. Servants, especially valets, again seem especially prone to this. Sir Brian Newcomes' man announces that the family is staying 'at Brighting' (The Newcomes, Ch. 40), while Morgan, with characteristic ambivalence, boasts in public of his master having lived 'in the fust society, both at 'ome and foring' (Pendennis, Ch. 60) while threatening him in private with 'certing infamation' (Ch. 68).

Solecisms produced by over strenuous efforts to achieve correctness are not only found in pronunciation; they may also occur when a character attempts vocabulary beyond his linguistic powers. Mr. Mawmsey, the Middlemarch grocer, approached by Mr. Brooke on the question of electoral support, seeks to impress the

12. An overfrequent use of titles can in itself be a sign of vulgarity suggesting, perhaps, obsequiousness and name-dropping. Honourable, even so, is a special case: 'It is an unexplained mystery,' wrote Agnes Grove, 'why the courtesy title "Honourable" is not to be mentioned in polite society Why should it be the only title to be ignored in conversation?' (The Social Feticch, Ch. 3, p. 33). As so often, one is impressed by Thackeray's subtlety in the deft handling of solecisms of this kind.

local squire by putting a question 'fictiously, knowing what must be the answer' (Middlemarch, Ch. 51). Presumably this is a mispronunciation of fictitiously, though from the context it is clear that hypothetically is the word he wants. Once again, such slips seem to be especially common among domestic servants of the more exalted kind - butlers, nurses and the like - no doubt because of the combination peculiar to them of a low level of education and the high status they enjoyed below stairs. In The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Sir Austin's man, Berry, is, we are told, 'of majestic port' and uses 'dictionary words', though hardly, as his dialogue shows, with much felicity. 'Pardon me, sir,' he tells Adrian Harley, 'Acting recipient of special injunctions, I was not a free agent' (Ch. 21), while more straightforwardly erroneous is the attempt by the Whitney's nurse in Johnny Ludlow at the word surreptitiously, when she has to confess that 'Master Charles had slipped on to the ice "surrepstitiously" when her back was turned, and had gone souse in' (1, 26).

Mistakes are also likely to occur when characters embark on sentences of overambitious complexity which are beyond their powers of syntactic control. In Wives and Daughters, Miss Phoebe recounts to Molly the confusion occasioned to her by an unexpected visit from Lady Harriet. She has been doubly embarrassed, for during her conversation with her aristocratic visitor - by no means an everyday event - her sister has been snoring and worse, on waking, has made it very clear that she has mistaken Lady Harriet's voice for that of a servant. Phoebe seeks to rectify this discourtesy with dignified elegance, but overreaches herself and blunders over the matter of grammatical agreement :

Sister, it's her ladyship and me that has been conversing.
(Ch. 14).

Relative clauses were a temptation fraught with danger for the uneducated speaker anxious to impress. The error which most commonly occurs is the retention of a redundant personal pronoun. This is the problem which bedevils the speech - significantly called 'a studied composition' - with which Ridley, a butler, marks the departure of his master, Colonel Newcome, for India :

His Lordship have taken a young man, which Mr. Ridley had brought him up under his own eye, and can answer for him, Mr. R. says, 'with impunity; and which he is to be his Lordship's own man for the future.' (The Newcomes, Ch. 26).

Sometimes a character may simply lose his way in a complex sentence in the manner of Mr. Mawmsey whose formless utterance to Mr. Brooke seems to reflect his bewilderment at the task of simultaneously placating a valued customer while denying him solicited electoral support :

I am not one of those who have nothing to lose; I mean as to respectability both in parish and private business, and noways in respect of your honourable self and custom, which you was good enough to say you would not withdraw from me, vote or no vote, while the article sent in was satisfactory.
(Middlemarch, Ch. 51).

Another important difference between upper-class speakers and the socially ambitious has to do with the relationship between the generations in matters of linguistic prescription. Among upper-class families a sense of tradition is strong. Indeed, as we have seen in the case of the Duke of Monmouth in Coningsby, it can be so strong as to override the rulings of grammatical correctness. (see p. 100). As a result we find that aristocratic

parents generally correct their children as a securely held set of expectations is transmitted from one generation to the next.

So, the Duke of Omnium objects to a thoughtless use of awfully as an intensifier by his son, Lord Silverbridge and, to take another example from the Palliser novels, Violet Effingham is rebuked by her aunt in Phineas Finn for the use of the slang expression A1 (Ch. 42). Among rising families of the middle class, however, the situation is commonly reversed. Here the assumption tends to be that the children will know better than their parents. This is the case with the titled, but nonetheless vulgar, Lady Clavering who suffers much from the censure of her much smarter daughter, Blanche, occasioned by her - admittedly grossly unfashionable - mispronunciations :

If Lady Clavering talked about Sparrowgrass instead of Asparagus, or called an object a hobject, as this unfortunate lady would sometimes do, Missy calmly corrected her, and frightened the good soul, her mother, into errors only the more frequent as she grew more nervous under her daughter's eye. (Pendennis, Ch. 23).

But perhaps the clearest example of such a relationship between parent and child is that between Mrs. Vincy and Rosamond in Middlemarch. She corrects her mother on a number of occasions; for instance, over her use of the word tetchy, while she can confidently claim, '... you never hear me speak in an unladylike way' (Ch. 11). Indeed, throughout the novel, it is accepted quite naturally by both parties that Rosamond's level of refinement is the higher. When a parent was as good-natured as Mrs. Vincy and deferred gracefully to the child there were few problems, but this was not always the case. Acute family tensions could arise, as they do in Vanity Fair, when old Mr. Osborne cannot admit to the superior breeding of his son. George, in his turn, is not above using his father's speech as a weapon in a quarrel :

'I'm a gentleman though I am your son, sir,' George answered haughtily. 'Any communications which you have to make to me, or any orders which you may please to give, I beg may be couched in that kind of language which I am accustomed to hear.' (Ch. 21).

This line of attack proves highly effective for, as we are told, old Osborne stands 'in secret terror of his son as a better gentleman than himself'. The same situation was also capable of comic treatment, especially when the speech of the child was scarcely less vulgar than that of the parent. In The Newcomes, Julia Sherrick objects to her mother's habit of addressing Charles Honeyman as Mr. H., but remains unaware of the increasingly déclassé tone of her own mode of address to her parent : 'Don't say Mr. H., ma' (Ch. 44).

There seems little doubt that the phenomenon of the refined child and the vulgar parent was largely the result of the kind of education which the parent's money could buy. The public schools (or for girls a governess or school like that of Mrs. Lemon's which Rosamond Vincy has attended) were the source of many of the features associated with upper-class speech which they did much to standardise. The remarks which Ross makes on 'changing voice' - that is, turning a non-U speaker into a U one - were as applicable in the nineteenth century as they are in the twentieth :

I may mention that there is one method of effecting change of voice, provided the speaker is young enough. This is, to send him first to a preparatory school, then to a good public-school. This method is one that has been approved for more than a century and, at the moment, it is almost completely effective. (Ross, pp.47-8).

There were some, however, who felt that the young could suffer from being drilled in upper-class habits of speech with too much

zeal, and who favoured a more relaxed approach. Mrs. Waddy in Meredith's novel, Harry Richmond, tells how the hero's father, concerned for the boy's education, 'worrits about his learning to speak the language of a British gentleman' and how 'Before that child your h's must be like the panting of an engine - to please his father.' In response to this, her brother-in-law, on whose farm Harry is brought up, exclaims,

Hark you, Mary Waddy ... there's cockney and there's country, and there's school. Mix the three, strain, and throw away the sediment You may be over-careful. A stew's a stew, and not a boiling to shreds, and you want a steady fire, and not a furnace. (Ch. 3).

Perhaps this attitude was the wisest. Certainly the language of the strenuously refined was, to judge from the evidence of the novels, held in special disesteem. This can be seen from the attitudes which the novelists have, and invite us to share towards those who speak it. If we exclude those occasions on which the main intention is comic, and these are frequent, we find that such language tends to be associated with characters who are cold-hearted, egotistical and hypocritical. The snobbery which it reveals is a more serious indictment than a simple and unconscious lack of education. The same dislike is manifested in the etiquette books and manuals of polite conversation. At the beginning of this century, Agnes Grove remarked on the way in which English could be 'hideously murdered' not 'by those who speak the fine, interesting old dialects of the different provinces, but by those who profess to speak "pure English"' (The Social Fetich, Ch. 1, p.1).

But the pursuit of refinement had its triumphs too, despite this widespread hostility; it had an impact even on the speech of the upper class who were so ready to deplore it. Its influence

seems to have been particularly strong after the advent of universal elementary education had encouraged social and linguistic aspiration among those classes who had hitherto and without much thought spoken 'the fine, interesting old dialects' in an unadulterated form.¹³ J.W. Clark, who agrees that the critical influence was the Education Act of 1870, speculates in his Language and Style of Anthony Trollope (London, 1975) on the nature of the process involved :

The lower classes increasingly tended to drop not only exclusively lower-class usages, but also certain usages that may be called in one or another sense or degree irregular once shared by all classes. As a result, the upper classes, which had never used and certainly did not begin to use the former, and which heard the latter along with the former from the unreformed part of the lower classes, gradually came to confound the two, and to avoid certain once universal usages as they had always avoided exclusively lower-class usages. (Ch. 1, p.37).

One of these once universal usages which has all but disappeared from educated conversation is ain't, sometimes written an't and a'nt in the Victorian period. For much of the nineteenth century the idiom was, though colloquial and informal, quite free from its present-day association with vulgar and substandard speech, and it is used by even so staid and old-fashioned a gentleman as

13. Complaints about the deleterious effects of education on the countryman are not uncommon. The compilers of A Glossary of Wiltshire Words (1893), striking a note not dissimilar to Agnes Grove's, complain : 'The use of dialect would appear gradually to be dying out now in the county, thanks, perhaps, to the spread of education, which too often renders the rustic half-ashamed of his native tongue. Good old English as at base it is ... is not good enough for him now.' The authors then go on to remark how, as a result of this education and increasing geographical mobility, this 'good old English' was being replaced by 'a stock of slang phrases and misplaced aspirates' (p. VI.) The natives were clearly growing less picturesque. In the present century Ross continues this strain by deprecating the influence of primary school teachers, 'a class of people entirely non-U' (Ross, p.47).

Mr. Thorne of Barchester Towers who reflects 'I an't a young man' (Ch. 35).

Perhaps these spellings, an't and a'nt, which are by no means uncommon, suggest the pronunciation [a:nt] rather than the [eint] which is more familiar today. Even so, the more usual form is ain't, and examples of it are so common as to make exemplification highly arbitrary. It is, however, worth illustrating briefly the range of applications which were possible. Dolly Longestaffe and Felix Carbury use the word in both the first and second person singular :

'You ain't tight now, at any rate.'
'No; I ain't tight,' said Dolly, with melancholy acquiescence.
(The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 3).

An example in the first person plural is provided in the same novel by Julia Monogram, who reflects on the limitations of the social influence enjoyed by her husband and herself : 'But we ain't big enough to introduce new-comers' (II, Ch. 60), while, in Can You Forgive Her ?, Glencora Palliser uses the word in the third person plural : 'Ain't they a beautiful match ?' (1, Ch. 22).

Instances of ain't used by upper-class speakers in the third person singular are considerably less frequent for, while it could quite acceptably take the place of are not or am not in educated speech, it could not be substituted for is not without courting the charge of vulgarity.¹⁴ When this usage does occur, it is very often to be found in the speech of commercial men such as the

14. 'In the 19th and 20th C. an't and ain't are frequent for is not as representing vulgar speech' (Jespersen, Modern English Grammar, V, p. 434).

brewer, Andrew Cogglesby of Evan Harrington, who remarks of his brother, 'He ain't like me' (Ch. 5). It is, however, necessary to exercise some caution before regarding this use of ain't in the third person singular as an indicator of social class. It is also to be found among upper-class young men who are by disposition and habit dandified and 'fast'. It may well, like the slang which it generally accompanies, be regarded as an example of the tendency among those who are socially confident to adopt some features of vulgar and uneducated speech. Equally, it may be a preservation of an old feature of upper-class language since, according to Jespersen, the usage had enjoyed a higher status in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Whatever their origin, examples are common. Many, for example, occur among members of the Beargarden, the gambling club in The Way We Live Now. 'This is awful; - ain't it ?' asks Lord Nidderdale (II, Ch. 83), while in Vanity Fair, the dissolute dragoon, Rawdon Crawley, affects to deplore the gaming habits of George Osborne, though with heavy irony : 'Horrid, ain't he, hey ?' (Ch. 14).

Whether or not we agree with Professor Clark in his assertion that the elementary schools were instrumental in bringing about the disappearance of ain't, it is hard to believe they carry the full responsibility. The pressure to adopt a, perhaps misguided, ideal of correctness was more general than this and, as early as 1826, we find the author of The Vulgarities of Speech Corrected earnestly advising readers to avoid the usage altogether :

If you have got a habit, therefore, of using this expression a'n't in any of its applications, you cannot be too careful in avoiding it, as you will never hear it employed by any well educated person, much less by correct and elegant speakers. (p.23).

15. See M.E.G., V, p. 434, where Jespersen quotes an example from Swift.

As we have seen, the truth of these last assertions must be regarded as very doubtful.

An interesting postscript to this history of the declining fortunes of ain't is provided by the aristocratic Agnes Grove who, writing in 1907, can be found fighting a vigorous if hopeless, rearguard action against such misguided notions of correctness. Her note, however, is one of impotent regret. The battle has been lost to the forces of refinement :

If 'ain't I ?' is objected to, surely 'aren't I ?' is very much worse, and which of us can always undertake to keep up to the level of those who invariably say 'am I not ?' (The Social Fetich, p. 38).

A not dissimilar case is presented by the widespread tendency of Victorian upper-class speakers to use don't where, today, doesn't would seem more correct. In the nineteenth century this was evidently free from vulgarity like most applications of ain't and, indeed, seems to have been even more common, for, while it is certainly found among such 'fast' young men as Dolly Longestaffe - 'At least he's a fool if he don't' (The Way We Live Now, 1, Ch. 13) - it is also adopted by so reserved and modest a character as Mary Corby in Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe, who laments over the indifference of the man she loves : 'He don't dream I care for him' (Ch. 47). My own observations tend to confirm those of J.W. Clark who remarks that the 'expression is used by persons of both sexes and all ages, with no significant variation in frequency' (Language and Style of Anthony Trollope, Ch. 1, p. 38).

A NOTE ON THE LANGUAGE OF DISSENTERS.

There seems little doubt that, in the nineteenth century at least, religious practice had a significant effect on language, and particularly important from our point of view are a number of features associated with nonconformity. These may in many respects be legitimately regarded as constituting an element of class dialect since, with some notable exceptions, church and chapel was as much a social as a religious divide, with the various dissenting groups claiming by far the largest part of their membership from the lower and middle classes.¹⁶ Mrs. Oliphant tells us that 'there are no Dissenters in Carlingford - that is to say, none above the rank of a greengrocer or milkman' (The Rector, Ch. 1), while in Sybil Disraeli notes how

Going to church was held more genteel than going to meeting. The principal tradesmen of the neighbouring great houses deemed it more 'aristocratic'; using a favourite and hackneyed epithet, which only expressed their own servility. (Bk. II, Ch. 11).

Perhaps the most common feature in the speech of many nonconformists was the use of archaisms which seem often to derive from the idiom of the Bible, perhaps filtered though the medium of the chapel pulpit.¹⁷ Bulstrode, the Middlemarch banker, is a rich

16. Though it should be remembered that the position is complicated by the fact that it is hardly possible to distinguish the language of nonconformists from that of evangelicals within the Church of England. However, the reaction of the older school of clergymen in Barchester to the idioms of Mr. Slope, and even Mrs. Proudie, suggests that theirs was very far from the best usage as that was conventionally understood.

17. Though, once again, there is an Anglican equivalent to this in the speech of unworlly clergymen like Josiah Crawley of Trollope's Barchester novels or the Rev. Clutterbuck of Bulwer Lytton's Pelham. In their speech, however, the Hebraic elements are notably fewer, and we seem to have a scholarly, though certainly very old-fashioned idiom.

source of examples. He is pleased to 'hail the advent of Mr. Lydgate' (Middlemarch, Ch. 10), and habitually expresses himself in such terms as 'I shall rejoice to furnish your zeal with fuller opportunities' (Ch. 13). He also displays another characteristic of men of his persuasion which is to refer very frequently to God, but indirectly by means of some piously respectful appellation. Anglicans, even members of the clergy, tend to be fairly reticent about God in their everyday conversation, though, of course, the word may occur as an oath, something which nonconformists generally avoid strictly. When an outbreak of cholera threatens Middlemarch, Bulstrode talks of besieging 'the Mercy-seat for our protection' (Ch. 67),¹⁸ while in Little Dorrit the pious Mrs. Clennam refers to the Lord, 'But the Lord forbid that I should repine under any visitation' (I, Ch. 5), and Jehovah, '... that was the just dispensation of Jehovah' (II, Ch. 30). Similarly in Middlemarch, the dying Featherstone confides, 'The Almighty knows what I've got on my mind' (Ch. 32), a usage which he shares with his sister, Mrs. Waule, who in the same chapter declares, 'It would be flying in the face of the Almighty that's prospered him.'

A related characteristic of nonconformist language is an explicit preoccupation with the life to come, and, once again, a number of idioms and images are used to express this. A decidedly Calvinistic influence is discernible in one of the village women of Ravenshoe who, watching the impending shipwreck of the Warren Hastings remarks,

18. Miss Galindo's gloss on her own expression, a mercy, is interesting here : 'But, however, it was a mercy, and I don't mind saying so, aye, and meaning it too, though it may be like Methodism....' (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 11).

There's some of the elect on board, I'll be bound ... as will be supping in glory this blessed night. (Ravenshoe, Ch. 6).

The ailing Bessy Higgins, in conversation with a mildly embarrassed and disapproving Margaret Hale, the daughter of a former Anglican clergyman, expresses her 'longing to get away to the land o' Beulah' (North and South, Ch. 11), while in Felix Holt George Eliot notes how in the home of the minister, Mr. Lyon, heaven was 'spoken of as "Jerusalem" and "glory"' (Ch. 10). With the use of Jerusalem, we see the characteristic fondness for Hebraisms which is also prominent in a sermon which Mr. Lyon is composing :

My breth^en, do you think that great shout was raised in Israel by each man's waiting to say "amen" till his neighbours had said amen ? (Ch. 4).

