

Vanity Fair by William Makepeace Thackeray

Chapter 4

"The Green Silk Purse"

Poor Joe's panic lasted for two or three days; during which he did not visit the house, nor during that period did Miss Rebecca ever mention his name. She was all respectful gratitude to Mrs. Sedley; delighted beyond measure at the Bazaars; and in a whirl of wonder at the theatre, whither the good-natured lady took her. One day, Amelia had a headache, and could not go upon some party of pleasure to which the two young people were invited: nothing could induce her friend to go without her. "What! you who have shown the poor orphan what happiness and love are for the first time in her life—quit you? Never!" and the green eyes looked up to Heaven and filled with tears; and Mrs. Sedley could not but own that her daughter's friend had a charming kind heart of her own.

As for Mr. Sedley's jokes, Rebecca laughed at them with a cordiality and perseverance which not a little pleased and softened that good-natured gentleman. Nor was it with the chiefs of the family alone that Miss Sharp found favour. She interested Mrs. Blenkinsop by evincing the deepest sympathy in the raspberry-jam preserving, which operation was then going on in the Housekeeper's room; she persisted in calling Sambo "Sir," and "Mr. Sambo," to the delight of that attendant; and she apologised to the lady's maid for giving her trouble in venturing to ring the bell, with such sweetness and humility, that the Servants' Hall was almost as charmed with her as the Drawing Room.

Once, in looking over some drawings which Amelia had sent from school, Rebecca suddenly came upon one which caused her to burst into tears and leave the room. It was on the day when Joe Sedley made his second appearance.

Amelia hastened after her friend to know the cause of this display of feeling, and the good-natured girl came back without her companion, rather affected too. "You know, her father was our drawing-master, Mamma, at Chiswick, and used to do all the best parts of our drawings."

“My love! I’m sure I always heard Miss Pinkerton say that he did not touch them—he only mounted them.” “It was called mounting, Mamma. Rebecca remembers the drawing, and her father working at it, and the thought of it came upon her rather suddenly—and so, you know, she—“

“The poor child is all heart,” said Mrs. Sedley.

“I wish she could stay with us another week,” said Amelia.

“She’s devilish like Miss Cutler that I used to meet at Dumdum, only fairer. She’s married now to Lance, the Artillery Surgeon. Do you know, Ma’am, that once Quintin, of the 14th, bet me—”

“O Joseph, we know that story,” said Amelia, laughing. Never mind about telling that; but persuade Mamma to write to Sir Something Crawley for leave of absence for poor dear Rebecca: here she comes, her eyes red with weeping.”

“I’m better, now,” said the girl, with the sweetest smile possible, taking good-natured Mrs. Sedley’s extended hand and kissing it respectfully. “How kind you all are to me! All,” she added, with a laugh, “except you, Mr. Joseph.”

“Me!” said Joseph, meditating an instant departure “Gracious Heavens! Good Gad! Miss Sharp!”

“Yes; how could you be so cruel as to make me eat that horrid pepper-dish at dinner, the first day I ever saw you? You are not so good to me as dear Amelia.”

“He doesn’t know you so well,” cried Amelia.

“I defy anybody not to be good to you, my dear,” said her mother.

“The curry was capital; indeed it was,” said Joe, quite gravely. “Perhaps there was not enough citron juice in it—no, there was not.”

“And the chilis?”

“By Jove, how they made you cry out!” said Joe, caught by the ridicule

of the circumstance, and exploding in a fit of laughter which ended quite suddenly, as usual.

“I shall take care how I let you choose for me another time,” said Rebecca, as they went down again to dinner. “I didn’t think men were fond of putting poor harmless girls to pain.”

“By Gad, Miss Rebecca, I wouldn’t hurt you for the world.”

“No,” said she, “I know you wouldn’t”; and then she gave him ever so gentle a pressure with her little hand, and drew it back quite frightened, and looked first for one instant in his face, and then down at the carpet-boards; and I am not prepared to say that Joe’s heart did not thump at this little involuntary, timid, gentle motion of regard on the part of the simple girl.