But perhaps the most common instance of this tendency is found in the preference for the Sabbath over Sunday; this 'good old Saxon word', Thackeray tells us in The Newcomes, 'was scarcely known at the Hermitage', the home of Sophia Hobson (Ch. 2). Indeed, the use of Sabbath, as Mrs. Proudie bears witness, was also gaining a foothold in the evangelical party in the Church of England, though this is vigorously resisted by more traditional Anglicans, and not only in Barchester. Lady Ludlow reacts very strongly to its use in a sermon by the new vicar of her parish, Mr. Gray. She tells him :

... she had gathered from his sermon the last Sunday, he was all for Judaism against Christianity. He looked as if he did not understand what she meant; but the truth was that ... he had kept calling Sunday the Sabbath : and, as her ladyship said, 'The Sabbath is the Sabbath, and that's one thing - it is Saturday; and if I keep it, I'm a Jew, which I'm not. And Sunday is Sunday; and that's another thing;

and if I keep it, I'm a Christian, which I humbly trust I am. (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 1).

Various idioms were concerned with attendance at nonconformist services, which were often referred to as meetings, a usage which today is all but restricted to Quakers. As the O.E.D. points out (meeting sb. 3b) this sometimes appears after a preposition without the article. Thackeray records this in The Newcomes : 'on the next Sunday his father was at meeting (Ch. 2). It is also possible that the prepositional verb to sit under, meaning to listen to a preacher (O.E.D. sit v 28), was predominantly a usage of dissenters. Mrs. Mackenzie, also of The Newcomes, uses this when recalling a chapel near her home in Edinburgh: 'At home we sit under Dr. M'Craw, of course; but he is so awfully long !' (Ch. 23).

Rather as one might expect, a number of words are found which distinguish members of the various sects and the qualities which they were expected to possess from outsiders. Nuttwood, a dissenting grocer in Felix Holt, is suspicious of 'a show of punctilious morality in one who was not a "professor"' (Ch. 13). Here professor is used in the sense of 'one who makes open profession of religion' (O.E.D. sb. 3b). Such professors might be awakened, a characteristic nonconformist (and evangelical) usage with the meaning aroused 'to a sense of sin' (O.E.D. awaken, v. 5). Thackeray tells us that Thomas Newcome, shortly after meeting Sophia Hobson, the Quaker heiress who is to become his wife, 'became an awakened man' (The Newcomes, Ch. 2). Those who had not undergone such a process of awakening might be described as dark, the judgement which the Rev. Mr. Pickard of the Independent Meeting passes on Mr. Gilfil in George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical

Life. In one of his sermons he makes known his opinion that 'he lived in a parish where the Vicar was very dark' ('Mr. Gilfil's Love Story', Ch. 1). The faithful, however, might hope for leadings, something which Nuttwood suspects may have been granted to old Mr. Holt, but which he has little doubt will be denied to his radical and infidel son :

Old Mr. Holt, being a church member, had probably had 'leadings' which were more to be relied on than his son's boasted knowledge. (Felix Holt, Ch. 13).

This use of the word clearly corresponds with the O.E.D's definition 'a spiritual indication of the proper course of action in any case' (vbl. sb. 5) and which, like meeting, is to-day found mainly among Quakers. Such leadings might, in the words which Becky Sharp adopts in an attempt to win the favour of the evangelical Lady Southdown - one of the few undoubtedly upper-class characters to adopt such idioms - encourage 'more serious thought' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 41). Serious is a word which is also found in The Newcomes where the Hobsons' house, The Hermitage, is described as 'a serious paradise' (Ch. 2). In this specific sense, 'earnest about the things of religion' (O.E.D. a 2), the word is largely obsolete, but it seems, during the first part of the nineteenth century, to have been common among the groups we are considering.

Certain rhetorical figures seem to have been favoured by preachers when attempting to impress their meaning on the minds of their congregation. Perhaps the best known, and certainly one of the most amusing examples, is provided by Mr. Chadband of Dickens's Bleak House. Not only do his sanctimonious pronunciations (terewth for truth; untoe for unto) attract attention, but also the way in which his conversation is conducted almost entirely through

rhetical questions, to which he provides his own answers, and his fondness for elaborate and superfluous repetitions. The following extract is a fair example of his speech :

Or, my juvenile friends ... if the master of this house was to go forth into the city and there see an eel, and was to come back, and was to call untoe him the mistress of this house, and was to say, 'Sarah, rejoice with me, for I have
 x seen an elephant !' would that the ~~terewth~~ ? ... Or put it, my juvenile friends, that he saw an elephant, and returning said, 'Lo, the city is barren, I have seen but an eel,' would that be Terewth ? (Ch. 25).

It seems very doubtful that anyone spoke exactly in this way, though the possibility that there may be an element of truth in this evidently exaggerated portrait is suggested by the more restrained account of the pulpit oratory of Mr. Lyon in Felix Holt; here, he is composing a sermon :

Do you think there will ever be a great shout for the right ... if every Christian of you peeps round to see what his neighbours in good coats are doing, or else puts his hat before his face that he may shout and never be heard ? But this is what you do : when the servant of God stands up to deliver his message, do you lay your souls beneath the Word as you set our your plants beneath the falling rain ? No (Ch. 4).

Perhaps, however, the major difference between the two men is that, whereas Lyon reserves these flights of rhetoric for his formal addresses to his flock, Chadband constantly introduces them into everyday conversations.

Interesting, too, are the comments which George Eliot makes on the stress patterns which characterise Mr. Lyon's preaching for, as he warms to his subject, we are told that 'he had begun to utter his thoughts aloud in the varied measure and cadence habitual to him, changing from a rapid but distinct undertone to a loud emphatic

rallentando' (Ch. 4).

Unfashionable as the language of dissenters may have been, Mr. Lyon, along no doubt with many who shared his beliefs, finds it difficult to accept virtue in any other dress. This is a prejudice which shows very clearly in his initial reaction to Felix Holt; he is, we are told 'too little used to high principle quite dissociated from sectarian phraseology to be as immediately in sympathy with it as he would otherwise have been' (Ch. 5). Though many novelists show scant respect for this 'sectarian phraseology', often presenting it as a thin cloak for hypocrisy, it was clearly accepted by many nonconformists as an unquestioned token of piety. It was, indeed, a sine qua non for acceptance in chapel-going society.

CHAPTER III.

SLANG IN UPPER-CLASS SPEECH.

It is clear that in the nineteenth century slang could earn considerable disapprobation for its users. Novelists of the period were inclined to introduce it with some circumspection, often asking their readers' indulgence for so doing. What may seem to the modern reader a quite unexceptionable word is sometimes accompanied by the kind of apparently needless apology which Trollope attaches to the word jilted :

There is a feeling, too, when a girl has been jilted, - thrown over, perhaps, is the proper term(The Way We Live Now, II, Ch. 70.)

Possibly such romantic contexts were felt to be especially ill-suited to such informal and irreverent language and demanded a more becoming earnestness, for Henry Kingsley in Ravenshoe apologises even more profusely for an expression he uses when George Corby realises that he has lost his pre-eminence in the affections of his cousin, Mary :

It was evident that, since John Marston's arrival, he had been playing, with regard to Mary, second fiddle (if you can possibly be induced to pardon the extreme coarseness of the expression). (Ravenshoe, Ch. 58).

We would almost certainly be right to detect an ironic shaft here, directed at an excessive and possibly affected fastidiousness in his readers, and it is true that there often seems to be a considerable element of self-indulgence in the frisson of horror with which some Victorians responded to the use of slang. The same irony is also present in the excessively laborious defence of

slang which earlier in the novel accompanies the epithet, horsy, which is used to describe 'a gentleman with bandy legs' :

I strongly object to using a slang adjective, if any other can be got to supply its place; but by doing so sometimes one avoids a periphrasis, and does not spoil one's period. Thus, I know of no predicate for a gentleman with a particular sort of hair, complexion, dress, whiskers, and legs, except the one I have used above, and so it must stand. (Ch. 30).

However, even such muted protests as this testify to the fact that a writer had to guard himself against the objections of his public, a substantial number of whom clearly felt such expressions to be unacceptable, no doubt because they were 'low' (to use the contemporary vocabulary). Even a writer so tolerant of verbal ingenuity as Dickens playfully acknowledges this when, in Martin Chuzzlewit, the Man in the Monument reveals that the admission fee is 'a tanner', and the narrator remarks, 'It seemed a low expression, compared with the Monument' (Ch. 37).

Nevertheless, as so often in human affairs, theory and practice fail to coincide, and it is evident that slang expressions were not only widely used, but often by those of high social status. They seem to have been especially common among upper-class young men, particularly those of worldly or dandified tastes. Laura Pendennis is amused by Mr. Pynsent, 'the first specimen of a young London dandy that Laura had seen or heard', and his conversation, we are told, was 'interspersed with homely expressions of a style which is sometimes called slang' (Pendennis, Ch. 25). The 'English Raff Snob', an account of whose qualities is to be found in The Book of Snobs (Ch. 23), is described as 'startling the midnight echoes of quiet Continental towns with shrieks of English slang' and talking French 'with slang familiarity'.

Slang, then, was not confined to the 'low', at least in the social sense of that word, but there are, nonetheless, strong indications that it was not thought to be consonant with the highest moral qualities. As the last quotation shows, the word slang could be used adjectivally, and in such contexts something more than a fondness for colloquial language was implied. When Trollope describes the men whom Louis Scatcherd befriends at Cambridge as 'fast, slang men, who were fast and slang, and nothing else - men who imitated grooms in more than their dress' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 24), he is associating disreputable and, very possibly, strong language with disreputable behaviour. The first part of the O.E.D.'s definition (slang a 2) is 'Given to the use of slang', but to this is added a further element' of a fast or rakish character; impertinent'.

Slang might be thought excusable in a young man. Marston of Ravenshoe remarks, 'I don't pardon slang in any one beyond a very young bachelor' (Ch. 22), but even among the young its use was not universal, and it seems to have been largely eschewed by those of the highest character and probity. When Charles Ravenshoe begins to move in a more estimable set at Oxford, he immediately notices different linguistic conventions :

On the barge Charles met others of the Eight-quiet, staid, gentlemanly men Musgrave, the captain, received him with manly courtesy The others were very courteous too, and Charles soon began to find that he himself was talking in a different tone of voice, and using different language from that which he would have been using in his cousin's rooms (Ch. 8).

The cousin in question is the scapegrace, Lord Welter, and he is, as this implies, a great user of slang (and no doubt strong language as well) and the general disapproval which this evokes is

expressed most forcibly by the aging Lord Saltire who, as a man of the Regency, one would assume to be fairly broad-minded in such matters :

I can't stay in the house with him. The contrast of his loud coarse voice and stable slang to the sort of quiet conversation we have had lately would be intolerable; besides, he is an atrocious young ruffian(Ch. 18).

'Stable slang' is his description of what is evidently a notably coarse language and it recalls Trollope's assertion that Louis Scatcherd resembles his grooms - clearly a race of little verbal delicacy. The phrase also reminds us that much slang was derived from the language of lower social groups. An extreme and amusing example of this tendency occurs in Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham. When the hero is given a rapid introduction to 'Flash' or thieves' slang by the amiable, though disreputable Job Jonson, he finds its elements more familiar than might have been supposed since, as he remarks,

The slang part of my Cambridge education had made me acquainted with some little elementary knowledge, which rendered Jonson's precepts less strange and abstruse. (Ch. 81)¹

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1. Though the point is not directly related to social class, the link between slang and immorality is also discussed in Bulwer-Lytton's novel. Dawson confides to its hero how Thornton's use of thieves' slang has been instrumental in leading him into serious crime :

They never spoke of things by their right names : and, therefore, those things never seemed so bad as they really were - to swindle a gentleman did not sound a crime when it was called 'macing a swell' - nor transportation a punishment, when it was termed with a laugh, 'lagging a cove.' Thus, insensibly, my ideas of right and wrong, always obscure, became perfectly confused : and the habit of treating all crimes as subjects of jest in familiar conversation, soon made me regard them as matters of very trifling importance. (Pelham, Ch. 83).

No doubt the association of slang with moral laxity was the reason why women, at least those careful of their reputation, not only avoided slang in their own conversation, but disliked its use by men in their presence. The most common defence when this convention was breached and slang was used in their hearing was for the woman to affect a surprised incomprehension. To show an understanding of slang was too compromising. So Trollope in An Eye for an Eye (1878-9) remarks,

If there was anything that Lady Scroope hated almost as much as improper marriages it was slang. She professed that she did not understand it; and in carrying out her profession always stopped the conversation to have any word explained to her which she thought had been used in an improper sense. (Ch. 4).

There are many examples of this phenomenon. In Ravenshoe, Mary Corby is, or affects to be, ignorant of Charles's Oxford idioms: 'Mary was going to ask what exact amount of personal suffering being dropped on to like blazes involved' (Ch. 15); while in Middlemarch, when Fred Vincy describes Lydgate as 'rather a prig', his self-consciously refined sister remarks, 'I never can make out what you mean by a prig' (Ch. 11). However, when slang conveyed a particularly agreeable sentiment the usual objections might be waived. In the same novel, even the normally fastidious Mrs. Garth, an ex-schoolteacher who is indefatigable in the preservation of linguistic standards, allows Alfred to describe Mary as 'an old brick'. George Eliot comments, 'even Mrs. Garth, her lips curling with a calm contentment, allowed that inappropriate language to pass without correction' (Ch. 40).

As we might expect, women who have any pretensions to gentility use slang very rarely in their own speech. On those occasions when women do employ it it is inclined to draw censure, not

only from other women, but also from men, including those who habitually make use of such idioms themselves. Pendennis's friend, Foker, no purist in matters of language, remarks of one of his female acquaintances, 'The way in which that Pinckney talks slang is quite disgusting' and he goes on to observe, 'I hate chaff² in a woman' (Pendennis, Ch. 40). There is, however, some reason to suppose that this prohibition was relaxed somewhat as the century progressed. Trollope, in particular, has a number of female characters, often attractive and engaging ones, who are not content to leave the pleasures of slang to men. Martha Dunstable of Doctor Thorne is one example of the type. She writes to Mary Thorne before her wedding, 'I shall certainly come and see you turned off', a usage which Trollope clearly feels unable to let pass without comment :

Miss Dunstable, it must be acknowledged, was a little too fond of slang; but then, a lady with her fortune, and of her age, may be fond of almost whatever she pleases. (Ch. 47).

This remark of Trollope's is very similar to Agnes Grove's assertion in The Social Fetich that those whose social position is unassailable may defy the ordinary rules of etiquette almost with impunity. 'Given certain conditions,' she writes, 'an individual may do or say almost anything he pleases' (p.25). The Dunstable fortune has, of course, been recently acquired through trade, and it is possible that this fondness for slang may be a mark of vestigial vulgarity. The same can hardly be suspected of Lily Dale in The Small House at Allington (1864), who shocks her sister

2. The word was much used in Victorian times but, as the O.E.D. observes, it was 'of slang origin, and still somewhat vulgar'. It is defined (chaff, sb. 2) as 'Banter, light and good-humoured raillery, or ridicule, calculated to try the temper of the person to whom it is addressed: badinage.'

by calling a young man a 'swell'. Accused of the crime, she confesses :

I fancy I do like slang. I think it's awfully jolly to talk about things being jolly. Only that I was afraid of your nerves I should have called him stunning. It's so slow, you know, to use nothing but words out of a dictionary. (Ch. 2).

Times were changing and Trollope, ever an acute observer of linguistic fashion, records the fact through these and a number of other spirited young women. Glencora Palliser is perhaps the most memorable of them, though her excessively stiff husband is not appreciative of her taste for verbal experimentation. Plantagenet Palliser might have quoted with approval the author of Society Small Talk who shared his distaste for 'the fast and flippant manner of speech in which certain youngladies indulge'. Such women, the anonymous author goes on, 'have at command a vocabulary of terms and expressions bordering upon slang, if not slang strictly speaking, and altogether fast, if not absolutely vulgar'; and they like 'nothing so much as being mistaken for a stable lad' (Ch. 10, p. 158). However, despite the authority of the etiquette books, a general relaxation of formality between the sexes is noticeable. Certainly the use of slang in mixed company seems to have become more possible, though it is a change acknowledged somewhat ruefully by Miss Demolines in The Last Chronicle of Barset (1866-7) during a conversation with John Eames :

'It's the way of the world just at present that ladies should submit to that sort of thing from gentlemen.'

'What sort of thing, Miss Demolines ?'

'Chaff, as you call it. Courtesy is out of fashion, and gallantry has come to signify quite a different kind of thing from what it used to do.'

'The Sir Charles Grandison business is done and gone. That's what you mean, I suppose ? Don't you think we should find it very heavy if we tried to get it back again ?'

'I'm not going to ask you to be a Sir Charles Grandison, Mr. Eames.' (Ch. 39).

It will not have escaped notice that the word chaff is now used by the lady.

Some groups of upper-class speakers used slang with especial frequency. The young, as we have noticed, were fond of it; not surprisingly, perhaps, since in our own century Eric Partridge in his Slang Today and Yesterday reminds us that such language is always prevalent among 'the young in heart' and 'the young in years' (p.6). Because of this, the great educational institutions were a source of much slang as the speech of boys at the public schools quickly testifies. Again, this is as we should expect, since a closed society, sharing common interests and habits and aware, no doubt, of its own privileged position, would be particularly likely to develop its own vocabulary and idiom.

Sometimes these usages might be confined to a single school. Examples of this are to be found in The Newcomes in which Clive's school, Grey Friars, is modelled on Charterhouse which Thackeray himself had attended. The founder of Charterhouse had made provision for the establishing of alms-houses for pensioners on a site adjoining the school and the old men who lived in them were known to the boys as codds. The word is carried into the fictional world of Grey Friars and, as the following quotation shows, it could be used both as a general term and as a title prefixed to a surname :

... The Cistercian lads called these old gentlemen Codds, I know not wherefore ... but is old Codd Ajax alive I wonder ? (Ch. 75).

Another piece of 'Cistercian' (i.e. Carthusian) slang occurs in Thomas Newcome's reminiscences of his own schooldays. He recalls the habit of 'tibbing out and receiving the penalty therefor' (Ch. 2). The O.E.D. defines this as 'to escape unobserved from school or house' and the word is exemplified by quotations both from Thackeray and J.T. Hewlett who, writing in 1840, is also referring to Charterhouse.

Black, in the sense of nickname, is sufficiently unusual (it is unrecorded both by the O.E.D. and Eric Partridge's Dictionary of Slang) to suggest that it may have been confined to Rugby school where it occurs twice in Tom Brown's Schooldays. The narrator explains that 'Scud' - itself school slang for a good runner (Ch. 5) - was 'East's nickname, or Black, as we called it' (Ch. 6), and the word is found again later when Tom has cause to regret having called a gamekeeper 'old Velveteens' : '... what a fool I was,' he laments, 'to give him a black' (Ch. 9). Another word which was more certainly specific to Rugby was lout (O.E.D. sb. 3) meaning a townsman and, by extension, a common and uneducated person.³ Lout is twice used by East when introducing Tom to his new school. He advises him on his dress or 'rig', and in particular on the kind of headgear he should adopt since 'Only the louts wear caps' (Ch. 5). Later, when explaining the school tradition of Saturday night singing, he tells how during this musical entertainment 'the louts come and pound at the great gates' (Ch. 6).

Most school slang, however, was in more general use and it is relatively unusual to find an example of an idiom which remained

3. The word is very similar in meaning to cad, which was in use at Eton and Oxford, and snob in its pre-Thackerayan sense, which seems to have had special significance in Cambridge. (see p.179)

confined to a single school. Fellow, for example, is very frequent and widespread among schoolboys. It is the word most frequently used to refer to other boys, especially those who are most readily accepted as colleagues and friends. So Tom is greeted on his arrival at Rugby : 'I say, you fellow, is your name Brown ?' (Ch. 5), while in Cuthbert Bede's novel, The Adventures of Verdant Green, the word occurs again (the spelling no doubt indicating the usual pronunciation) as Charles Larkyns explains the pleasures of school cricket to the innocent Verdant who has been educated in the shelter of his father's home :

You get a feller to give you a few balls, just for practice, and you hit the ball into another feller's ground(1, Ch 1).

'Fellers' who merited particular approval might, like Tom, be 'voted ... a brick' (Tom Brown's Schooldays, Ch. 6), or, in East's words, after Tom buys some food for him at the tuck-shop, 'a trump' (Ch. 6).

Certain adjectives expressing approval (or the reverse) are often characteristic of particular social groups. Some seem to have been especially associated with schoolboys. In his Sketches and Travels, Thackeray suggests that one of these was prime, for during a visit to a theatre one boy calls out to another artlessly,

By Jove, old fellow, ain't it good ? I say, Smith, isn't it prime, old boy ? ('A Night's Pleasure', II).

The word may suggest a certain naive enthusiasm, a quality which it shares with jolly. The author of Society Small Talk confirms this : '"Jolly" is well enough on the lips of a schoolboy, to whom

it now of right belongs, a right which no one disputes,' he writes, before going on to warn the unwary, 'but slang proper is and never can be anything else than vulgar' (p.116). This word is used by Tom Brown when he is congratulated on his inclusion in the school cricket XI : 'Yes, ain't it jolly ?' (Tom Brown's Schooldays, II, Ch. 6), and we can see very clearly from this the tendency of such words to become debased into the vaguest tokens of approval.

Slang provides us with a clear reflection of the unofficial hierarchy of school life. At the bottom of the social order came the fag, the junior boy acting as a servant to his seniors. There is some evidence that the word, like the system, was confined to the larger public schools for, in Johnny Ludlow, both are unknown in the small local academy run by Dr. Frost. This is clear from the reaction provoked by the bully, Wolfe Barrington, who has arrived from a grander institution :

'I shall make you my fag,' said Barrington, the day he entered, catching hold of little Hearn in the playground, and twisting him round by the arm.

'What's that ?' asked Hearn, rubbing his arm - for Wolfe's grasp had not been a light one.

Later, Barrington is cautioned by the headmaster in terms that remind us that much in the life and language of the public schools remained unregenerate even in the age of Dr. Arnold. Barrington is told to be 'a little more careful in your language' and reminded, 'You have come amidst gentlemen here, not blackguards' (III). Clearly, the smartest and grandest were by no means the most fastidious. Where the fagging system prevailed, however, it clearly required to be sternly enforced, and its victims had to be warmed (beaten) occasionally to remind them of their position.

When Charles Larkyns reminisces to Verdant about his dealings with his fag, he recalls that it is necessary to 'take out your strap and warm him' (The Adventures of Verdant Green, 1, Ch. 1). Much the same treatment is suggested during the account of the cricket match between the school and School House in Tom Brown's Schooldays, though here the chastisement is described as toco :

The School leaders come up furious, and administer toco to the wretched fags nearest at hand. (1, Ch. 5).

Though the etymology of this word is somewhat uncertain, the O.E.D. suggests that it may derive from the Greek Tókos (interest). Such mock pedantry is a feature of some school (and especially of University) slang.

At the opposite end of the social scale from the humble fags came the most senior boys. These, like Lord Vane of Mrs. Henry Wood's East Lynne, might describe themselves as 'the great whips at Eton' (III, Ch. 21), or vie for position of cock of the school, an honour which, as readers of Vanity Fair will remember, devolves upon the unlikely figure of Dobbin after his memorable defeat of the school bully, Cuff (Ch. 5). Doubtless, much prestige might be won through such proficiency in fighting, and the ability to lick one's opponent. This word is used by George Osborne in the letter home which describes the encounter between Cuff and Dobbin. Rather oddly to us, the verb is used intransitively, but this is often a characteristic of small social groups where the familiarity of context renders further elaboration unnecessary (see p. 73):

They fought thirteen rounds, and Dobbin licked. (Ch. 5).

The word might also be used of contests of a less physical kind.

One piece of information which George Osborne's son, Young Georgy, brings home from his school is that 'Bull Major was so strong (though only in Eutropius) that it was believed he could lick the usher, Mr. Ward, himself' (Ch. 46). To return, however, to the schoolboys' taste for pugilism. The verb peel (also used intransitively) is worth noticing. It occurs in Tom Brown's Schooldays in a description of one of the combatants before a fight. Williams, we are told, 'is very strongly made about the arms and shoulders; "peels well", as the little knot of big fifth-form boys, the amateurs, say' (II, Ch. 5). This clearly corresponds to O.E.D. (peel v. 5), 'to strip as in preparation for some exercise', a usage which it regards as originally having been a term of pugilism.

Various offences against the schoolboys' code of honour were clearly viewed very seriously, and these too have their special vocabulary. It is not, perhaps, surprising to find that a character as disreputable as Flashman 'used to toady the bullies by ... peaching against the rest of us' (Tom Brown's Schooldays, 1, Ch. 8). The word peach, aphetic for impeach, in the sense of 'to act as an informer' is a very common one in school slang. Dobbin's troubles at school are compounded by 'the lad who had peached upon him about the grocer's cart' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 5). This is the cart on which his father's name is displayed and which delivers provisions to the school in lieu of fees. Peaching, however, was more usually directed towards masters and those in authority and the victim of the practice, brought to justice, might find himself floored that is, in the words of the O.E.D. (floor, v. 3a), 'to grow confused, be at a loss, fail, break down'. This is the fate which Tom Brown fears is in store for Martin after he has allowed George Martin to go wading in pursuit of birds' eggs:

... you'll be called up and floored when the master sees what a state you're in. (Tom Brown's Schooldays, II, Ch. 4).

When a young man went on from public school to one of the universities, slang often remained a conspicuous feature of his speech. So much so, indeed, that the use of slang was regarded as one of the distinguishing marks of the university man. This point is made explicitly in the North British Review of May 1851.⁴ During a comparison between the respective styles of Thackeray and Dickens, the reviewer remarks,

In the ease, and, at the same time, thorough polish and propriety with which Mr. Thackeray can use slang words, we seem especially to detect the University man. Snob, swell, buck, gent, fellow, fogy - these, and many more such expressive appellatives, not yet sanctioned by the Dictionary, Mr. Thackeray employs more frequently, we believe, than any other living author, and yet always with unexceptionable taste.

The truth of this suggested link between slang and the universities is quickly confirmed by an examination of undergraduate speech. Slang is prominent in the dialogue of many university novels and in the language of characters like Fred Vincy of Middlemarch who 'rather looked down on the manners and speech of young men who had not been to the university' (Ch. 23). Fred's education, indeed, has purged him of any narrow-minded prejudices concerning the value of correct English, and he amazes his more conservative and fastidious sister by remarking that 'All choice of words is slang' and that 'correct English is the slang of prigs who write history and essays. And the strongest slang of all is the slang of poets' (Ch. 11).

4. The passage is reprinted in Thackeray : The Critical Heritage, ed. Tillotson and Hawes, London, 1968, p.112.

Like the public schools, the universities could boast their virtuosi of slang, the equivalents of East at Rugby. Such a character is to be found in Lindsay, 'the dialectician' of Clough's narrative poem, The Bothie of Tober-Na-Vuolich, who, during a vacation reading party in the Highlands, 'in three weeks had created a dialect new for the party' (I, 25-30). Bouncer, an undergraduate in Cuthbert Bede's novel of Oxford life, The Adventures of Verdant Green, is evidently of the same species. He is to be found taking delight in linguistic games in phrases such as to poke a smipe (smoke a pipe) (II, Ch. 3); he congratulates Verdant on his rendering of a song, thanking him with heavy irony for having 'pitched it so uncommon strong in the vocal line' (I, Ch. 8); later he recalls how 'The Mum cut up doosid' after his failure to gain a degree and 'turned on the main, and did the briny' (III, Ch. 11). The first of these two phrases, meaning 'to weep copiously' is exemplified by the O.E.D. with a quotation of 1857, while, interestingly, the second, to do the briny, which carries the same meaning, is regarded by Eric Partridge as 'low'. This may lend further credence to the idea suggested earlier (p. 165) that some upper-class slang may derive from speakers of much lower social groups. It is possible that what differentiates the educated speaker's slang from outright vulgarity is a certain consciously playful colouring made possible by an absolute security of status. Certainly David Masson, in the review of Thackeray already quoted, goes on to make this point, and, indeed, it is worth noticing that at least one of the slang idioms which he regards as characteristic of Thackeray - gent - was certainly a vulgarity in the Victorian period :

... he is conscious, no doubt, of the same kind of security that permits Oxford and Cambridge men, and even, as we can testify, Oxford and Cambridge clergymen, to season their conversation with similar words - namely, the evident air

of educated manliness with which they can be introduced, and which, however rough the guise, no one can mistake.

Not all university slang, however, was derived from low or vulgar speech. Like toco at Rugby, some words had their origin in the classical languages. Probably the most familiar example of this is kudos which comes from the Greek word meaning glory or renown. The O.E.D. dates this usage from 1831, and it is fairly common in scenes of university life in Victorian fiction. When a steeplechase (or grind) is planned in The Adventures of Verdant Green, we hear how 'Mr. Smalls gained kudos by offering to give the luncheon at his rooms' (III, Ch. 11), while in Tom Brown at Oxford, the word is rendered in Greek script when Tom, having asked Drysdale what Blake will receive as a prize for his Latin verse, is told, 'Not much - perhaps a ten'ner ... but no end of κωδός, I suppose' (Ch. 19). Also found in undergraduate speech is the mock pedantry which playfully introduces Latin tags and quotations into ordinary conversation. James Crawley of Vanity Fair exhibits this trait while staying at Brighton with his aunt. The port which the younger Pitt encourages him to drink after dinner renders him less than discreet about his college career and does little to improve his classical scholarship :

You want to trot me out, but it's no go. In vino veritas, old boy. Mars, Bacchus, Apollo virorum, hey ? (Ch. 34).

The last sentence is, in fact, an imperfect and misapplied quotation from the Eton Latin Grammar. Bouncer of The Adventures of Verdant Green also occasionally uses Latin vocabulary. 'Videsne puer ?' he asks Verdant when ensuring that his naive friend has followed one of his elaborate exercises in punning. Then, in a way which illustrates the diverse sources of university speech,

he quickly substitutes the highly colloquial English 'D'ye twig, young 'un ?' (1, Ch. 9). The sprightliness of these sudden changes of register and the seemingly inexhaustible verbal ingenuity which they represent are, of course, highly suggestive of youthful energy and high-spirited irreverence. Perhaps it is little wonder that the Homeric epithets applied to Lindsay of Clough's The Bothie should be 'the lively, the cheery' (I, 26). One of the motives which lay behind this youthful fondness for slang seems to have been the desire to assert a kind of sophistication, a freedom from the restricting narrowness of home and family. Certainly, to show an ignorance of the special idiom of such a society was to reveal oneself as a naive outsider, as the aptly-named Verdant Green discovers when he refers to the coming 'holidays'. His scout, Mr. Filcher, asserts the eternal prerogative of the servant in affecting a dumbly disdainful incomprehension of his master :

' 'Ollidays, sir ?' said Mr. Filcher. 'Oh ! I see, sir ! Vacation, you mean, sir. Young gentlemen as is men, sir, likes to call their 'ollidays by a different name to boys, sir.' (1, Ch. 6).

When this vacation arrives, and Verdant returns to his home in Warwickshire, it is probably the pleasure of asserting that he is now one of the 'young gentlemen as is men' that leads him to cause grave alarm to his maiden aunt, the unworldly Miss Virginia, by declaring that as a freshman he has learned to 'chaff a cad' and 'grill a devil' :

'Grill a devil !' groaned Miss Virginia. 'Infatuated young man !' (1, Ch. 12).

This phrase to grill a devil, a skill which Verdant has acquired

from his friend, Charles Larkyns, refers to the preparation of a devil which, according to a quotation from G. Griffin's The Collegians (1830), cited by the O.E.D., was 'the drumstick of a goose or turkey, grilled and highly-spiced' (devil sb.9). Chaff we have already discussed, while cad, originally derived from caddie, an errand boy, was first used at Eton to describe the 'low fellows, who hang about the college to provide the Etonians with anything necessary to assist their sports' (O.E.D. cad sb. 4). The word seems to have been taken up at Oxford where it carried the same meaning, though this could be extended to refer to townsmen in general. It is in this more general sense that it is used by Verdant. Cad, often reflects the more or less open hostilities which existed between town and gown. In Tom Brown at Oxford, the captain of the St. Ambrose eight is taken to task for his egalitarian views after one such skirmish :

Jervis, Brown says you don't believe a gentleman can lick a cad, unless he is the biggest and strongest of the two. (Ch. 12).

In this last example the final development of the word's meaning, 'A fellow of low vulgar manners and behaviour' (O.E.D. cad 5) is at least latent.

Snob, which carried a very similar meaning, occurs in The Adventures of Verdant Green. Before yet another battle, our hero fortifies himself with spirits which 'made his face flush, and caused him to declare that "the first snob who 'sulted him should have a sound whopping"' (II, Ch. 3). Like cad, the original meaning of the word was occupational, in this case referring to a shoemaker or his apprentice. The O.E.D. regards its use to designate a townsman - and ultimately any vulgar or ill-bred person -

as Cambridge slang, but its appearance in a novel of Oxford life rather confirms the suspicion that few of these usages remained confined to a single institution for very long. As is well-known, the present-day meaning of the word seems to have been an innovation of Thackeray's and is first exemplified by the O.E.D. (snob 3c) with a quotation from The Book of Snobs (1848).

Much higher in the social scale at Oxford came the lions. This was the title given by undergraduates to visitors, especially distinguished ones, who were sight-seeing in the city (O.E.D. lion 4c). There was, however, a certain ambiguity here for, in more general usage, the phrase to see the lions meant to see 'things of note, celebrity, or curiosity (in a town etc)' (O.E.D. lion 4), 'the lions' originally having been those kept at the Tower of London. This ambiguity accounts for a slight misunderstanding which takes place in Tom Brown at Oxford. When Tom's cousin, Mary, visits him during Commemoration, Tom decides to wait for Hardy who will act as a knowledgeable guide to the city and its distinguished men :

'... he knows all the people by sight up here. We couldn't have gone to the Walk without someone to show us the lions.'

Hardy, however, appears to understand lions as Oxford slang for visitors to the city and is doubtful of his ability to undertake such a task:

I know most of our dons by sight, certainly, but scarcely any of the visitors. (Ch. 26).

No such difficulty surrounded the word lioness which, naturally enough, was used of female visitors. Earlier, during the same

Commemoration, Tom's friends are warned to 'keep your eyes open' since 'there must be plenty of lionesses about' (Ch. 25). Hughes himself explains to us that 'lady visitors' are 'profanely called lionesses'.

If, despite such sources of distraction, an undergraduate wished to devote himself to academic work, his simplest recourse was to sport his oak. Tom Brown's first letter from Oxford to his school-friend, George Arthur, clearly explains the origin and meaning of the phrase :

My rooms are pleasant enough, at the top of the kitchen staircase, and separated from all mankind by a great, iron-clamped, outer door, my oak, which I sport when I go out or want to be quiet.... (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 1).

Once safely behind this barrier, Tom hopes, 'I shall take to reading something or other by myself' but, as he goes on to confide, 'I never was much of a hand at sapping' (Ch. 1). To sap was 'to pore over books' (O.E.D. sap v.3). A subject which had been neglected might be rubbed up. Blake realises he is unprepared for a forthcoming examination and resolves, 'I must rub up my history somehow' (Ch. 10). To someone in Blake's position the assistance of a coach might be useful. The origin of this word, which is now, of course, no longer slang, and a playful variant cab is explained to the puzzled freshman, Verdant Green, by Charles Larkyns :

Oh, I forgot you didn't know college-slang. I suppose a royal mail is the only gentleman coach that you know of. Why, in Oxford, a coach means a private tutor, you must know; and those who can't afford a coach, get a cab - alias a crib, - alias a translation. (The Adventures of Verdant Green, I, Ch. 7).

Later in the same novel, we learn that the equivalent of coach among medical students was grinder (III, Ch. 11), though the fact that the word is also part of Foker's extensive slang vocabulary suggests that it enjoyed a somewhat wider currency than this. He tells Pendennis how his mother, determined that he shall succeed academically, 'sent me down here with a grinder' (Pendennis, Ch. 5). Assistance of a less legitimate kind, when the task in hand was an imposition for misconduct, might be obtained by employing a deputy who would agree to barberise, or carry out the task on one's behalf. The practice is referred to in The Adventures of Verdant Green where Bouncer cheers the erring Verdant by asking him, 'Ain't there coves to barberise 'em for you, Gig-lamps ?' (I, Ch. 12). The word seems to have been derived from the existence of a learned barber who was prepared to undertake work of this kind.

Despite all efforts, however, the unfortunate undergraduate might still plough (fail) an examination and be plucked or, less seriously, take a lower degree than had been expected, as when in Ravenshoe the rusticated Charles hears news that 'Charles Marston's classical first is fishy' (Ch. 14). Rather similar in meaning to fishy is shady, a word used by Lindsay in Clough's Bothie to express his doubts as to his tutor's competence in some subjects. He describes him as

Skilful in Ethics and Logic, in Pindar and Poets unrivalled;
Shady in Latin, said Lindsay, but topping in Plays and Aldrich.
 (I, 23-24).