It was an advance, and as such, perhaps, some ladies of indisputable correctness and gentility will condemn the action as immodest; but, you see, poor dear Rebecca had all this work to do for herself. If a person is too poor to keep a servant, though ever so elegant, he must sweep his own rooms: if a dear girl has no dear Mamma to settle matters with the young man, she must do it for herself. And oh, what a mercy it is that these women do not exercise their powers oftener! We can’t resist them, if they do. Let them show ever so little inclination, and men go down on their knees at once: old or ugly, it is all the same. And this I set down as a positive truth. A woman with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry whom she likes. Only let us be thankful that the darlings are like the beasts of the field, and don’t know their own power. They would overcome us entirely if they did.

“Egad!” thought Joseph, entering the dining-room, “I exactly begin to feel as I did at Dumdum with Miss Cutler.” Many sweet little appeals, half tender, half jocular, did Miss Sharp make to him about the dishes at dinner; for by this time she was on a footing of considerable familiarity with the family, and as for the girls, they loved each other like sisters. Young unmarried girls always do, if they are in a house together for ten days.

As if bent upon advancing Rebecca’s plans in every way—what must Amelia do, but remind her brother of a promise made last Easter

holidays—”When I was a girl at school,” said she, laughing—a promise that he, Joseph, would take her to Vauxhall. “Now,” she said, “that Rebecca is with us, will be the very time.”

“O, delightful!” said Rebecca, going to clap her hands; but she recollected herself, and paused, like a modest creature, as she was.

“To-night is not the night,” said Joe.

“Well, to-morrow.”

“To-morrow your Papa and I dine out,” said Mrs. Sedley.

“You don’t suppose that I’m going, Mrs. Sed?” said her husband, “and that a woman of your years and size is to catch cold, in such an abominable damp place?”

“The children must have someone with them,” cried Mrs. Sedley.

“Let Joe go,” said his father, laughing. “He’s big enough.” At which speech even Mr. Sambo at the sideboard burst out laughing, and poor fat Joe felt inclined to become a parricide almost.

“Undo his stays!” continued the pitiless old gentleman. “Fling some water in his face, Miss Sharp, or carry him upstairs: the dear creature’s fainting. Poor victim! carry him up; he’s as light as a feather!”

“If I stand this, sir, I’m d—!” roared Joseph.

“Order Mr. Jos’s elephant, Sambo!” cried the father. “Send to Exeter ‘Change, Sambo’; but seeing Jos ready almost to cry with vexation, the old joker stopped his laughter, and said, holding out his hand to his son, “It’s all fair on the Stock Exchange, Jos—and, Sambo, never mind the elephant, but give me and Mr. Jos a glass of Champagne. Boney himself hasn’t got such in his cellar, my boy!”

A goblet of Champagne restored Joseph’s equanimity, and before the bottle was emptied, of which as an invalid he took two-thirds, he had agreed to take the young ladies to Vauxhall.

“The girls must have a gentleman apiece,” said the old gentleman. “Jos will be sure to leave Emmy in the crowd, he will be so taken up with Miss Sharp here. Send to 96, and ask George Osborne if he’ll come.”

At this, I don’t know in the least for what reason, Mrs. Sedley looked at her husband and laughed. Mr. Sedley’s eyes twinkled in a manner indescribably roguish, and he looked at Amelia; and Amelia, hanging down her head, blushed as only young ladies of seventeen know how to blush, and as Miss Rebecca Sharp never blushed in her life—at least not since she was eight years old, and when she was caught stealing jam out of a cupboard by her godmother. “Amelia had better write a note,” said her father; “and let George Osborne see what a beautiful handwriting we have brought back from Miss Pinkerton’s. Do you remember when you wrote to him to come on Twelfth-night, Emmy, and spelt twelfth without the f?”

“That was years ago,” said Amelia.

“It seems like yesterday, don’t it, John?” said Mrs. Sedley to her husband; and that night in a conversation which took place in a front room in the second floor, in a sort of tent, hung round with chintz of a rich and fantastic India pattern, and double with calico of a tender rose-colour; in the interior of which species of marquee was a featherbed, on which were two pillows, on which were two round red faces, one in a laced nightcap, and one in a simple cotton one, ending in a tassel—in a curtain lecture, I say, Mrs. Sedley took her husband to task for his cruel conduct to poor Joe.

“It was quite wicked of you, Mr. Sedley,” said she, “to torment the poor boy so.”