This word might also be used in less scholastic contexts. The prospects of the various college eights are discussed in The Adventures of Verdant Green, and it is decided that 'Exeter, Lincoln, and Wadham were very shady, and not doing the things that

were expected of them' (I, Ch. 10). Rowing, of course, was a highly popular sport among undergraduates and it had its own specialised vocabulary. Oar, for example, could be used not only to refer to the object but to the person using it. Tom Brown on his arrival at Oxford is convinced that he is 'a heaven-born oar' (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 2), only to discover that he and the rest of his crew of freshmen 'cut crabs desperately at present' (Ch. 1). The phrase to cut crabs, a variant of the more usual to catch a crab (O.E.D. crab sb. 10), refers to a faulty stroke and is a facetious explanation of the oar's failure to emerge from the water.

For the young man whodid not go to the university, the commissioned ranks of a fashionable regiment offered a popular and socially acceptable choice of career, and the idioms of army life are an important element in upper-class colloquial speech. Thackeray's Vanity Fair, dealing as it does with a number of military men, illustrates this influence clearly and shows, incidentally, the acuteness of its author's ear for the varieties of the spoken language. The chapter title, 'Dobbin of Ours' (Ch. 5), is one example, this characteristically military mode of reference being an abbreviated form of of our regiment. In the same novel we find Captain Macmurdo, who is acting as a second to Rawdon Crawley in his duel with Lord Steyne, disconcerted to find that his counterpart is a 'pekin' or civilian (Ch. 55). This was a name originally adopted by French soldiers serving under Napoleon I, perhaps, the O.E.D. suggests, because trousers of pekin (a kind of silk) were much worn at the time. The word is occasionally found in English. Its occurrence here in a novel of Regency life and presenting the Napoleonic campaigns is another highly Thackerayan touch of authenticity.

Not unnaturally perhaps, soldiers undergoing the dangers of active service seem to have used a number of euphemistic terms for death. Rawdon Crawley, in fact, provides an example of one of these, drop, when hoping that Macmurdo will take a fatherly interest in his son should Steyne prove victorious in the coming duel :

I say, Mac, if anything goes wrong - if I drop - I should like you to - to go and see him, you know,... (Ch. 54).

East, the great user of slang at Rugby in Tom Brown's Schooldays, is equally quick to adopt military idiom as his letters to Tom at Oxford, which give an account of his campaigns in India, show. In one he uses the similarly euphemistic verb, to knock over. He reflects on his isolation : 'Except you, old friend, I don't know who would care much if I were knocked over tomorrow' (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 44). In the same letter he describes how the men of his company seem light-hearted even with an outbreak of fighting imminent, 'as if we were out for a junketing', while the coming battle itself is, with the same euphemistic intention described as a 'ball' :

You'll know more about what's going on from the papers than we do, but here they say the ball may begin any day

Perhaps this is the coolness of the professional soldier; perhaps it is a further reflection of aristocratic nonchalance, a refusal to let one's style be ruffled even in the face of the gravest physical danger.

There was a very considerable body of slang which had to do with horses and riding. These were, of course, very much upper-

class interests and, not surprisingly, the colloquial idioms associated with them are characteristic of the speech of men of this class.⁵ Such colloquialisms are numerous. In Thackeray's Book of Snobs, for example, the impecunious Wellesley Ponto, a cornet in a fashionable regiment, looks over his father's stables and he and his friend, we are told, 'make merry over the cattle there' (Ch. 29). Cattle, as the O.E.D. entry reveals, is a word which has become progressively restricted in meaning. Originally referring to any 'movable property or wealth',⁶ it increasingly became used only for livestock of various kinds. By the nineteenth century, however, the word was applied almost exclusively to bovine animals (O.E.D. cattle 4c), its application to horses being by that date regarded as 'the language of the stable' (O.E.D. cattle 4d). As we might expect, colloquial idioms are also frequently found when the qualities of particular horses are being discussed. An effete young man at a racecourse in Disraeli's Sybil describes a horse of doubtful wind as 'puffy' (Bk. I, Ch. 1), which may be compared with the usages of the (admittedly lower-class) horse-dealer of Middlemarch, Mr. Bambridge. With the circumspection proper to his calling, he affects to have a very poor regard for Fred Vincy's horse, declaring on hearing its supposedly noisy breathing, 'I never heard but one worse roarer in my life' and professes not to deal in what he facetiously chooses to call 'wind-instruments'. Fred, however, retains some faith in the animal and affirms that he is 'quite satisfied with his paces'

5. Though it would, of course, be an oversimplification to suggest that these would not also be in use by those members of the lower-class, such as grooms, who were through their occupations much in contact with horses.

6. Cf. chattels which shares a common origin with cattle.

and that its trot is 'an uncommonly clean one' (Ch. 23).

Some usages seem to have been especially associated with hunting and the devotees of this sport seem to have been remarkable for their strongly colloquial language. A general idea of such speech, its slang, and indeed its profanity, can be gained from the dialogue of Mr. Wurley of Tom Brown at Oxford who, as we have seen, excites Tom's particular disgust (see p. 103) or Sir Ralph Rumford of Pelham, 'a stout, red-faced man, about thirty', who when asked whether he has been hunting all day replies,

Yes, old cock ... been after the brush till I am quite done up: such a glorious run ! By G- , you should have seen my grey mare, Smith; by G- , she's a glorious fencer. (Ch. 40).

Clearly a 'glorious fencer' was a valuable asset in a sport in which one would frequently be called, in Lord Farintosh's words, to ride 'over timber' (The Newcomes, Ch. 42). This last phrase, according to the O.E.D. (timber sb. 5), refers to jumping 'wooden gates and fences' and is specifically described as hunting slang. Equally useful to the huntsman in some types of country was the cover hack, 'a horse ridden in a cover (for game)' (O.E.D. cover sb. III 8). The narrator of Surtees' Hawbuck Grange tells us that the equanimity of Tom Scott is undisturbed 'by the cantering and splashing past of Tom Muffinmouth and his cousin, Bill Bullfinch, on their cover hacks' (Ch. 4).

Once more there are a number of idioms connected with the qualities of particular horses. In Phineas Finn, Lord Chiltern, on a hunting trip in the Shires, is confident that he will be in time for the next day's meet since he has 'a trap with a fast stepper' (1, Ch. 24). In Hawbuck Grange a hunt takes place with

what is described as a 'good field'. This turns out to contain 'no grooms on rearers, no horse-breakers on kickers, no young farmers on runaways' (Ch. 4). The word nag, properly a 'small riding horse or pony' (O.E.D. nag sb. 1), is often, with a certain depreciating irony, applied to horses of rather larger stature and greater speed. George Vavasor, 'when he found himself among hunting men', would 'speak of his two nags at Roebury' (Can You Forgive Her ?, 1, Ch. 12).

Hunting terms might refer not only to the hunters and their mounts, but also to the hunted. Ralph Rumford, in the passage from Pelham quoted above, describes himself as having been 'after the brush', while the intransitive use of hang (presumably derived from the prepositional verb to hang on) is also notable when Lord Chiltern, during the hunt in Phineas Finn, realises that the fox is unlikely to escape the pack for much longer :

There are not above eight or nine acres in it ... and he can't hang long. (1, Ch. 24).

Disaster is not restricted to the fox, however, for shortly after this Chiltern falls and realises that his horse has been fatally injured. 'I think he's gruelled now,' he tells Phineas. Gruelled here is clearly connected with the O.E.D.'s definition, 'To exhaust or disable' (gruel v.1), but in this case perhaps corresponds more closely with the idiomatic phrase to have or get one's gruel (O.E.D. gruel sb. 4), 'to receive one's punishment, to get killed.'

The interest of the upper-class in horses and riding is also reflected in the tendency, particularly marked among worldly young dandies, to refer to nubile young women as if they were horseflesh. This is clearly exemplified, though one suspects with a certain

Dickensian exaggeration, in the account which the significantly named Bob Stables gives of Lady Dedlock's attractions :

... 'the most is made,' as the Honourable Bob Stables has frequently asserted upon oath, 'of all her points.' The same authority observes that she is perfectly got up; and remarks, in commendation of her hair especially, that she is the best-groomed woman in the whole stud. (Bleak House, Ch. 2).

Clearly enough, we are intended to feel that there is something distasteful and illiberal about this and, apart from the more obvious coarseness of stud, the word points is perhaps the best indicator of the source of this impression. The usage corresponds with the O.E.D's definition, 'A physical feature in an animal; especially one by which excellence or purity of breed is judged' (point sb. 26b), and indicates how the woman in question is being assessed by her physical qualities, very much after the manner of a pedigree animal. The word is used again by the clergyman, Jack Lingon, in Felix Holt (significantly he is addicted to sport) when it is widely assumed that Esther is to marry Harold Transome. To Lingon, we are told, 'she seemed to have all the "points", and to carry herself as well as Arabella did' (Ch. 43). The implications are very much the same when, later in the novel, Sir Maximus Debarry discerns 'something thoroughbred' in Esther's look (Ch. 47) after her intervention at the trial of Felix Holt.

Another word commonly applied to attractive young women was filly. Becky Sharp in one of her rather arch letters to Amelia from Queen's Crawley reports that she has heard the swaggering dragoon, Rawdon, refer to 'your humble servant' as 'a neat little filly' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 11). She clearly regards this as complimentary, though perhaps calculating that it is sufficiently improper to produce a frisson of shock in her innocent friend. The

implications of the word could, however, on occasions, be less than flattering. When John de Courcy in Barchester Towers discusses the charms of Madeline Neroni with Dr. Thorne and remarks, 'I have heard no end of stories about that filly' (Ch. 37), there is little doubt that he intends to suggest that her reputation is very far from being above reproach.

Usages of this kind are clearly associated with the 'stable slang' which was discussed earlier, and again we find that some characters of fastidious tastes deplore them. Cuthbert Ravenshoe of Henry Kingsley's novel is one of this disposition and he strongly disapproves of the Ascot family who are much addicted to the turf. In a conversation with his father, he remarks of Lady Ascot,

I will allow my aunt to be the most polite, intellectual, delicate-minded old lady in creation ... only, not having been born (I beg her pardon, dropped) in a racing stable, as she was herself, I can hardly appreciate her conversation always. (Ravenshoe, Ch. 5).

Here dropped is doubtless intended to parody all those features of such language which he finds most distasteful.

Similarly ungracious in tendency is the habit of referring to young women by the pronoun it. This is sometimes associated with the language of the stable as it is when Lord Welter tells Charles Ravenshoe of Adelaide's real nature : 'I knew better than you ... what a heartless ambitious jade it was' (Ravenshoe, Ch. 39). It can, however, occur in contexts unconnected with riding, as it does when Captain Wybrow in Scenes of Clerical Life reflects on the jealousy he has aroused in Caterina : 'What a little simpleton it was, to set her heart on me in that way' ('Mr. Gilfil's Love Story', Ch. 10). The common factor here would seem to be that both characters,

Welter and Wybrow, are exceptionally selfish and corrupt young men.

We have suggested before that it was young men of this type, the idle and dandified, whose conversation was probably most rich in slang. During the Victorian period, the members of this species were often designated swells and, to judge from a letter from Mr. Brown to his nephew, Robert, in Thackeray's Sketches and Travels, the usage was a relatively new one. In it he gives a sharp delineation of this class of young men :

... handsome and graceful, splendid and perfumed, beautiful - whiskered and empty-headed, a sumptuous dandy and man of fashion - and what you young men have denominated 'A Swell.' ('Mr. Brown's Letters to his Nephew').

In a way rather characteristic of colloquial usages, the word was liable to fanciful elaboration and, in The Newcomes, we find a young army officer, Butts, in conversation with his colleagues designating Clive Newcome as a 'heavy swell' (Ch. 43).

In addition to riding and wenching (though this last activity is barely hinted at in the fiction of the period), such men seem to have directed much of their attention towards various forms of gaming, and this interest leaves a strong mark on their speech in a variety of contexts. Indeed, their speech does much to confirm Eric Partridge's contention in Slang To-day and Yesterday that a great body of slang is derived from sports and games of various kinds. Trump, derived from various card games, and meaning an excellent and reliable person, is one of the most obvious examples. It is used by the disreputable Lord Catchimwhocan of Disraeli's Henrietta Temple who promises to introduce Ferdinand to a 'regular trump' - in this case a dependable source of credit (Bk. VI, Ch. 11). The word did not, however, always retain such connections with

gambling. When, in The Last Chronicle of Barset, John Eames becomes enmeshed in his flirtation with Miss Demolines, and tells her she is 'what one may call a trump' (Ch. 39), the colloquialism is merely a mark of their growing intimacy. Gambling metaphors, appropriately enough, are also frequent in the conversation of Felix Carbury of The Way We Live Now. Indeed, in his case, they might almost be regarded as constituting an occupational dialect. When ruin threatens both him and his family, he consoles himself with the thought that in the past 'to use his own language, he had always contrived "to carry on the game"' (II, Ch. 67). The significantly-named Major Loder, a member of Becky's dubious entourage towards the end of Vanity Fair, also habitually uses the language of the gaming table. Georgy reports a conversation between the sharks who are circling the unfortunate and gullible Jos Sedley. The Major is heard to remark,

No, no, Becky, you shan't keep the old buck to yourself. We must have the bones in, or, dammy, I'll split. (Ch. 67).

Bones here (particularly in view of the Major's name) is almost certainly used in the sense of dice, the whole phrase, to have the bones in, meaning 'to share the spoils'.

The vocabulary of gambling was an extensive one. Foker warns Pendennis that he will be beaten at cards by his present companions 'even if they play on the square' (Pendennis, Ch. 18): that is, straightforwardly and without deceit. In all such games the possibility that one's opponents might not behave with honesty had to be faced. A boxing match might be crossed, its outcome 'fixed' to use the present-day idiom. This is a practice of which Bute Crawley suspects his nephew, Rawdon :

Didn't he cross the fight between Bill Soames and the Cheshire Trump, by which I lost forty pounds ? (Vanity Fair, Ch. 11).

In races and other competitions which involved animals, one of the participants might be hocussed, or stupefied with a drug. The nameless gentleman of the Circumlocution Office in Little Dorrit recalls such an instance of a dog made drunk to ensure that it would lose a ratting match :

Said the Dog was the perfect picture of the old aunt from whom he had expectations. Found him particularly like her when hocussed. (Ch. 10).

Those who practised such trickery might be known as blacklegs, the word's present-day association with strike-breaking dating, according to the O.E.D., from 1865. Felix Carbury of The Way We Live Now, we are told, 'with all his faults, was not as yet a blackleg' (1, Ch. 10). An alternative word was sharper, a title which Mark Robarts levels at Mr. Sowerby in Framley Parsonage (Ch. 33). This, in the words of the O.E.D. (sharper sb. 2), is 'one who lives by his wits and by taking advantage of the simplicity of others'.

A good deal of slang was, in fact, concerned with these two categories of mankind : the trickster and his victim. Though the musical parallel is, it seems, fortuitous, the unfortunate on whom the sharper practised was known as a flat. In Sybil, a Whig secretary of state is sanguine about the electoral prospects for his party on the anticipated dissolution at the death of William IV. The whole speech is, in fact, an extended gaming metaphor :

No, no, my dear fellow, you are dead beat; the stake is worth playing for, and don't suppose we are such flats as to lose the race for want of jockeying. (Bk. I, Ch. 6).

Into the same category, no doubt, fell muffs. Again, the implication was that the person so called lacked practical good sense and know-how, though the word seems originally to have been used to indicate an ineptitude at physical sports, possibly, as the O.E.D. puts it, 'conveying the scoffing accusation of keeping one's hands in a muff' (muff sb. 4). The more general sense is, however, clearly intended when Charles Ravenshoe expresses his scorn for the irrelevance of the academic honours which Marston has won at the university :

They won't take you in the Army; they are not such muffs.
(Ravenshoe, Ch. 8).

Much the same deficiency was implied by spooney which, readers of Vanity Fair will recall, conveys Thackeray's final judgement on Major Dobbin. It is also used adjectivally in Coningsby on Lord Monmouth's first meeting with his grandson, who proves to be 'not to his taste; amiable no doubt, but spooney (Bk. I, Ch. 3).

The tricks which were practised on men of this kind were known by a variety of names. In Pendennis, during an account of life in one of the Inns of Court, Thackeray describes as dodges the stratagems employed by the less scrupulous students to secure the best food for themselves, 'if we may be permitted to use an excellent phrase that has become vernacular since the appearance of the last dictionaries' (Ch. 29). At the university, Verdant Green is 'sold out' by the 'sells' which are customarily practised on the more credulous freshmen (II, Ch. 1), though when he has gained the friendship of Bouncer, his worldly-wise companion offers to 'put **[him]** up to a wrinkle' (III, Ch. 11). A wrinkle is a cunning device or expedient, in this case a racing tip and the phrase is one which the O.E.D. records as having become frequent from about

1840. The practising of these tricks on the unsuspecting is, curiously, often referred to by means of culinary analogies. A typical nobleman in Thackeray's Book of Snobs 'has a fancy to be a blackleg, and occasionally condescends to pluck a pigeon at cards' (Ch. 5), while, later in the same book, in an account of the gambling career of Captain Rag, we are told how, when playing billiards, 'he always contrives to get hold of a good flat, and never leaves him till he has done him uncommonly brown' (Ch. 10). Perhaps the best way to avoid this fate was to be downy, a word originally derived from Flash or thieves' slang, meaning alert or wideawake and, therefore, an unpromising target for theft. Foker in a conversation with Major Pendennis claims this quality for himself :

I'm not clever, p'raps : but I am rather downy; and partial friends say I know what's o'clock tolerably well. (Pendennis, Ch. 10).

This last phrase, to know what's o'clock, which clearly carries much the same meaning as downy, is repeated in another of Thackeray's novels, The Newcomes, applied on this occasion to Pendennis by Fred Bayham :

But, Pendennis, you understand a thing or two. You know what o'clock it is(Ch. 70).

After about 1840, dissipated young men of the kind we have been examining began to be described as fast. The usage is tentatively adopted by some older men, but not without a comment on its novelty. Squire Todhetley, for example, warns Johnny Ludlow about some of the company he is likely to encounter in London : 'I have a notion that the young Pells are wild; fast, as it is called now' (Johnny Ludlow, I, 21), while Lord Saltire of Ravenshoe thinks of

Ranford, the home of the Ascot family, as 'what he believed the young men of the day called a fast house' (Ch. 10). Slang is often liable to give rise to playful variants, and we find Mr. Brandon, Johnny Ludlow's trustee, 'dryly' remarking, 'Rather a rapid life, that London life' (Johnny Ludlow, 1, 23). The phrase fast living from which there seems little doubt this usage was derived is, in fact, quite an old one dating back at least to the eighteenth century, but the application of the adjective to a person or thing is later; the phrase fast men is first recorded by the O.E.D. in a quotation from 1841. Those whose tastes led them to enjoy such a life often branded the more staid and respectable as slow. In Sketches and Travels, Grigg, 'a young buck about town', noting the narrator's depression, declares him to be 'as slow as a parliamentary train' ('A Night's Pleasure, VI). On other occasions, the word seems to carry the suggestion that a certain kind of behaviour is unacceptable in terms of the unspoken code to which the bucks of the day adhered. A quarrel between Felix Carbury and Grasslough in The Way We Live Now which threatens to degenerate into naked violence falls into this category and is disapproved of by Dolly Longestaffe, who asks, 'But don't you think that kind of thing is a little slow?' (Ch. 96). Dolly's sister, Sophia, rebelling against her father's decree that the family cannot afford a London season, uses the word rusty which evidently carries a similar significance to the more usual slow. The prospect of a stay in the country evokes in her mind nothing but boredom :

To go and be buried down in that place for a whole year with no one near us but the rusty old bishop and Mr. Carbury, who is rustier still. I won't stand it. (Ch. 13).

The word seems to be one of a number which express the contempt of youth for the scrupulosity of age. The old (and those who share

their attitudes) are variously described by the young as fogies (Grasslough fondly remembers his club, The Beargarden, as having 'no infernal old fogies wearing out the carpets and paying for nothing (Ch. 96)); old dust (Lord Chiltern in Phineas Finn (II, Ch. 49) calls his father 'the greatest old dust out'); old stager (which is what the same Lord Chiltern promises to become 'as steady as' (II, Ch. 52) after his marriage); or chaw-bacon (which, according to Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair (Ch. 11), is the disrespectful term applied by Rawdon Crawley to his father, the old baronet).

A final note seems appropriate on an aspect of slang which is especially relevant to our field of inquiry. The whole question of class was something about which those highly placed in society tended to be reticent. To speak too overtly on the subject was frowned upon. In such a climate slang could have the advantage of a certain indirectness. There are certainly a number of colloquialisms in use by members of the upper class which enabled such speakers to place their acquaintances and their behaviour discreetly in accordance with what remained an essentially unspoken code.

In the early part of our period one such word was snob which, as we have already seen, indicated that the person so designated was certainly not a gentleman. Sometimes this word was juxtaposed with its antonym, nob. This is often thought of as an abbreviation of nobleman, though the O.E.D. casts some doubt on this. Both words occur in the account which we are given of Barnacle Junior's view of the true function of the Circumlocution Office in Little Dorrit, which is revealing both of class vocabulary and of the attitudes which it rather thinly veils. We are told that 'he fully understood the Department to be a politico-diplomatic hocus pocus piece of

machinery for the assistance of the nobs in keeping off the snobs' (Ch. 10).

A number of colloquial epithets are used of the vulgarly ostentatious. The banker, Barnes Newcome, of Thackeray's The Newcomes is stigmatized by Lord Farintosh as a 'brute' (Ch. 42), a term which might appear direct enough but which, in fact, conceals the fact that the grounds of the nobleman's dislike are as much social as moral.⁶ On a number of occasions, Barnes Newcome is described by various other characters as a 'cocktail'. Crackthorpe, describing a party at Lady Kew's, talks of 'that cocktail Barney Newcome' (Ch. 43), while, after the second occasion on which Barnes refuses to take up a challenge, Sir Thomas de Boots declares, 'It was in the second affair that poor little Barney showed he was a cocktail' (Ch. 53). Cocktail in this context is, of course, quite unrelated to the originally American word for a mixed alcoholic drink. In nineteenth-century England, a cocktail was a horse whose tail had been shortened and, since such animals were rarely thoroughbred, the word also became used to describe a person 'assuming', in the words of the O.E.D., 'the position of a gentleman, but deficient in thorough gentlemanly breeding' (cocktail 1b). The word also occurs in Tom Brown at Oxford when Tom asks his friend, Drysdale, whether the servitors in the university can be regarded as gentlemen and he replies, 'A good deal of the cock-tail about them, I should think' (Ch. 6).

The Greek phrase hoi polloi, meaning the mass of men, was probably a mock-pedantic university usage. It occurs in The

6. We might compare the formula 'X - is obviously awful' which Ross cites as typical of the 'circumlocutions' with which 'youngish U-speakers sometimes express class-distinction' (Ross, p.22).

Adventures of Verdant Green when the services of a professional boxer are secured to fight on behalf of the gownsmen against the town, and it is declared that he 'will astonish the oi polloi no end' (II, Ch. 3).⁷

A similar evasiveness is found in the phrase, not the thing. This is used very characteristically in The Way We Live Now. The rich, but ill-bred, financier, Melmotte, insists on being introduced to the Emperor of China who is guest-of-honour at a state banquet. Because of his great wealth, Melmotte cannot well be refused, but the irregularity of the proceeding produces considerable discomfiture among the more cultivated hosts. Lord Alfred tries to dissuade him by pointing out that he is assuming a position not rightly his :

... upon my word it isn't the thing. They're only Indian chaps and Eastern swells who are presented here(II, Ch. 54).

When Melmotte persists, his wishes are complied with, though reluctantly :

'If you will come with me,' whispered Lord De Griffin, 'it shall be managed. It isn't just the thing, but as you wish it, it shall be done.'

As K.C. Phillipps notes in The Language of Thackeray (pp.69-70), this phrase, which could be applied to people as well as their behaviour, goes back at least as far as Jane Austen, though in the Victorian period the similar, possibly more euphemistic,

7. This may be compared with the Latin pleb which Ross (p.22) regards as a usage of some public schools. Both examples employ the distancing effect of a classical language to make communication of a potentially uncomfortable subject easier.

not the ticket is also found. It occurs in The Newcomes as the young Clive discusses his aunt with the Colonel :

'And so about Aunt Maria, she's very handsome and she's very finely dressed, only somehow she's not - she's not the ticket, you see !'

'Oh ! she's not the ticket ?' says the Colonel, much amused.

'Well, what I mean is - but never mind,' says the boy.
'I can't tell you what I mean.' (Ch. 7).

Interesting here, of course, is Clive's inability (or reluctance) to define in more precise terms the meaning of the phrase he has just used.

CHAPTER IV.

MODES OF ADDRESS.

Modes of address and reference provide one of the most sensitive guides to social relationships. This is particularly true in the case of the Victorians who observed a complex code which was capable of reflecting nuances of intimacy and status in a way impossible in our much more informal age where Christian names are naturally adopted even between relative strangers.

Something of the unfamiliarity of Victorian manners can be gauged from the excited remarks of Miss Piper in Wives and Daughters as she takes in the company assembled at a Hollingford ball :

Look, look ! that's our Mr. Cholmley, the magistrate ... and that's Mrs. Cholmley in red satin, and Mr. George and Mr. Harry from Oxford, I do declare; and Miss Cholmley, and pretty Miss Sophy ... And there is Coxie the butcher and his wife ! (Ch. 26).

Perhaps only the reference to Mr. and Mrs. Cholmley exactly coincides with present-day usage. We should be unlikely to distinguish these worthies from the mere tradesman, Coxie; the formula used of the two sons, Mr. George and Mr. Harry, is now largely obsolete, while the distinction between the elder daughter, Miss Cholmley, and the younger, Miss Sophy, would certainly be lost today.

Particularly interesting are the forms of address and reference used between acknowledged superiors and inferiors. It might be reasonably supposed that speech addressed to superiors would show a respectful formality which would be absent from that

directed towards inferiors. Though this often is true, the idea takes little account of the irony which colours so much human discourse. In Sybil, Disraeli looks at some of the unexpected results which such irony can produce. Lord de Mowbray greets Lord Marney :

'And how do you find the people about you Marney ?'
said Lord de Mowbray, seating himself on a sofa by his guest.
'All very well, my lord,' replied the earl, who ever treated Lord de Mowbray with a certain degree of ceremony, especially when the descendant of the Crusaders affected the familiar.

The key to this passage is that de Mowbray's claim to be descended from a family of Crusaders is a false one. In fact, he is a 'new man', and Disraeli goes on to recall similarly indirect expressions of disdain among 'the old nobility of Spain' who, he tells us, 'delighted to address each other only by their names, when in the presence of a spic-and-span grandee; calling each other "Infantado," "Sidonia," "Ossuna," and then turning round with the most distinguished consideration, and appealing to the Most Noble Marquis of Ensenada' (Bk. II, Ch. 12). Here, of course, the formality is simply a marking of territory; the outsider must keep his distance. But formality to social inferiors might be more generously motivated. In Middlemarch, Mr. Farebrother begins to use 'Miss Garth' rather than 'Mary' when her family comes down in the world, and George Eliot tells us that it was 'part of his delicacy to treat her with the more deference because ... she worked for her bread' (Ch. 40).

Probably the clearest example of an unequal social relationship was that between servants and their employers. Here, forms of address and reference seem to have been governed by fairly firm conventions. In a large house it was usual for servants to be called

by their surname alone, both in reference and address. So, in a conversation with Roger Hamley (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 21), Molly Gibson refers to her gardener as 'Williams'. Male and female servants were not always distinguished in this respect. In the same novel, during Molly's stay at Cumnor Towers, Lady Harriet proposes that 'Parkes [her maid] shall attend upon her' (Ch. 57), while in Hard Times young Tom Gradgrind, with somewhat untypical chivalry, confides in his sister after Sissy has been brought into the household that he hates 'to be obliged to call her Jupe' (Bk. I, Ch. 8).

Surnames were also used for others of low status not in domestic service. They are frequently applied to tradesmen. In Wives and Daughters, Miss Browning, herself on only the lower edge of middle-class society, talks of 'Cromer, the upholsterer' and recalls a conversation in which she has cut short his attempt to sell her furniture for her bedroom : 'I said, "No, no, Cromer : bedrooms are for sleeping in"' (Ch. 13). Mr. Harding of Barchester uses the same form of address to the inmates of Hiram's Hospital, calling the pensioners 'Bell, 'Bunce', and so on (The Warden, Ch. 20). It is, of course, rare for women not in domestic service to be addressed in this way.

Another characteristic mode of reference and address adopted by upper-class speakers to their inferiors is the use of phrases beginning with my. Sometimes these are used to give an air of brisk cheerfulness - and even a certain affection - to a conversation. This is so when Squire Hamley tries to administer some comfort to one of his old tenants who is near death :

'Come, come, my man !' said the Squire, easily affected, as

he always was. 'Don't talk of dying....' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 30).

More often, however, such phrases are felt to be discourteous. Tom Brown is described as 'put out' and 'in a touchy state of mind' when he shouts to the village constable, 'Hullo, my man, can't you hear me ?' (Tom Brown at Oxford, Ch. 32), while Lady Harriet tells Molly about the habits of speech of one of her aunts which have a proprietorial air and complains of 'the way in which she takes possession of human beings, "my woman," "my people"' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 14). It is such an air of instinctive patronage which provokes a quarrel between Mr. Brooke and one of his tenants, Dagley, in Middlemarch. Brooke, with a complacent sense of the generosity he is going to display over the misdemeanours of Dagley's children, begins by calling their father, 'my good fellow' - only to be answered with some warmth :

'Oh, ay I'm a good feller, am I ? Thank ye, sir, thank ye,' said Dagley, with a loud snarling irony.... (Ch. 39).

In the speech of women in particular, these forms of address are often linked with a term of endearment. This is very often ironic and frequently accompanies a rebuke or discourtesy. The Countess de Courcy, for example, calls Dr. Thorne 'my dear doctor' when she is about to banish his daughter, Mary (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 14). This may be compared with the phrase my dear Sir which, as R.W. Chapman notes in his Names, Designations and Appellations (S.P.E. Tract 47, 1936), 'usually conveys a mild remonstrance' (p.240).

If my man and my woman were sometimes resented, man and woman alone were very much more offensive. They are sometimes found

addressed to inferiors, but being distinctly impolite they are generally reserved for moments of anger or, at least, agitation. The latter is the case when Miss Matty of Cranford hears an 'affrighted carter' reporting the death of Captain Brown : 'Oh, man, man ! say it is not true' (Ch. 2), though irritation and alarm are the dominant emotions displayed when Mr. Dorrit, basking in his new-found prosperity, receives a card from Mrs. Finching, a name associated with his years of degradation. He turns on his servant : 'Man, man ... explain your motive in bringing me this ridiculous name' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 17). The notably imperious Lady Bellair of Disraeli's Henrietta Temple is more truly patrician. On her arrival at Ducie she is notably abrupt to the servants. 'Man, there's something wanting,' she calls and, turning to one of the female domestics, demands, 'Here ! woman, who are you. The housemaid. I thought so' (Bk. IV, Ch. 3). Woman is, of course, especially discourteous, and it is a measure of Lady Bareacre's anger (and panic) when she so addresses Becky Sharp, who is demanding an extortionate price for a horse as the British begin to flee Brussels and a supposedly victorious Napoleon : 'Woman, the diamonds are at the banker's, and I will have the horses' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 32). Between gentlefolk, of course, the word is scarcely used in this way, though Mr. Crawley, under considerable provocation, does so address Mrs. Proudie - with devastating effect :

'Peace, woman,' Mr. Crawley said, addressing her at last. The bishop jumped out of his chair at hearing the wife of his bosom called a woman. But he jumped rather in admiration than in anger

'Woman !' said Mrs. Proudie, rising to her feet as though she really intended some personal encounter. (The Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 18).

The address boy is very unusual, though when it does occur it,

too, conveys contempt. It is used by the haughty Estella in her humiliation of the young Pip. 'Don't loiter, boy', she orders him as she shows him Satis House (Great Expectations, 1, Ch. 8).

Sometimes we find a servant's official position in the household used as a form of address. Mrs. Gibson gives the instruction, 'Cook, go and find Miss Molly (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 5). The cook, of course, was an important figure below stairs, and the hierarchy which existed in domestic service can sometimes be seen reflected in modes of address and reference. The governess, for example, placed on the isthmus of a middle state, is sometimes distinguished from the other servants. Miss Wade in Little Dorrit, giving an account of her days as a governess in the family of a 'poor nobleman', recounts a conversation with her mistress after she has quarreled¹ with another servant. The mistress protests, 'Miss Wade ! Poor Dawes is devoted to you' (II, Ch. 21), and the distinction is not simply between address and reference. The humbler servant might also address the governess in a respectful way. In East Lynne the maid, Hannah, calls the governess (the disguised Isabel) 'ma'am' (III, Ch. 5). Not all governesses were so favoured. Lady Cumnor tells a bewildered Mr. Gibson, 'Clare is here; you remember Clare, don't you ?' He does not, and has to be prompted by Lady Agnes, 'Miss Clare, our old governess' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 1). The reason for Mr. Gibson's puzzlement is the fact that Miss Clare has long since become Mrs. Kirkpatrick and, indeed, is shortly to become Mrs. Gibson. Lady Cumnor takes no more account of this second marriage and continues to address the doctor's wife by her maiden name : 'Well, Clare ! I am really glad to see you' (Ch. 25). It is amusing to find Mrs. Gibson treated so unceremoniously by the patron from whose acquaintance so many of her pretensions derive. Another married servant who

continues to be addressed by her maiden name is Mrs. Hicks in Felix Holt. 'Forty years ago,' George Eliot tells us, 'she had entered Mrs. Transome's service, when that lady was beautiful Miss Lingon, and her mistress still called her Denner, as she had done in the old days' (Ch. 1). Sometimes valets and butlers were known by their master's surname. Among his fellows, Major Pendennis's own man is known as 'Morgan Pendennis' for, notes Thackeray, 'by such compound names gentlemen's gentlemen are called in their private circles' (Pendennis, Ch. 36).

In smaller, less pretentious households Christian names seem to have been commonly used towards female servants. Mr. Gibson addresses one of his staff, described as an 'underling in the establishment' as Bethia (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 5). This also happens with youths of low status. The 'boots' at a local inn is universally called 'Sam' by the Eton boys in Coningsby. There were, however, conventions limiting the use of familiar appellations to other men's servants. Trollope observes this in Doctor Thorne during an account of Louis Scatcherd's man :

His name was Jonah, which his master and his master's friends shortened into Joe; none, however, but those who were very intimate with his master were allowed to do so with impunity. (Ch. 34).

Such liberties were normally only for intimate friends of the family. The right is tacitly conferred on Archdeacon Grantly at Framley; he was, we learn, 'petted in the house' and 'was allowed to poke the fire if he pleased, and called the servants by their names as though he were at home' (The Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 56). To assume this right under inappropriate circumstances might be construed as an impertinence to the master.

It is a sign of Colonel Newcome's declining fortunes when the vulgar Sherrick, to whom he owes money, begins to behave like the master of the house :

... he ordered the servants about, addressing the butler as 'Old Corkscrew,' and bidding the footman, whom he loved to call by his Christian name, to 'look alive'.

At the same time, Thackeray informs us, he 'called the Colonel 'Newcome' sometimes' (The Newcomes, Ch. 70).

When, like Denner, a servant had been a personal attendant of her mistress for many years, an unspoken intimacy sometimes grew up between them which, at moments of particular emotion, might be acknowledged more openly. Unusual modes of address might then be used. This happens in Felix Holt when Mrs. Transome is moved to confide in Denner that she wishes her son, Harold, had never been born. To this Denner replies, 'Nay, my dear,' and George Eliot goes on to explain that 'Denner had only once before in her life said "my dear" to her mistress' (Ch. 39). The same endearment is used by Dixon, a long-standing servant of the Hale family in North and South, this time to the daughter, Margaret, just after her mother's death in alien Milton-Northern : 'Come, Miss Hale - come, my dear ! You must not give way, or where shall we all be ?' (Ch. 31).

This degree of familiarity is exceptional. Sir and ma'am (sometimes mum) were the usual modes of address from servants to superiors. Needless to say, all tended to suggest habitual subservience. Sir is used by Richard Hare in East Lynne when he has buried himself in obscurity among the lower orders in order to escape arrest. Carlyle, who is endeavouring to establish his

innocence, observes 'the mode of addressing him : "sir"' :

It told plainly of the scale of society in which Richard must be mixing : that he was with those who said it habitually; that he used it habitually himself. (II, Ch. 8).