“My dear,” said the cotton-tassel in defence of his conduct, “Jos is a great deal vainer than you ever were in your life, and that’s saying a good deal. Though, some thirty years ago, in the year seventeen hundred and eighty—what was it?—perhaps you had a right to be vain—I don’t say no. But I’ve no patience with Jos and his dandified modesty. It is out-Josephing Joseph, my dear, and all the while the boy is only thinking of himself, and what a fine fellow he is. I doubt, Ma’am, we shall have some trouble with him yet. Here is Emmy’s little friend making love to him as hard as she can; that’s quite clear; and if she does not catch him

some other will. That man is destined to be a prey to woman, as I am to go on 'Change every day. It's a mercy he did not bring us over a black daughter-in-law, my dear. But, mark my words, the first woman who fishes for him, hooks him."

"She shall go off to-morrow, the little artful creature," said Mrs. Sedley, with great energy.

"Why not she as well as another, Mrs. Sedley? The girl's a white face at any rate. I don't care who marries him. Let Joe please himself."

And presently the voices of the two speakers were hushed, or were replaced by the gentle but unromantic music of the nose; and save when the church bells tolled the hour and the watchman called it, all was silent at the house of John Sedley, Esquire, of Russell Square, and the Stock Exchange.

When morning came, the good-natured Mrs. Sedley no longer thought of executing her threats with regard to Miss Sharp; for though nothing is more keen, nor more common, nor more justifiable, than maternal jealousy, yet she could not bring herself to suppose that the little, humble, grateful, gentle governess would dare to look up to such a magnificent personage as the Collector of Boggley Wollah. The petition, too, for an extension of the young lady's leave of absence had already been despatched, and it would be difficult to find a pretext for abruptly dismissing her.

And as if all things conspired in favour of the gentle Rebecca, the very elements (although she was not inclined at first to acknowledge their action in her behalf) interposed to aid her. For on the evening appointed for the Vauxhall party, George Osborne having come to dinner, and the elders of the house having departed, according to invitation, to dine with Alderman Balls at Highbury Barn, there came on such a thunder-storm as only happens on Vauxhall nights, and as obliged the young people, perforce, to remain at home. Mr. Osborne did not seem in the least disappointed at this occurrence. He and Joseph Sedley drank a fitting quantity of port-wine, *tete-a-tete*, in the dining-room, during the drinking of which Sedley told a number of his best Indian stories; for he was extremely talkative in man's society; and afterwards Miss Amelia Sedley did the honours of the drawing-room; and these four young

persons passed such a comfortable evening together, that they declared they were rather glad of the thunder-storm than otherwise, which had caused them to put off their visit to Vauxhall.

Osborne was Sedley's godson, and had been one of the family any time these three-and-twenty years. At six weeks old, he had received from John Sedley a present of a silver cup; at six months old, a coral with gold whistle and bells; from his youth upwards he was "tipped" regularly by the old gentleman at Christmas: and on going back to school, he remembered perfectly well being thrashed by Joseph Sedley, when the latter was a big, swaggering hobbadyhoy, and George an impudent urchin of ten years old. In a word, George was as familiar with the family as such daily acts of kindness and intercourse could make him.

"Do you remember, Sedley, what a fury you were in, when I cut off the tassels of your Hessian boots, and how Miss—hem!—how Amelia rescued me from a beating, by falling down on her knees and crying out to her brother Jos, not to beat little George?"

Jos remembered this remarkable circumstance perfectly well, but vowed that he had totally forgotten it.

"Well, do you remember coming down in a gig to Dr. Swishtail's to see me, before you went to India, and giving me half a guinea and a pat on the head? I always had an idea that you were at least seven feet high, and was quite astonished at your return from India to find you no taller than myself."

"How good of Mr. Sedley to go to your school and give you the money!" exclaimed Rebecca, in accents of extreme delight.

"Yes, and after I had cut the tassels of his boots too. Boys never forget those tips at school, nor the givers."

"I delight in Hessian boots," said Rebecca. Jos Sedley, who admired his own legs prodigiously, and always wore this ornamental chaussure, was extremely pleased at this remark, though he drew his legs under his chair as it was made.

“Miss Sharp!” said George Osborne, “you who are so clever an artist, you must make a grand historical picture of the scene of the boots. Sedley shall be represented in buckskins, and holding one of the injured boots in one hand; by the other he shall have hold of my shirt-frill. Amelia shall be kneeling near him, with her little hands up; and the picture shall have a grand allegorical title, as the frontispieces have in the Medulla and the spelling-book.”