An interesting parallel occurs in Henry Kingsley's Ravenshoe where the hero, Charles, also forfeits his position as a gentleman and disguises himself as a groom. He, too, begins to adopt the forms of reference appropriate to his new station. When he is describing Miss Summers to his master, he hastily checks his old habits of speech : 'he was going to say "girl," but said "lady"' (Ch. 36).

Sir, and other deferential modes of address, are by no means always unequivocal marks of respect, however. In the dealings of Mrs. Sparsit with Bounderby, sir becomes 'a word of ceremony, rather exacting consideration for herself in the use, than honouring him' (Hard Times, Bk. I, Ch. 7) and, when the word is addressed to an equal, some degree of rudeness is almost always intended. 'I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society,' Lord Marney angrily informs Egremont in Sybil (Bk. III, Ch. 2). In conversation with an inferior, such affectation of regard is generally a thin veil for contempt. In Wives and Daughters, Lady Harriet, who is 'not one to check herself, in any course, for the opinion of an inferior', responds scathingly to the 'insolence' of Preston, 'Then, sir ! are you aware of the injury you may do to a young lady's reputation ?' she asks (Ch. 49).

Ma'am, the usual address from servant to mistress - 'Please, ma'am, the great carriage from the Towers is coming up to the gate,'

remarks Maria to Mrs. Gibson (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 57) - is often replaced by missis or the missis in reference. Bowls, Miss Crawley's butler, is shocked when young James Crawley lights a clandestine cigar : 'What 'ave you done, sir ! Missis can't abide 'em' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 34), while Molly Davenport, a maid at Farmer Blaize's farm, reveals the secret of Richard Feverel's love for Lucy; he is, she tells Adrian Harley, 'after the missis' (The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Ch. 20).

Squire occurs as a mode of reference and address between tenants and their landlord, especially on the estates of long-established country families. Old Silas, a farm labourer on Mr. Hamley's land, both exemplifies this address and gives a lively sense of the sentiment of tradition and continuity which often accompanies it :

I thought you'd come, Squire. Your father came for to see my father as he lay a-dying. (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 30).

Shortly afterwards, Hamley's son and heir, Osborne, is referred to as 'the young squire'. Though properly speaking, squire was used of untitled country landowners, examples do occur of its application to men of somewhat higher rank. In Can You Forgive Her ? Trollope remarks that Sir William, the master of the Edgehill hunt, 'though a baronet, was familiarly called the Squire throughout the hunt' (1, Ch. 17). When the title is applied quite indiscriminately, it carries scant respect. The tipsy Sleary, the circus master in Hard Times, lispingly addresses Gradgrind as 'Thquire' (Bk. I, Ch. 6), though his reference to Louisa as 'Mith Thquire' (Bk. III, Ch. 7) is surely pure Dickensian fancy.

The associated title esquire was also becoming used less precisely in the nineteenth century, though some, like Holbrook of Cranford, were sufficiently conservative in temperament to resist this development :

Now this cousin lived four or five miles from Cranford on his own estate; but his property was not large enough to entitle him to rank higher than a yeoman; or rather, with something of the 'pride which apes humility,' he had refused to push himself on, as so many of his class had done, into the ranks of the squires. He would not allow himself to be called Thomas Holbrook, Esq; he even sent back letters with this address, telling the post-mistress at Cranford that his name was Mr. Thomas Holbrook, yeoman. (Ch. 3).

Miss Marrable of The Vicar of Bullhampton is equally out of sympathy with what she views as the growing laxity of her age :

She always addressed an attorney by letter as Mister, raising up her eyebrows when appealed to on the matter, and explaining that an attorney is not an esquire. (Ch. 9).

Mrs. Lookaloft, however, feels no such scruples. Having been admitted among Miss Thorne's guests at Ullathorne sports, she expects 'that from this time forward the tradesmen of Barchester would, with undoubting pens, address her husband as T. Lookaloft, Esquire' (Barchester Towers, Ch. 36). Even today, the title is, perhaps, most commonly used in letters from tradesmen to their customers.

The usual address to the wife of a squire was madam. In Tom Brown's Schooldays, an old villager asks Benjamin about his master and mistress, 'And how's the Squire, and Madam' (Ch. 2), while later in Tom Brown at Oxford Betty Winburn asks Tom, 'How's the Squire and Madam Brown ?' (Ch. 32). The same title is given

to Lady Ludlow by her tenants even though she is a noblewoman. This, as Mrs. Gaskell explains, is because she is the daughter of the old Squire - something which carries more weight than her marriage to a peer :

The tenants one and all called her 'Madam;' for they recognized in her the married heiress of the Hanburys, not the widow of a Lord Ludlow, of whom they and their forefathers knew nothing (My Lady Ludlow, Ch. 3).

Mr. Hamley refers to his own wife as 'Madam' in a conversation with Molly Gibson (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 6).

Very common in Victorian times, though much less so today, is the formula in which the titles Mr. (sometimes Master) and Miss are attached to a Christian name. This idiom is mainly used by servants in address and reference to children of the family, though it often continues to be used after they have grown up. Doubtless this provided a useful half-way house between the intimacy of Christian names and the formality of a title and surname which might be thought excessive, particularly for an old and trusted servant who had watched the family grow up. The formula was also useful for distinguishing children from parents and, as we have seen (p. 200), an older from a younger brother or sister. It is never used of the head of the household, and George Vavasor in Trollope's Can You Forgive Her ? feels that the form is no longer appropriate to him after the death of the old squire whose heir he hopes to be. A servant asks 'Would Miss Kate and Mr. George go with them ?' and George angrily corrects her :

'Mr. Vavasor !' shouted out George, making the old woman jump.

His point, however, is lost as this mode of address remains associated with her dead master :

She did not understand his meaning in the least. 'Yes, sir; the old Squire,' she said. (II, Ch. 55).

The same forms are also common in reference when the children of the house are named to servants. 'Cook, go and find Miss Molly,' orders Mr. Gibson (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 5), while Mrs. Vincy tells one of her servants, 'Knock at Mr. Fred's door again' (Middlemarch, Ch. 11). They also occur between employees and employers outside domestic service. The ability to draw a distinction between father and son was particularly useful when both were working in a family firm. This can be seen during Coningsby's visit to the factory owned by the father of one of his old school fellows :

'Perhaps his son, Mr. Oswald Millbank, is here ?' inquired Coningsby.

'Mr. Oswald is in Belgium,' said the clerk. (Coningsby, Bk. IV, Ch. 3).

We also find this idiom used between social equals of the opposite sex, particularly among the young, and perhaps more especially among lower-class speakers. Again, it offers a compromise between the formality of surnames and the intimacy of first names. Little Dorrit, for example, is addressed by her youthful admirer, John Chivery, as 'Miss Amy', while she in reply calls him 'Mr. John'. However, when she cuts short his attempt to declare his love, this youthful gallantry is brought to an end by what is, in fact, an unusual mode of address generally reserved for important 'moments of truth' :

'If you please, John Chivery,' she returned ... 'since you are so considerate as to ask me whether you shall say any more - if you please, no.' (Little Dorrit, 1, Ch. 18).

No consistent distinction appears to be preserved between Mr. and Master. There is one occasion, in Tom Brown's Schooldays, when the modern usage with Master reserved for a boy, is observed. At a village feast a woman calls to her daughter to 'come and see Mr. Benjamin and young Master Tom' (Ch. 2). Benjamin is an old servant. However, both forms are on many other occasions applied apparently indiscriminately to boys and young men, and both were also capable of being used to remind someone of their youth, especially by a social equal or superior. Lady Kew, for example, calls Clive Newcome 'Mr. Clive' with a note of dismissive patronage when indicating her strong opposition to Clive's hopes of marriage to Ethel (The Newcomes, Ch. 24), and in rather similar circumstances Lady Lufton refers to Lucy Robarts as 'Miss Lucy' in Framley Parsonage : 'That Miss Lucy of yours seems to be a very determined young lady,' she tells Mrs. Robarts (Ch. 41). Finally, it is worth noticing two occasions where such forms of address reflect, rather poignantly, a change of status. In the first, from Great Expectations, Pip is forced to realise how far his fortune has estranged him from his family when Biddy begins to call him 'Mr. Pip'; this, he tells her, 'appears to me to be in bad taste, Biddy' (II, Ch. 35). The second conversation is from Mrs. Henry Wood's East Lynne. In it, Carlyle is unaware that his governess is none other than his disgraced wife in disguise and that she is the mother of the child he refers to as 'Miss Lucy' :

'You will come into the drawing-room by-and-by with Miss Lucy, Madame Vine. We wish to hear you play.'
Miss Lucy : And it was spoken in the light of a command.
 (III, Ch. 3).

Sometimes, of course, servants commit definite solecisms when addressing their superiors. In Vanity Fair, Mrs. Blenkinsop, the Sedley's maid, refers to her master as 'Mr. S.' in a conversation with Mrs. Sedley : 'But, lor', Ma'am ... we was only grocers when we married Mr. S.' (Ch. 6). Mrs. Blenkinsop's conversation, as this short extract is enough to suggest, exhibits of wealth of substandard features, and this reflects the vulgarity of her employers. A family of greater refinement would have demanded higher linguistic standards. Overstrenuous respectfulness might also be a cause of errors. 'Be you a Muster Evv'n Harrington, Esquire ?' asks a rustic in Meredith's novel (Evan Harrington, Ch. 13), while in Middlemarch Rosamond's maid is dazzled by the grandeur of Dorothea's appearance and, though Mrs. Casaubon is, of course, a commoner, calls her 'my lady' as she is sure 'that "mum" was not the right title for this queenly young widow with a carriage and pair' (Ch. 77).

It was not only servants who felt uncertain about addressing members of the nobility. The more provincial members of the middle class might equally find this a problem, and the citizens of Cranford suffer some consternation at the news of Lady Glenmire's coming visit. Miss Pole, rather shamefaced, tries to get Miss Matty's guidance on the subject :

By the way, you'll think I'm strangely ignorant; but, do you really know, I am puzzled how we ought to address Lady Glenmire. Do you say, 'Your Ladyship,' where you would say 'you' to a common person ? I have been puzzling all morning; and are we to say 'My Lady,' instead of 'Ma'am' ? (Cranford, Ch. 8).

Unfortunately, Miss Matty proves equally at a loss. In another of Mrs. Gaskell's novels, Wives and Daughters, the young Molly Gibson, before a visit to the Cumnors, has received some anxious coaching

from the Miss Brownings 'as to the etiquette to be observed to earls and countesses, and their honourable progeny'. However, they, like the ladies of Cranford, are far from easy in such company themselves and have only succeeded in making Molly's speech excessively stiff and self-consciously formal. She is far from at ease with third-person forms :

'My lady, papa is come, and I am going away; and, my lady, I wish you good-night, and thank you for your kindness. Your ladyship's kindness, I mean,' she said, correcting herself as she remembered Miss Browning's particular instructions.... (Ch. 2).

Foreigners sometimes experience difficulty with the English convention of combining Sir with a Christian name. Madame Melmotte in The Way We Live Now refers to 'Sir Carbury', and even her more sharp-witted husband, we learn, 'did not yet quite understand the bearing and sequence of English titles' (1, Ch. 4). Melmotte's most characteristic weakness, however, is equally a feature of the speech of socially ambitious Englishmen : this is the over-frequent use of titles and formulae of respect. Melmotte closes a board meeting with a quite redundant repetition :

Well; - perhaps as your lordship is in a hurry, and as my lord here is engaged elsewhere ... we had better adjourn this meeting for another week. (1, Ch. 37).

His self-indulgent iteration of titles in reference is also at variance with the habits of fashionable society :

If it suits me to advance money to Lord Alfred Grendall, I suppose I may do so without asking your lordship's consent, or that of Sir Felix Carbury. (I, Ch. 22).

R.C. Chapman in his Names, Designations, and Appellations suggests

that there is a necessary proportion in such matters which Melmotte evidently lacks. 'These formulae of deference,' he writes, 'are to be used often enough but not too often; the degree is matter of tact and experience' (S.P.E. Tract 47, p.248). This coincides with the advice offered to Titmouse in Samuel Warren's Ten Thousand A-Year when he begins to move in aristocratic company : 'to say occasionally, only, "my lord" in addressing the Earl - and "Lady Cecilia" in addressing Lady Cecilia' (Bk. IV, Ch. 1). Other characters who seem vulgarly transfixed by titles are Sherrick of The Newcomes, who rejoices in the success of his tenant Charles Honeyman, in attracting the nobility to his chapel but who has to correct himself before finding the right title for a Countess's daughter :

Countess of Kew, and her daughter; Countess of Canterton, and the Honourable Miss Fetlock - no, Lady Fetlock. A Countess's daughter is a lady, I'm dashed if she ain't. (Ch. 44).

and Inspector Bucket who insists, rather oddly, in addressing Leicester Dedlock as 'Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet' (Bleak House, Ch. 54). At least Johnny Ludlow has the sensitivity to be embarrassed when his trustee, Mr. Brandon, suspects him of title-dropping :

'Rather ostentatious of you, Johnny Ludlow, to hasten to tell me he was the "Honourable."'

My face flushed. I had not said it in that light. (Johnny Ludlow, I, 21).

Probably Johnny's discomfiture is made worse by his knowledge that Honourable is normally a special case, a title not mentioned in conversation (see p. 145).

No doubt one of the reasons why the use of titles was restrained was to avoid the risk of suggesting irony, or even sarcasm, by an excessive parade of deference. Lady Scatterd, who has risen from very humble origins and feels unworthy of her title, is well aware of this possibility. She dislikes being called 'my lady' for, as she explains to Mary Thorne, 'I always think the people are laughing at me; and so they are.' Her husband, she is convinced, 'used to call me "my lady" just to make fun of me' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 27). Probably more offensive, however, was an excessive familiarity towards social superiors. This is often the result of ill-bred presumption as it is when Preston, the Cumnor's land-agent, addresses Mr. Hamley by name before a proper introduction has been made. It is clear that the initiative for this should come from the man of higher rank. In response to Preston's impertinence, we learn that the Squire 'bowed stiffly', and Mrs. Gaskell goes on to explain,

He did not like his name to be asked or presumed upon in that manner. An equal might conjecture who he was, or recognise him, but, till he announced himself, an inferior had no right to do more than address him respectfully as 'sir'. (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 30).

Earlier, in a conversation with Cynthia Kirkpatrick, Preston's vulgar assumption of familiarity is revealed again. He refers to the squire's eldest son without giving him a title. 'Osborne Hamley,' he declares, 'is too fine a gentleman to understand the means by which to improve the value of the land.' Shortly after this even the surname is dropped : 'Of course, Osborne will try and marry someone with money' (Ch. 20).

There are other, possibly more venial examples of the socially ambitious claiming an unwarranted familiarity with the great,

though in reference rather than direct address. Pendennis, for example, in his University days 'scared the quiet pair at Fair Oaks by stories of great houses ... and by talking of lords without their titles' (Pendennis, Ch. 18). There is some justification for this since at least he has been invited to the 'great houses' and has met many of these men in them, but Mrs. Gibson's claims to this freedom are much more dubious. Though she, like Preston, talks of 'Osborne Hamley' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 21), and refers to Lord and Lady Cumnor as 'the Cumnors' in a way which 'marked a distinction between her intimacy in the family, and the reverential manner in which the townspeople were accustomed to speak of "the earl and the countess"' (Ch. 16), she forgets that this 'intimacy' has been gained in the position of a governess on the Cumnor's staff.

Sometimes such impertinence is firmly checked. Pump, a city merchant, who has married a titled wife, looks blank when his colleagues ask, 'How's your wife, Pump, my boy?' and answers pompously, 'Lady Blanche Pump is pretty well, I thank you' (Book of Snobs, Ch. 8). In The Way We Live Now, Lord Alfred is forced to put up with the free use of his Christian name by Melmotte on whom he is financially dependent. Finally, however, pride is victorious over prudence when Melmotte invites 'Alfred' to have 'another rubber' :

Lord Alfred ... for a moment forgot the bills in the safe, and the good things which his boys were receiving. 'Damn that kind of nonsense,' he said. 'Call people by their proper names.' Then he left the house without a further word to the master of it. (Ch. 4).

The effects of class on address and reference are not revealed only in conversations between people of unequal status : different

conventions prevailed within the various classes. This variety in class usage is evident in the modes of address adopted within the family at different levels of society.

When comparing Victorian and modern usage, one is struck by the much greater formality which seems to have been normal between husbands and wives in fashionable society. Christian names seem to have been used rather sparingly and, especially in their shortened forms, were a mark of particular intimacy. Their use is often unusual enough to provoke an authorial comment. When Archdeacon Grantly tells his wife of the engagement between Arabin and Eleanor Bold, he calls his wife 'Sue', something, we learn, he did not do 'above twice or thrice in a year, and these occasions were great high days' (Barchester Towers, Ch.50). Similarly, in Doctor Thorne, Trollope reveals that Squire Gresham 'never called his wife Bell, except when he wanted her to be on particularly good terms with him' (Ch. 31). In less fashionable society, where such familiar abbreviations were perhaps more common, the reverse may sometimes be observed. In his story of low life, 'The Spotted Dog', Trollope notes, 'When a man, to whom his wife is usually Polly, addressed her as Mary Anne, then it may be surmised that that man is in earnest' (Part II).

Perhaps the most poignant example of a shift into the unwonted use of a Christian name occurs in The Last Chronicle of Barset where Mrs. Proudie calls the Bishop 'Tom' in a vain attempt to win back some of the affection she has lost (Ch. 54). This contrasts with her earlier use of 'my lord' which, far from betokening submissive respect, was 'a sign that terrible times had come' (Ch. 17). This degree of formality was clearly extreme, but other comparable examples do occur. Lord Cumnor apologises to ^{his} _^

wife : 'I beg your pardon, my lady - I'm later than I should have been' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 49), while, in Vanity Fair, Lord Steyne goes even further : 'My Lady Steyne ... I want to see the list for your dinner on Friday' (Ch. 49). Possibly these cases are not altogether typical since Lord and Lady Steyne are estranged and Lord Cumnor stands in some awe of his formidable wife, but titles of a quite formal kind do not seem to have been incompatible with affection and domestic harmony. They are common among the clerics of Barchester. Mrs. Grantly habitually calls her husband 'archdeacon' and, in the calmer passages of their marriage, 'bishop' is Mrs. Proudie's usual mode of address.

The use of a wife's Christian name to a third party was very unusual and, to anyone other than a close friend, vulgarly familiar. The fastidious Mr. Crawley does not miss this note of ill-breeding in an invitation from his lawyer, Mr. Toogood, who asks him to 'come and breakfast with me and Maria at nine' :

Doubtless he means to be kind. But his kindness is rough; - I will not say unmannerly, as the word would be harsh. I have never even seen the lady whom he calls Maria. (The Last Chronicle of Barset, Ch. 32).