“I shan’t have time to do it here,” said Rebecca. “I’ll do it when—when I’m gone.” And she dropped her voice, and looked so sad and piteous, that everybody felt how cruel her lot was, and how sorry they would be to part with her.

“O that you could stay longer, dear Rebecca,” said Amelia.

“Why?” answered the other, still more sadly. “That I may be only the more unhap—unwilling to lose you?” And she turned away her head. Amelia began to give way to that natural infirmity of tears which, we have said, was one of the defects of this silly little thing. George Osborne looked at the two young women with a touched curiosity; and Joseph Sedley heaved something very like a sigh out of his big chest, as he cast his eyes down towards his favourite Hessian boots.

“Let us have some music, Miss Sedley—Amelia,” said George, who felt at that moment an extraordinary, almost irresistible impulse to seize the above-mentioned young woman in his arms, and to kiss her in the face of the company; and she looked at him for a moment, and if I should say that they fell in love with each other at that single instant of time, I should perhaps be telling an untruth, for the fact is that these two young people had been bred up by their parents for this very purpose, and their banns had, as it were, been read in their respective families any time these ten years. They went off to the piano, which was situated, as pianos usually are, in the back drawing-room; and as it was rather dark, Miss Amelia, in the most unaffected way in the world, put her hand into Mr. Osborne’s, who, of course, could see the way among the chairs and ottomans a great deal better than she could. But this arrangement left Mr. Joseph Sedley *tete-a-tete* with Rebecca, at the drawing-room table, where the latter was occupied in knitting a green silk purse.

“There is no need to ask family secrets,” said Miss Sharp. “Those two

have told theirs.”

“As soon as he gets his company,” said Joseph, “I believe the affair is settled. George Osborne is a capital fellow.”

“And your sister the dearest creature in the world,” said Rebecca. “Happy the man who wins her!” With this, Miss Sharp gave a great sigh.

When two unmarried persons get together, and talk upon such delicate subjects as the present, a great deal of confidence and intimacy is presently established between them. There is no need of giving a special report of the conversation which now took place between Mr. Sedley and the young lady; for the conversation, as may be judged from the foregoing specimen, was not especially witty or eloquent; it seldom is in private societies, or anywhere except in very high-flown and ingenious novels. As there was music in the next room, the talk was carried on, of course, in a low and becoming tone, though, for the matter of that, the couple in the next apartment would not have been disturbed had the talking been ever so loud, so occupied were they with their own pursuits.

Almost for the first time in his life, Mr. Sedley found himself talking, without the least timidity or hesitation, to a person of the other sex. Miss Rebecca asked him a great number of questions about India, which gave him an opportunity of narrating many interesting anecdotes about that country and himself. He described the balls at Government House, and the manner in which they kept themselves cool in the hot weather, with punkahs, tatties, and other contrivances; and he was very witty regarding the number of Scotchmen whom Lord Minto, the Governor-General, patronised; and then he described a tiger-hunt; and the manner in which the mahout of his elephant had been pulled off his seat by one of the infuriated animals. How delighted Miss Rebecca was at the Government balls, and how she laughed at the stories of the Scotch aides-de-camp, and called Mr. Sedley a sad wicked satirical creature; and how frightened she was at the story of the elephant! “For your mother’s sake, dear Mr. Sedley,” she said, “for the sake of all your friends, promise never to go on one of those horrid expeditions.”

“Pooh, pooh, Miss Sharp,” said he, pulling up his shirt-collars; “the danger makes the sport only the pleasanter.” He had never been but once at a tiger-hunt, when the accident in question occurred, and when he was

half killed—not by the tiger, but by the fright. And as he talked on, he grew quite bold, and actually had the audacity to ask Miss Rebecca for whom she was knitting the green silk purse? He was quite surprised and delighted at his own graceful familiar manner.

“For any one who wants a purse,” replied Miss Rebecca, looking at him in the most gentle winning way. Sedley was going to make one of the most eloquent speeches possible, and had begun—”O Miss Sharp, how—” when some song which was performed in the other room came to an end, and caused him to hear his own voice so distinctly that he stopped, blushed, and blew his nose in great agitation.

“Did you ever hear anything like your brother’s eloquence?” whispered Mr. Osborne to Amelia. “Why, your friend has worked miracles.”