Among untitled, though educated, speakers the use of Mr. or Mrs. with a surname was not uncommon, though it seems to have been regarded as a little old-fashioned and faintly comic, as a conversation between the Merdles in Little Dorrit seems to suggest :

'Why, in the name of all the infernal powers, Mrs. Merdle, who does more for Society than I do ? Do you see these premises, Mrs. Merdle ? Do you see this furniture, Mrs. Merdle ? Do you look in the glass and see yourself, Mrs. Merdle ?'
'Pray, don't be violent, Mr. Merdle,' said Mrs. Merdle. (Ch. 33).

It is probable, however, that this form was becoming increasingly associated with provincial families. It is very common among the Dodson sisters in The Mill on the Floss (I, Ch. 7).

A wife's use of her husband's surname alone was of more questionable status. It was, perhaps, acceptable in reference. Lady Arabella, when speaking to her sister-in-law, the Countess de Courcy, talks of 'poor Gresham' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 4), but in the speech of many characters the form has a rather vulgar air. 'Respectable we are,' claims Mrs. Bunce in Phineas Finn, 'though Bunce is a bit rough sometimes' (I, Ch. 7), while the loquacious Mrs. Berry in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel laments in her unfashionable, if animated, idiom, 'I drew a blank in Berry. He was a black Berry to me, my dear' (Ch. 28). This form of reference is particularly common when widows refer - often with some term of pity or endearment - to their 'dead husband, though, again, this is not typical of the best speakers. 'Dear Greenow ! sweet lamb ! ' exclaims Aunt Greenow in Trollope's Can You Forgive Her ? (I, Ch. 7), while Mrs. Gibson of Wives and Daughters frequently talks of 'poor Kirkpatrick' and 'my dear Kirkpatrick'.

The use of the surname alone in direct address to a husband was unquestionably vulgar. It often occurs among the provincial middle class. Mrs. Vincy begs her husband, 'Don't be hard on the poor boy, Vincy' (Middlemarch, Ch. 36). Instances from the lower classes are even more common, however. Mrs. Plornish, wife of the plasterer from Bleeding Heart Yard, introduces her husband to Clennam as 'Plornish' (Little Dorrit, Ch. 12). The wife of a miner in Sybil repeatedly calls her husband 'Warner' (Bk. II, Ch. 13), while in the same novel, Mrs. Tanner, wife of the proprietor of a coffee house in London, uses the same form (Bk. V, Ch. 5).

Even more unacceptable was the use of an initial letter in address between husband and wife, though there is at least one example of this occurring in a professional family. The curate's wife, Mrs. Quiverful, calls her husband 'Q' (Barchester Towers, Ch. 43), though Quiverful is a very lowly and impoverished cleric. The usage is, however, more characteristic of such characters as Mrs. Bolton in Pendennis : 'Fanny, dear, get your pa some supper. What will you have, B. ?' she asks (Ch. 51), while Mrs. Sedley, as is more commonly the case, couples the initial with Mr., when exclaiming, 'We must have a party, Mr. S.' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 18). This formula seems equally vulgar when used in reference. Mr. Sherrick in The Newcomes suggests a visit to his home in Regent's Park where 'Mrs. S. and Emily will give you as many songs as you like' (Ch. 23). Similarly Flora Finching calls her husband 'Mr. F.' when recounting the story of her engagement and marriage to Arthur Clennam (Little Dorrit, I, Ch. 13). The usage is occasionally found in more fashionable company, though here it tends to be deliberately ironic. Rawdon Crawley, for example, uses it along with other substandard forms when discussing the possibility of meeting his death in the impending campaign. The intention seems to be to soften the impact of a painful subject : 'It is no laughing matter that, Mrs. C., anyways' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 30), he tells Becky.

Sometimes these abbreviated forms are used by someone other than a husband or wife and, interestingly, Fanny Bolton's new admirer, Huxter, commends himself to the family by just such lower-class usages which seem reassuringly familiar after the airs of Pendennis :

He called Mrs. Bolton Mrs. B., and was very intimate, familiar, and facetious with that lady, quite different

from that ' 'aughty, 'artless beast,' as Mrs. Bolton now denominated a certain young gentleman of our acquaintance (Pendennis, Ch. 55).

The formula could also be used by a parent to a daughter as it is by Mr. Moss in Vanity Fair. The redundant aspirate confirms its status :

Miss M. (Miss Hem, as her papa called her) appeared without the curl-papers of the morning, and Mrs. Hem did the honours of a prime boiled leg of mutton and turnips. (Ch. 53).

A variety of other modes of address, all more or less vulgar, occur between husbands and wives. These are often affectionate, like Mrs. Sedley's use of 'old man' when she first hears the news of her husband's financial failure : 'she called him her John - her dear John - her old man - her kind old man' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 18). This occurs again later when she accuses Amelia of selfishness in refusing to have Georgy adopted while, as she puts it, 'my dear, dear old man is without a sh-shilling' (Ch. 46). Of similar status is Mr. Plornish's 'old gal' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 27), and the reference by the Carlingford newsagent, Elsworthy, to 'my missis' (The Perpetual Curate, Ch. 31). Vulgarity is, however, probably taken a stage further when Sherrick adopts this last usage as a direct address : 'Our reverend gent drops in and takes a glass, don't he, Missis ?' (The Newcomes, Ch. 44). The use of master in the sense of husband was also an exclusively lower-class idiom. It occasions a degree of uncertainty in Esther Summerson when she hears it from the brick-maker's wife :

'I'm a-watching for my master'
'Do you mean your husband ?' said I.
'Yes, miss, my master.' (Bleak House, Ch. 8).

Master is also retained in place of the more usual mister by some dialect speakers. An example is found in Middlemarch where the lodge-keeper's wife assures Mrs. Cadwallader, 'Master Fitchett shall go and see 'em after work' (Ch. 6).

Among educated speakers, formality also marked the speech of children to their parents, though there is some evidence to suggest that more relaxed manners were becoming usual. A letter from Colonel Newcome in India to Clive gives information about this :

Your letters, my dearest Clive, have been the greatest comfort to me. I seem to hear you as I read them. I can't but think that this, the modern and natural style, is a great progress upon the old-fashioned manner of my day, when we used to begin to our fathers, 'Honoured Father,' or even 'Honoured Sir' ... though I suspect parents were no more honoured in those days than nowadays. (The Newcomes, Ch. 39).

Something of this old-fashioned formality survives in the Victorian novel, particularly in address to elderly relatives. Both Rawdon and James Crawley call the aged Miss Crawley 'ma'am', while in The Last Chronicle of Barset Trollope provides an interesting insight into the conventions prevailing in the home of old Lady Lufton. The grandchildren appear to treat her somewhat more informally :

The dowager was always called 'my lady,' both by her own daughter and by her son's wife, except in the presence of their children, when she was addressed as 'grandmamma.' (Ch. 5).

As always, however, markedly respectful forms of address carry with them the possibility of irony. When Archdeacon Grantly calls his father 'my lord', the result is that 'the good old bishop shook in his shoes, for he knew that an evil time was coming'

(The Warden, Ch. 9).

Sir, though hardly honoured sir - probably always epistolary - occurs infrequently in early Victorian novels from sons when speaking to their fathers. The admittedly pompous Jos Sedley informs his father, 'I promised Bonamy, of our service, sir ... to dine with him' (Vanity Fair, Ch. 3). As we might expect, by far the most frequent mode of address from sons to their parents is mother and father. The forms mamma (sometimes spelt mama) and papa are also very common, particularly among girls, and some felt that these were to be preferred. The most explicit reference to this is Mrs. General's attempt to make Amy Dorrit's language conform to what she conceives to be the habits of the fashionable world :

'Papa is a preferable mode of address,' observed Mrs. General. 'Father is rather vulgar, my dear. The word Papa, besides, gives a pretty form to the lips.' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 5).

There is some reason to think it true that it was the daughters of less fashionable families who used father and mother. Mary Garth of Middlemarch is one example : 'Not a sad while, father - I mean to be merry,' she remarks (Ch. 86). But there is a strong suspicion that, for some at least, mother and father had a refreshing lack of pretentiousness. The evident irony of Dickens's treatment of Mrs. General's remarks suggests this, while in Evan Harrington Rose Jocelyn, when asked about the identity of Louisa Harrington's father, replies, 'Sir Abraham Harrington ... I think she said father, if the word wasn't too commonplace for her' (Ch. 17). Papa and mamma, indeed, were beginning to be tainted by false refinement. The O.E.D., in its article on mamma, is quite explicit about this. The word, whose

status it notes has 'always been the same as that of papa', had in the eighteenth century 'been confined to the higher classes' where it was 'freely used not only by children but by adults of both sexes'. However, in the nineteenth century, the O.E.D. goes on, 'its use was much extended and among the lower middle class was a mark of "gentility"'. Both mamma and papa, in fact, display a familiar pattern of changing currency in words adopted for social parade and have finally, in the O.E.D's words, 'become unfashionable, even as used by children'. They do seem to have become confined to the nursery before disappearing from serious use almost completely. Even in the Victorian period they are uncommon in boys above very tender years. The sheltered Verdant Green is an exception, but even he realises that more adult forms are necessary among his more sophisticated contemporaries at Oxford : 'Why, pap - my father - is rather nervous on a coach,' he explains with a significant hesitation (The Adventures of Verdant Green, I, Ch. 6).

The evidence of the O.E.D. is confirmed by the advice given in Society Small Talk which also gives some interesting counsel on the abbreviations ma and pa :

Out of the nursery it is not customary for children to style their parents other than by the good old-fashioned reverential names of 'Father' and 'Mother.' 'Papa' and 'Mamma' are now nursery names only; but 'Pa' and 'Ma,' those unpleasant abbreviations are now happily quite out of date. (Ch. 7, pp.118-9).

This suggests that Pa and Ma had, earlier in the century, been more acceptable than they later became, as we might suppose from the evidence of Robert Martin's biography of Tennyson (Tennyson, The Unquiet Heart, Oxford, 1980) which records that these forms

were in use by the Hallam family (p.196). By the middle of the century their status had declined markedly and they are confined to such speakers as the lowly Fanny Bolton, who tells Pendennis, 'I've never been at Vauxhall, sir, and pa didn't like me to go' (Pendennis, Ch. 46). The implication of vulgarity is unmistakable in the intrusive 'r' suggested by the spelling adopted for the speech of the barely-educated Lady Clavering earlier in the same novel :

What have you been a doing of ? Nothink, I hope, to vex such a dear Mar as yours ? How is your dear Mar ? (Ch. 25).

The same spelling is found in the speech of the boorish Natty in Thackeray's earlier Sketches and Travels where it accompanies the then equally unacceptable pronunciation of girl. He complains that he 'could neither see his Mar nor the Gurls' ('On Love, Marriage, Men, and Women'). Grandma seems to have escaped this decline and remains quite acceptable today. It occurs in Henry Kingsley's Leighton Court when Laura asks, 'Grandma, how can you use your tact to find excuses ?' (Ch. 18). The common twentieth-century form Grannie, however, seems to have been of fairly recent introduction in the Victorian period, for Charlotte Yonge, in a letter of 1864, recalling her own youth, remarks,

I don't think such a familiarity as 'Grammie' would have been dreamt of. I never saw it in any old book, and with neither of my grandmothers should any of us ^{have} attempted it, indeed my Grandmother Yonge was addressed as 'ma'am' by all her sons and daughters. (Quoted in Georgina Battiscombe's Charlotte Mary Yonge, London, 1943, p.114).

The prevalent twentieth-century forms mummy/mum and daddy/dad are almost entirely absent from Victorian fiction. Indeed, mummy - according to the O.E.D., a 'childish alteration' of the much older

mammy - does not seem to have been at all fashionable before the end of the nineteenth century. Mammy is also very unusual, though the derisive mammy-sick does occur in Disraeli's Vivien Grey (Ek.I, Ch.3). Dad is recorded by the O.E.D. from the sixteenth century in 'rustic, humble or childish speech'. The word does occur in the speech of Squire Hamley, a countryman if not a rustic, but only when recalling the infancy of his son who has died suddenly :

'Oh, my lad, my lad - thou might have trusted thy old dad ! He used to call me his "old dad" when he was a little chap not bigger than this,' indicating a certain height with his hand. (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 52).

Earlier, during an estrangement from his younger son, he remembers with similar tenderness the days when he had been 'his old dad, as was his primest favourite of all'. This was when his son had been 'a little bit of a chap ! ' (Ch. 31). Clearly, at least among the fashionable, this was a usage confined much more exclusively to the nursery than it is today.

The conventional modes of reference my mother and my father were considered a little 'slow' in some circles, and a number of mildly disrespectful slang equivalents were in use by young men when naming parents to their contemporaries. The most common of these is the governor which is used by Bertie Stanhope, along with old chap. When borrowing money, we are told that 'he gave people references to "his governor;" told them that the "old chap" had a good income' (Barchester Towers, Ch. 42). Examples do occasionally occur in direct address and, generally, no offence is taken at the colloquialism. Frank Gresham reluctantly complies with his father's wish that he should go to stay at Courcy Castle, complaining, 'You don't know how dull it is, governor' (Doctor Thorne, Ch. 14).

Edmund Sparkler, however, does think it necessary to include an apologetic disclaimer when so addressing his step-father, Merdle : 'Fellers referring to my Governor - expression not my own - occasionally compliment my Governor in a very handsome way' (Little Dorrit, I, Ch. 33). This idiom can be regarded as typical of, if not exclusive to, upper-class speakers. In the speech of those of more humble status the word was often used of an employer rather than a father. Mr. Chopper, a clerk, refers to Mr. Osborne in this way in Vanity Fair.

There does not seem to have been a similarly ubiquitous slang alternative to mother, though the sophisticated Charles Larkyns astonishes Verdant Green by referring to the 'missis' (The Adventures of Verdant Green, I, Ch. 7), while in Jane Eyre, John Reed reveals himself as a fast young man in the making by calling his mother 'old girl' (Ch. 2).

Among the more staid and respectable, of course, formality prevailed. The first occasion on which Lord Monmouth calls his grandson 'Harry' marks an important advance in cordiality and is noted by the narrator :

'What Buckhurst is that, Harry ?' inquired Lord Monmouth, in a tone of some interest, and for the first time calling him by his Christian name. (Coningsby, Bk. I, Ch. 6).

Christian names were less frequently used to other relatives also, and the idiom, frequent in Jane Austen's novels of using aunt with a surname continues in Victorian dialogue. In Middlemarch, Mrs. Garth talks of Fred Vincy's 'Aunt Bulstrode' (Ch. 86), and in Can You Forgive Her ? we find Alice Vavasor using the same formula in direct address : 'Of course, Aunt Macleod, if you think I am

wrong you have quite a right to say so' (I, Ch. 2). Auntie is not used before the end of the century. In Besant and Rice's novel, By Celia's Arbour (1878), set in the 1850's, the authors, explaining the appellation 'dear Aunt', remark, 'well-brought-up people in those days did not venture on such a respectful endearment as "Auntie"' (II, Ch. 21).

Among the aristocracy, titles were often used when naming members of the family. An example occurs in Phineas Finn when Lady Laura Standish introduces 'my brother Chiltern' (I, Ch. 4). This is, of course, Lord Chiltern. Lady Kew in The Newcomes calls her grandson 'Kew' and her son by his title 'Walham', while in her conversation with Barnes Newcome she distinguishes her daughter-in-law in a similar way as 'my daughter Walham' (Ch. 52). In Disraeli's Henrietta Temple, Lady Bellair refers to her son as 'dear Bellair' (Bk. IV, Ch. 6).

Old-fashioned, if not positively vulgar, by the Victorian period was the excessive use of titles of relationship, especially when those referred to were of the speaker's own generation. This is mainly found among provincial characters though in Jane Austen's novels the usage is much more fashionable. It is common in the St. Oggs of The Mill on the Floss. 'I wonder you don't take pattern by your sister Deane,' sister Glegg advises sister Tulliver (Ch. 7), and in Middlemarch, too, Mrs. Waule may be found calling her brother 'brother Solomon' (Ch. 12), while Solomon himself addresses Featherstone as 'brother Peter' (Ch. 32). Occasionally, these titles are used alone. 'Why, whatever is the matter, sister?' Mrs. Tulliver asks Mrs. Pullett who has arrived in tears (The Mill on the Floss, Ch. 7). When another name is used in these formulae however, the choice of Christian or surname is governed by the

degree of intimacy prevailing. In The Vicar of Bullhampton - the setting is again provincial - Mrs. Brattle, the miller's wife, can, we learn, speak of 'Sister Jay, the wife of the prosperous ironmonger at Warminster; but of sisters by their Christian names no mention was ever made' (Ch. 6).

Undoubtedly vulgar is the use of the possessive our before the Christian name of a member of the family. Mrs. Chivery in Little Dorrit laments the effect of her son's passion : 'Miss Dorrit is the matter with Our John' (I, Ch. 22), while in the same novel Fanny Dorrit, a veritable mine of unacceptable idiom, applies the formula to her sister :

'Oh, our Amy, our Amy !' said Fanny. 'What a timid little goose our Amy is !' (II, Ch. 7).

Outside the family, and perhaps especially in society, modes of address remained formal for the most part. As we might expect, Christian names were used infrequently, and this is nowhere more apparent than between young and unmarried members of the opposite sex. Here, Christian names were often used only after an engagement had been formed. Indeed, the first adoption of a woman's Christian name is often tantamount to a declaration of love. 'Let me call you Edith ! Yes ... let me call you my Edith ! ' exclaims Coningsby to Miss Millbank, 'I love you' (Coningsby, Bk. VII, Ch. 5), and when Mr. Slope call Madeline Neroni by her first name in Barchester Towers, she archly reminds him of the implication :

Well, my name is Madeline ... but none except my own family usually call me so. Now look me in the face, Mr. Slope. Am I to understand that you say you love me ? (Ch. 27).

The same implication demanded that an increase in formality was necessary when childhood friends of the opposite sex approached marriageable age. In Doctor Thorne, Trollope notes how, at around the time of a young man's coming of age, the girls of his acquaintance begin to call him 'by his stern family name', being 'instructed by instinct rather than precept that the time has come when the familiar Charles or familiar John must by them be laid aside' (Ch. 1). In the same novel, Mary Thorne insists that Frank Gresham should no longer call her Mary after he has irrevocably altered the character of their relationship by making a declaration of love which she has rejected (Ch. 6).