“The more the better,” said Miss Amelia; who, like almost all women who are worth a pin, was a match-maker in her heart, and would have been delighted that Joseph should carry back a wife to India. She had, too, in the course of this few days’ constant intercourse, warmed into a most tender friendship for Rebecca, and discovered a million of virtues and amiable qualities in her which she had not perceived when they were at Chiswick together. For the affection of young ladies is of as rapid growth as Jack’s bean-stalk, and reaches up to the sky in a night. It is no blame to them that after marriage this *Sehnsucht nach der Liebe* subsides. It is what sentimentalists, who deal in very big words, call a yearning after the Ideal, and simply means that women are commonly not satisfied until they have husbands and children on whom they may centre affections, which are spent elsewhere, as it were, in small change.

Having expended her little store of songs, or having stayed long enough in the back drawing-room, it now appeared proper to Miss Amelia to ask her friend to sing. “You would not have listened to me,” she said to Mr. Osborne (though she knew she was telling a fib), “had you heard Rebecca first.”

“I give Miss Sharp warning, though,” said Osborne, “that, right or wrong, I consider Miss Amelia Sedley the first singer in the world.”

“You shall hear,” said Amelia; and Joseph Sedley was actually polite enough to carry the candles to the piano. Osborne hinted that he should

like quite as well to sit in the dark; but Miss Sedley, laughing, declined to bear him company any farther, and the two accordingly followed Mr. Joseph. Rebecca sang far better than her friend (though of course Osborne was free to keep his opinion), and exerted herself to the utmost, and, indeed, to the wonder of Amelia, who had never known her perform so well. She sang a French song, which Joseph did not understand in the least, and which George confessed he did not understand, and then a number of those simple ballads which were the fashion forty years ago, and in which British tars, our King, poor Susan, blue-eyed Mary, and the like, were the principal themes. They are not, it is said, very brilliant, in a musical point of view, but contain numberless good-natured, simple appeals to the affections, which people understood better than the milk-and-water lagrime, sospiri, and felicita of the eternal Donizettian music with which we are favoured now-a-days.

Conversation of a sentimental sort, befitting the subject, was carried on between the songs, to which Sambo, after he had brought the tea, the delighted cook, and even Mrs. Blenkinsop, the housekeeper, condescended to listen on the landing-place.

Among these ditties was one, the last of the concert, and to the following effect:

Ah! bleak and barren was the moor, Ah! loud and piercing was the storm,
The cottage roof was shelter'd sure, The cottage hearth was bright and warm—
An orphan boy the lattice pass'd, And, as he mark'd its cheerful glow,
Felt doubly keen the midnight blast, And doubly cold the fallen snow.

They mark'd him as he onward prest, With fainting heart and weary limb;
Kind voices bade him turn and rest, And gentle faces welcomed him.
The dawn is up—the guest is gone, The cottage hearth is blazing still;
Heaven pity all poor wanderers lone! Hark to the wind upon the hill!

It was the sentiment of the before-mentioned words, “When I’m gone,” over again. As she came to the last words, Miss Sharp’s “deep-toned voice faltered.” Everybody felt the allusion to her departure, and to her hapless orphan state. Joseph Sedley, who was fond of music, and soft-hearted, was in a state of ravishment during the performance of the song,

and profoundly touched at its conclusion. If he had had the courage; if George and Miss Sedley had remained, according to the former's proposal, in the farther room, Joseph Sedley's bachelorhood would have been at an end, and this work would never have been written. But at the close of the ditty, Rebecca quitted the piano, and giving her hand to Amelia, walked away into the front drawing-room twilight; and, at this moment, Mr. Sambo made his appearance with a tray, containing sandwiches, jellies, and some glittering glasses and decanters, on which Joseph Sedley's attention was immediately fixed. When the parents of the house of Sedley returned from their dinner-party, they found the young people so busy in talking, that they had not heard the arrival of the carriage, and Mr. Joseph was in the act of saying, "My dear Miss Sharp, one little teaspoonful of jelly to recruit you after your immense—your—your delightful exertions."

"Bravo, Jos!" said Mr. Sedley; on hearing the bantering of which well-known voice, Jos instantly relapsed into an alarmed silence, and quickly took his departure. He did not lie awake all night thinking whether or not he was in love with Miss Sharp; the passion of love never interfered with the appetite or the slumber of Mr. Joseph Sedley; but he thought to himself how delightful it would be to hear such songs as those after Cutcherry—what a distinguee girl she was—how she could speak French better than the Governor-General's lady herself—and what a sensation she would make at the Calcutta balls. "It's evident the poor devil's in love with me," thought he. "She is just as rich as most of the girls who come out to India. I might go farther, and fare worse, egad!" And in these meditations he fell asleep.

How Miss Sharp lay awake, thinking, will he come or not to-morrow? need not be told here. To-morrow came, and, as sure as fate, Mr. Joseph Sedley made his appearance before luncheon. He had never been known before to confer such an honour on Russell Square. George Osborne was somehow there already (sadly "putting out" Amelia, who was writing to her twelve dearest friends at Chiswick Mall), and Rebecca was employed upon her yesterday's work. As Joe's buggy drove up, and while, after his usual thundering knock and pompous bustle at the door, the ex-Collector of Boggley Wollah laboured up stairs to the drawing-room, knowing glances were telegraphed between Osborne and Miss Sedley, and the pair, smiling archly, looked at Rebecca, who actually blushed as she bent her fair ringlets over her knitting. How her heart beat

as Joseph appeared— Joseph, puffing from the staircase in shining creaking boots— Joseph, in a new waistcoat, red with heat and nervousness, and blushing behind his wadded neckcloth. It was a nervous moment for all; and as for Amelia, I think she was more frightened than even the people most concerned.

Sambo, who flung open the door and announced Mr. Joseph, followed grinning, in the Collector's rear, and bearing two handsome nosegays of flowers, which the monster had actually had the gallantry to purchase in Covent Garden Market that morning—they were not as big as the haystacks which ladies carry about with them now-a-days, in cones of filigree paper; but the young women were delighted with the gift, as Joseph presented one to each, with an exceedingly solemn bow.

“Bravo, Jos!” cried Osborne.

“Thank you, dear Joseph,” said Amelia, quite ready to kiss her brother, if he were so minded. (And I think for a kiss from such a dear creature as Amelia, I would purchase all Mr. Lee's conservatories out of hand.)

“O heavenly, heavenly flowers!” exclaimed Miss Sharp, and smelt them delicately, and held them to her bosom, and cast up her eyes to the ceiling, in an ecstasy of admiration. Perhaps she just looked first into the bouquet, to see whether there was a billet-doux hidden among the flowers; but there was no letter.

“Do they talk the language of flowers at Boggley Wollah, Sedley?” asked Osborne, laughing.

“Pooh, nonsense!” replied the sentimental youth. “Bought ‘em at Nathan's; very glad you like ‘em; and eh, Amelia, my dear, I bought a pine-apple at the same time, which I gave to Sambo. Let's have it for tiffin; very cool and nice this hot weather.” Rebecca said she had never tasted a pine, and longed beyond everything to taste one.

So the conversation went on. I don't know on what pretext Osborne left the room, or why, presently, Amelia went away, perhaps to superintend the slicing of the pine-apple; but Jos was left alone with Rebecca, who had resumed her work, and the green silk and the shining needles were quivering rapidly under her white slender fingers.

“What a beautiful, BYOO-OOTIFUL song that was you sang last night, dear Miss Sharp,” said the Collector. “It made me cry almost; ‘pon my honour it did.”

“Because you have a kind heart, Mr. Joseph; all the Sedleys have, I think.”

“It kept me awake last night, and I was trying to hum it this morning, in bed; I was, upon my honour. Gollop, my doctor, came in at eleven (for I’m a sad invalid, you know, and see Gollop every day), and, ‘gad! there I was, singing away like—a robin.”

“O you droll creature! Do let me hear you sing it.”

“Me? No, you, Miss Sharp; my dear Miss Sharp, do sing it. “Not now, Mr. Sedley,” said Rebecca, with a sigh. “My spirits are not equal to it; besides, I must finish the purse. Will you help me, Mr. Sedley?” And before he had time to ask how, Mr. Joseph Sedley, of the East India Company’s service, was actually seated *tete-a-tete* with a young lady, looking at her with a most killing expression; his arms stretched out before her in an imploring attitude, and his hands bound in a web of green silk, which she was unwinding.

In this romantic position Osborne and Amelia found the interesting pair, when they entered to announce that tiffin was ready. The skein of silk was just wound round the card; but Mr. Jos had never spoken.

“I am sure he will to-night, dear,” Amelia said, as she pressed Rebecca’s hand; and Sedley, too, had communed with his soul, and said to himself, “Gad, I’ll pop the question at Vauxhall.”