The use of Christian names by a married man or woman to someone of the opposite sex other than their wife or husband was also unusual, and could carry the suggestion of an adulterous liaison. The impertinent Mrs. Van Siever in The Last Chronicle of Barset remarks with provocative knowingness when Mrs. Dobbs Broughton calls Dalrymple 'Conway', 'I suppose you must be her brother, or her cousin, or something of that sort ?' (Ch. 60). In Can You Forgive Her ?, Plantagenet Palliser advises Glencora to call Burgo simply 'Mr. Fitzgerald'. He dislikes the way, 'you generally prefix his Christian name, which it would be much better that you should omit' (II, Ch. 58), and it is only the age of the older Duke of Omnium that lends a veneer of respectability to his 'privilege' of calling Madame Goesler 'Marie' (Phineas Finn, II, Ch. 57).

This conventional reticence over the use of Christian names produces a phenomenon which George Watson in his article, 'Trollope's Forms of Address' (Critical Quarterly, Vol. 15, no 3, Autumn 1973) has called 'the glide'. This is a quick movement through two or

more forms of address on a scale of increasing or decreasing intimacy. This is well exemplified by Casaubon when Dorothea accepts his proposal : 'My dear young lady - Miss Brooke - Dorothea !' (Middlemarch, Ch. 5). The reverse effect is found on the reunion of the young sweethearts, Holbrook and Miss Matty, in old age. Holbrook is forced to acknowledge that they are now virtual strangers : 'Matty - Miss Matilda - Miss Jenkyns ! God bless my soul ! I should not have known you' (Cranford, Ch. 3).

It is not unusual to find a character checking himself in the use of a woman's Christian name lest he should seem to be claiming too great a degree of intimacy. Clive Newcome corrects himself in a conversation with his rival, Lord Kew :

Good heavens ! you don't suppose that I would speak to Ethel, to Miss Newcome, about such a foul subject as that ? (The Newcomes, Ch. 30).

The less fastidious, however, might need a firm reminder. When Barnes Newcome asks how 'Clara' is, Lord Kew pointedly replies, 'Lady Clara Pulleyn, I believe, is very unwell indeed' (Ch. 29). A father might feel insulted, as does old Jones in Thackeray's Sketches and Travels, by having a 'little scamp call my daughters by their Christian names !' ('On Love, Marriage, Men, and Women'), while after an engagement a fiancé jealously guarded the right to his beloved's first name. When Lord de Guest asks Johnny Eames whether he may call Lily Dale 'Lily', Eames laments his misfortune as a rejected lover : 'Oh, dear ! I wish I might have the power of letting you' (The Small House at Allington, Ch. 52).

This is not to suggest that members of the opposite sex

might not sometimes be on Christian name terms when circumstances had conspired to promote a particular, but not romantic intimacy. Roger Hamley takes this liberty with Molly Gibson who has been nursing his mother through her last illness for, as he explains, 'at such a time as this one can't stand on formalities' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 18). Also, there was a state which Trollope in The Vicar of Bullhampton calls 'cousinhood'. 'Cousins,' he writes, 'are almost the same as brothers, and yet they may be lovers.' Moreover : 'Cousins are Tom, and Jack, and George, and Dick' (Ch. 14).

Outside the family circle, it seems probable that Christian names were most commonly used between women. Thackeray certainly suggests this and contrasts their habits with those of men (see p.57) However, even in female conversation this degree of familiarity was not to be too thoughtlessly assumed, for it did mark a definite stage in increasing intimacy. Juliana Bonner writes to Caroline Strike as 'Caroline' and goes on, 'There, I have mustered up courage to call you by your Christian name at last' (Evan Harrington, Ch. 38). Among men who are not close relatives Christian names are unusual. The question here is rather whether the surname alone is used, or whether it should be prefixed by Mr. This could be a class matter; George Vavasor has two election agents: one is Scruby, a lawyer; the other Grimes, a publican. Their mode of mutual address is clearly governed by their respective status :

The two men were very civil to each other in their salutations, the attorney assuming an air of patronising condescension, always calling the other Grimes; whereas Mr. Scruby was treated with considerable deference by the publican, and was always called Mr. Scruby. (Can You Forgive Her ? I, Ch. 13).

But what might seem 'patronising condescension' to an inferior could, between equals, be a mark of cordiality, though the use of

a surname as a mark of friendship sounds distinctly odd to us to-day. Early in Little Dorrit Mr. Meagles greets Clennam,

We are delighted to see you, Clennam (if you'll allow me, I shall drop the Mister); I heartily assure you, we are delighted. (I, Ch. 16).

It was, nonetheless, possible to be too precipitate. In Tom Brown at Oxford, Mr. Wurley addresses Tom as 'Brown' almost at once and the young man is 'somewhat astonished at the intimacy of the greeting' (Ch. 33). The more fastidious and conservative might resent such liberties. In The Last Chronicle of Barset, Archdeacon Grantly calls his clerical colleague 'My dear Crawley' - not unreasonably as they are well known to each other and their children are to be married. But Crawley regards this as presumptuous, and complains to his wife that 'of late there seems to have grown up in the world a habit of greater familiarity than that which I think did prevail when last I moved much among men' (Ch. 83). There is little doubt, however, that it is Crawley who is out of step with the habits of the age, certainly with those of younger men. In Coningsby, the schoolboys at Eton use surnames exclusively: 'I heard Bradford tell Palmer it was Buckhurst' (Bk. I, Ch. 9) and, when it is necessary to distinguish between two brothers, forms like 'Fielding major' are used.

The question of whether women could, without vulgarity, address men in this way is an interesting one. In Emma, of course, it is Mrs. Elton's use of 'Knightley' which offers conclusive proof of her ill-breeding (Ch. 14), and certainly a conversation between Felix Carbury and his mother illustrates the conventional distinction of usage between speakers of different sexes :

'I am told they are going out of town at Whitsuntide, and

that she's to meet Lord Nidderdale down in the country.'
 'She can't endure Nidderdale. She says so herself.'
 (The Way We Live Now, I, Ch. 11).

Yet, in Middlemarch, we find the outspoken, though undoubtedly upper-class Mrs. Cadwallader remarking in a conversation with Sir James Chettam, 'As if you could ever squeeze a resolution out of Brooke !' (Ch. 6). This is clearly not to be regarded as vulgar, though it is certainly unusual. Perhaps the important point is that, unlike Mrs. Elton, who, as Emma exclaims, has 'never seen' Knightley 'in her life before' (Ch. 14), Mrs. Cadwallader has been an established figure in her neighbourhood for many years, and knows the man of whom she speaks very well.

Christian names were used between men but not commonly. When they do occur, they generally indicate a particularly warm regard. We have already noticed how, in Little Dorrit, Meagles first claims the right to address Clennam by his surname alone. Somewhat later he calls him 'Arthur', and we learn that he is 'using that familiar address for the first time in their communication' (Ch. 28). Clearly, this marks a new stage of cordiality. Equally, when the rather disreputable Sowerby calls Mr. Roberts 'Mark' in Framley Parsonage, Trollope explains that 'he had become very intimate with him in these latter days' (Ch. 8). Exceptionally, some men were known more widely by their Christian name. One of these is Phineas Finn whom 'everybody ... or nearly everybody' addressed in this way. 'There are men,' Trollope notes, 'who seem to be so treated by general consent in all societies' (I, Ch. 5). Probably this familiarity was due to some particular affability of character, though there is some doubt as to whether it is a mark of unqualified respect.

In Besant and Rice's The Golden Butterfly, the authors have an interesting note on this point :

When a woman is always called by her Christian name, it is a sign that she is loved and lovable. If a man, on the other hand, gets to be known, without any reason for the distinction, by his Christian name, it is generally a sure sign that he is sympathetic, but blind to his own interests. (Ch. 14).

Perhaps the only society in which Christian names were widely and habitually used was that of the London Bohemia which, according to Thackeray's Philip, is 'a pleasant land ... where men call each other by their Christian names' (I, Ch. 5). In Phineas Finn, this 'pleasant land' is represented by the Shakespeare Club where, we learn, 'Everybody called everybody by his Christian name, and members smoked all over the house' (I, Ch. 21).

Nicknames and abbreviated forms of both Christian and surnames were common among schoolboys and undergraduates. East in Tom Brown's Schooldays is known as 'Scud' because he is a fast runner, and Verdant Green as 'Giglamps' because he wears spectacles. This habit outlasted schooldays, particularly among those with a taste for fast living. In the circle of Felix Carbury's acquaintances in The Way We Live Now, Adolphus Longestaffe is almost universally known as 'Dolly' and Lord Grasslough as 'Grassy'. Probably the use of such names is analogous to the slang which occurs so frequently in the same company. Forms of address like this were not, however, to be risked by those unsure of their social status. Amy Dorrit's brother associates the name 'Tip' with his days of poverty. When the family fortunes revive, he tells his sister, 'You needn't call me Tip ... because that's an old habit, and one you may as well lay aside' (Little Dorrit, II, Ch. 3). Some abbreviations probably were reserved for people of lowly occupations.

Robinson, the Hamley's butler, refers to 'Dick Hayward' who is 'Boots at the Hamley Arms' (Wives and Daughters, Ch. 53), while in Cranford Martha introduces her 'follower' to Miss Matty as 'Jem Hearn' who is 'a joiner making three and sixpence a day' (Ch. 4). There seems little doubt that shortening a man's name could imply that he was unworthy of much respect. Jane Austen, it will be remembered, briefly disposes of 'Dick Musgrove' as a man 'who had never done anything to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead' (Persuasion, Ch. 6), though slightly different motives prompt Bounderby, the prototype of all professional northcountrymen, to speak always of 'Tom Gradgrind' :

Tom Gradgrind, for a bluff independent manner of speaking - as if somebody were always endeavouring to bribe him with immense sums to say Thomas, and he wouldn't. (Hard Times, Bk. I, Ch. 7).

The familiar appellation fellow, though by no means confined to upper-class speech, is commonly used, and with especial frequency by public schoolboys. Indeed, it forms a noticeable element in their speech as the following brief extract from the Eton scenes of Coningsby illustrates :

'Just help me with this verse, Collins ... that's a good fellow.'
 'Well, give it us.... There, I have done it for you.'
 'That's a good fellow.'
 'Any fellow seen Buckhurst ?' (Bk. I, Ch. 9).

The last speaker shows the common tendency for the word to become a colloquial equivalent to the indefinite personal pronoun one. This frequent use of fellow by nineteenth-century schoolboys is recorded by the O.E.D. (fellow 9d) which cites an interesting quotation from Stanley's Life of Arnold recalling how the Doctor

surprised the boys of Rugby by adopting the usage himself :

'He calls us fellows', was the astonished expression of the boys when ... they heard him speak of them by the familiar name in use among themselves. (I, 157).

There were some who felt the word was less acceptable on the lips of women, and the author of Society Small Talk had some words of caution for female readers :

The word 'Fellow,' however much in use it may be between men, sounds objectionable from the lips of women; and some women are given to the foolish conceit of speaking of every man they may happen to know as a 'Dear fellow,' a 'Charming fellow,' a 'Handsome fellow,' or a 'Clever fellow'. (Ch. 7 p.118).

For others the prohibition was less absolute. Mrs. Humphry in her Manners for Men (1897) notes that a lady 'may frequently speak of "young fellows" ', but that, in some phrases at least, the same lady would avoid the word in the singular. 'A lady never uses the expressions "a girl and a fellow", ' she writes, and she would 'reveal herself as belonging to the uncultured classes' if she were to say ' "I met a fellow yesterday" ' (. . . p.140). According to Mrs. Humphry, equally fine snares lay in the path of the male aspirant to gentility. 'A young man,' she warns, 'would make an equal mistake if he were to say "My sister's fellow" ; but he would be correct enough if he were to say "The fellow my sister's engaged to". ' Evidently one needed an ear long accustomed to the ways of the polite to draw these distinctions with ease and confidence. Fellow, of course, may also be used contemptuously, and among lower-class speakers an awareness of this could eclipse the associations of warm comradeship which the word tends to have for the more fortunate. In consequence, the word could be strongly

resented. When Silas Wegg asks of Sloppy, Boffin's assistant, 'Who employed this fellow ?' Sloppy replies with some warmth, 'I say ! No fellows, or I'll throw you out of winder !' (Our Mutual Friend, IV, Ch. 64).

A number of more unconventional forms of address and reference were used by members of the lower class, though some of these were also adopted by those of higher status when talking of their inferiors. It is characteristic of the uneducated to use terms of status, occupation or relationship more frequently. In Sybil, for example, Mrs. Carey, the keeper of a market stall, is addressed by Mr. Trotman as 'widow' : 'It's the trade leaving the country, widow, and no mistake' (Bk. VI, Ch. 3). Earlier in the novel, the word has been used as a title coupled with a surname : 'Am I the man to send up a bad-bottomed cop, Widow Carey ?' (Bk. II, Ch. 9). Widow seems to have been commonly used of humbler retailers for, in Cranford, Lady Glenmire refers to another stall-holder as 'Widow Hayward' (Ch. 11). Similarly, in Scenes of Clerical Life, a poor shop-keeper is known as 'Dame Fripp' ('Mr. Gilfil's Love Story', Ch. 1). Neighbour also occurs quite commonly as a form of address. There is an example in North and South when a friend breaks the news of her husband's death to Mrs. Boucher, 'Neighbour ... your man is dead' (Ch. 36), and the same word occurs between two rustics in Doctor Thorne : 'Things be altered at Greensbury ... altered sadly, neebor. Oaklerath' (Ch. 1). Interestingly, this form of address is adopted by the aristocratic Egremont in Sybil, but only when he is seeking to hide his real identity and rank : 'You see I took you at your word, neighbour,' he remarks on paying a visit to Gerard (Bk. III, Ch. 5). Mate was also confined to those of low status. It is found in Mrs. Henry Wood's Johnny Ludlow where Roberts, an engine driver, tries to console the

pointsman, Lease, after he has caused an accident :

'Mate,' said Roberts, putting out his hand that Lease might take it, 'I've never had an ill thought to ye.' (VI).

This, the O.E.D. notes, was a form of address used mainly by sailors and labourers. Its status remains largely unchanged today.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to summarise the findings of a study of this kind. The distinctions which may be observed between the usage of the various classes are often so arbitrary that it is difficult to formulate any general theories about them. Often the temptation to do so is best avoided. Our attention should be directed towards the individual word or phrase. Nevertheless, a number of themes do recur in the preceding chapters and connections between some of the idioms discussed do suggest themselves. The carpet is not quite without a pattern.

I think we can be quite sure that a number of significant and related changes took place in colloquial English between about 1815 and 1835 or, say, between the death of Jane Austen and the publication of Pickwick Papers. We can be certain, too, that these changes were the result of certain social conditions, in particular the aspiration of some members of the middle class to achieve gentility and refinement.

Perhaps the clearest linguistic indicator of this aspiration is the considerable number of words which seem to have undergone a similar shift in status at much the same time. Genteel may serve as a paradigm. It is a word itself concerned with social class, defining a certain level of taste and refinement. It could be used by educated speakers during the Regency without self-

consciousness or the fear of censure. By the Victorian period it had become a vulgarism or was used only with a facetious or ironic intention. There is no doubt that the word had been adopted by speakers anxious to possess the quality so described, but ignorant of its real nature, until, over-used, misapplied and contaminated by unpleasant associations, the word was dropped from serious contexts by all educated speakers.

The attempt by the socially aspiring to model their language on an aristocratic ideal is revealed by other characteristics. Often such speakers were unaware of what the English of the upper-class was really like and mistakenly imagined that it must be notably grand and elevated in manner. The desire to emulate these supposed qualities often produces an inflated, sometimes absurdly inflated, idiom which, so far from being impressive, was felt by the educated to be vulgar and, since it was especially associated with commercial men, shoppy. In fact, as a general rule, aristocratic speech tends to be casual and relaxed in tone. Indeed, among the young and dissipated, the casual often shades into the careless. The self-conscious pursuit of correctness was on the whole a middle-class trait, though there is some evidence to suppose that towards the end of our period, and perhaps particularly after the Education Act of 1870, the idea of correctness began to exert a greater influence over the speech of the upper class which had hitherto been governed more by, an often idiomatic, tradition.

In this study I have looked at few novels published after 1880, for it has been my intention to look particularly at the language of the early and middle years of Victoria's reign. My reason for imposing this limitation is, as I explained in my introduction, the feeling that the colloquial English of these years has, despite its variety, a certain homogeneity deriving from the presence of some important distinctive features. I have suggested the nature of these in the preceding paragraphs. In contrast, there is good reason to suppose that in the final decades of the century the social changes we have been considering resulted in a more radical alteration in the relationships between the classes. A novel like Trollope's significantly titled The Way We Live Now (1875) may be seen as a harbinger. It acknowledges the advent of a plutocracy and registers an associated decline in the power and influence of the older ruling class. A future study might seek to establish how far this rather different state of affairs was reflected in language. We know that the speech of the upper class was not immune to changes provoked by social aspiration on the part of the class below, but one wonders how far these changes were accelerated towards the end of the century and what direction they took. It would be particularly interesting to know how far the high prestige enjoyed by aristocratic speech in the period studied here suffered a decline.

Certainly a new note is struck by the manuals of polite conversation written in the early years of the present century. The Victorian books of etiquette offer advice to their readers on

particular usages from the security of an established tradition. A writer like Agnes Grove, the Edwardian arbitress of manners, seems rather to be engaged in defending a beleaguered position against the forces of 'middleclassdom'. Her most conspicuous weapon is a heavy sarcasm, and the impression given by her little book is of a quasi-sociological polemic on behalf of a way of life which is now felt to be under threat. This sociological perspective is also apparent in some novels written after the death of Trollope. Dickens, for example, often conceives his uneducated characters as amusing and picturesque individuals; in the work of Gissing and Besant and Rice our attention is directed more to the habits characteristic of whole classes viewed en masse.

A further area for future study suggests itself. Here, I have confined myself by and large to evidence drawn from fictional dialogue. I discussed in my introduction some possible dangers of using novels in this way, though I am confident they are a substantially reliable guide. It would, however, be interesting to know how far the findings recorded here are reflected in other kinds of contemporary material. I have looked, rather selectively, at books of etiquette, but I have not attempted a comprehensive survey of such literature. This might be undertaken, though such essentially prescriptive works carry their own dangers of distortion. Perhaps more reliable and worthy of detailed scrutiny would be the substantial body of material which must be widely scattered in letters,

memoirs and reminiscences of various kinds.

I must, however, remain content with this attempt to survey what is, after all, the vast field of Victorian fiction. I hope the foregoing pages will have provided some new insight into the language of the period and that they will enable the reader to return to the novels with a sharper eye for the slight, but often significant, detail.

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