VANITY FAIR

AMERICAN HUMOR, 1859-63

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English

by

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I THE TIMES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II FORMS OF HUMOR</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III REFORMERS AND REFORM</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV ENDINGS</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Summary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later Years</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Retrospect</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

VANITY FAIR
AMERICAN HUMOR, 1859-63
by
William A. Coonfield
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Vanity Fair was an American (New York City) humor publication from 1859-63. Managing editors were Frank Wood, Charles G. Leland, Charles Farrar Browne, and Charles Dawson Shanly. However, the Stephens brothers held the magazine together; throughout the magazine's life, Henry Louis Stephens was art director, Allan Stephens was editor, and Louis Stephens was publisher. The magazine's stated intent was to view its day and age, condemn vice and praise merit, all for the ultimate purpose of reformation. Fundamentally Democratic, the magazine came to respect and extoll Lincoln. Cartoons, jokes, puns, cacography, comment on current speech and events, proverbs, fables, parody, verse, and satirical sketches
poked fun at cultural variations and satirized international, state, and metropolitan political figures and reformers. Although *Vanity Fair* enthusiastically satirized reformers--particularly those of the press--the magazine had stated reform ends, i.e., to expose and eliminate venality, charlatanism, and treason by using laughter. The magazine also was conscious of and described poverty, corruption, and oppression in New York City. *Vanity Fair* was an early supporter of labor unions and strikers. Editors, authors, artists, and printers produced a sophisticated, humorous commentary on crucial years of American development. The magazine's jokes, political cartoons, and word play are forerunners of modern American humor.
CHAPTER I: THE TIMES

The first half of the 1860's were boom years for American humor. Laughs relieved wartime tensions; laughter was also another weapon in the struggle of American against American. Many periodicals had their humorous departments, some modeled upon Clark's "Table Talk" in the earlier Knickerbocker, some imitating the "Editor's Drawer" in Harper's, and some called merely "Joke Corners." Magazines and newspapers constantly searched for witty stories, and a writer could find no quicker way to impress himself upon the public than to coin or vividly retell a funny story. Like a meteor, Artemus Ward came and went in this brief time. Mark Twain got started. Seba Smith was already a writer of established reputation. As Hosea Biglow, James Russell Lowell was speaking out of Boston. Robert Henry Newell contributed his "Orpheus C. Kerr" papers, and Lincoln read him avidly. 1 Charles Henry Smith--Bill Arp--was describing the fortunes of the Confederacy in a droll manner. As the Rev. Petroleum V. Nasby, David Ross Locke posted his contributions from Ohio. Henry Wheeler Shaw had published "Essa on the Muel" and "Josh Billings" and was traveling in the North and West, giving lectures that seemed almost parodies of the
Emerson and Alcott appearances; his droll bits of homely wisdom were certainly different from transcendental verities of "Orphic Sayings," but they were no less popular.²

As Frank Luther Mott notes, the humor of middle-nineteenth-century America seemed to divide itself into two sorts, frontier and urban.³ Frontier humor depended upon exaggeration, incongruity, and dialect for its effect. Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, Petroleum V. Nasby, and Bill Arp wrote in this vein. "Their wit was often rough, and their incongruities were frequently the result of a crude treatment of sacred matters; but their buffoonery often had a real point, and they were sworn enemies of sham." Urban comedy used a combination of time-worn situation comedy, cacography, parody, and burlesque to entertain its audience. The number of such humorists was legion, but Charles G. Leland and Oliver Wendell Holmes are good examples. Although it leans heavily on the vocabulary and events of its own time for meaning, urban humor does not change greatly from age to age. Vanity Fair contains extensive urban humor, and the quotations that follow indicate how little the substance of urban humor changes.

More than fifty humor publications were begun in America during the period of 1845-1865.⁴ The two years 1859-1860 saw no less than seven comic periodicals founded.
Vanity Fair, although not the longest lived, was the most significant.

Vanity Fair was published weekly, beginning with the December 31, 1859, issue, until the January 1863 monthly issue. Only the January and February issues were published as monthlies, and then the magazine lapsed in publication until May 2, 1863, when it resumed as a weekly and remained thus for ten issues, finally ceasing altogether with the July 4, 1863, issue. Altogether we have 169 numbers in seven thin volumes. The office was first located at 100 Nassau Street; subsequently, it moved to No. 116 on the same street, where it ended its career. The paper usually consisted of twelve two-column quarto pages, twelve by sixteen inches. The make-up and typography were neat, although the print was fine. The paper was of good quality, and the illustrations were of the best grade of comic art. These were carefully engraved on wood by Bobbett and Hooper, famous workers in their time. In the beginning the price was $3.00 per year or six cents per copy. With the issue of July 12, 1862, however, the subscription rate went down to $2.00. The magazine had some advertising, chiefly of books and patent
medicines. The following is typical of a patent medicine advertisement:

Mrs. Woodhull, wife of Mr. Samuel Woodhull of Lockport, N.Y., had for fifteen years been in a delicate state of health, and had used almost every popular remedy and the best medical advice without permanent benefit. At her request her husband purchased a box of "Brandreth's Vegetable Universal Pill", and she took the medicine according to the printed directions. . . . The next morning they operated freely, and brought away a large knot of fleshy substance as tough as hide, about three and a half inches in circumference. From this time she gained her health rapidly. She continued to take the pills . . . and several large tape-worms were expelled. . . . The effects of your pills have also been surprising on me (writes Mr. Woodhull) for the cure of piles, having several times had them in the coarse stages, and one or two doses of four or five pills have invariably cured me.5

Since sales and advertising could not maintain the magazine, it had to be subsidized by "the Proprietors," Frank J. Thompson, a wealthy Baltimore merchant, and his successor, William Camac of Philadelphia. Thompson is listed as the "Publisher" in the first 17 issues, but Camac is never mentioned; we have the answers to questions addressed by Mott to the sons of Henry Stephens to indicate that they were "the Proprietors."6

The magazine seems to have been created and held together by the Stephens brothers, Henry Louis, Louis Henry, and William Allan. Henry was an illustrator for Frank Leslie and Harper's. His cartoons are among the finest of the nineteenth century—or any century—and he was particularly skilled at animals, illustrating some
fine children's books. Significantly, he was also a friend of Thompson. Allan Stephens was the editor, and Louis Stephens was the publisher. These men held these positions throughout the life of the magazine. Frank Wood was managing editor from December 1859 until July 1860. Apparently Wood could not work with Allan Stephens and felt compelled to leave, taking with him a large number of contributors. In his memoirs, Leland wrote

... and Wood left, followed by all the clan. I was called in in the emergency, and what with writing myself, and the aid of R. H. Stoddard and T. B. Aldrich, and a few more, we made a very creditable appearance indeed. Little by little the bohemians all came back, and all went well ... The manager was very much averse to committing the magazine to Republicanism, and I was determined on it.

The magazine does not reflect such staunch Republicanism, and it seems probable that he was hired by the Democratic Stephens brothers to replace a very Republican Wood.

Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903) had been taught as a young boy by Bronson Alcott. He attended the College of New Jersey, but perhaps his most valuable experience was gained in his studies at the University of Heidelberg and Munich, for there he learned German. His translations of Heine remain standard. His work in folklore and linguistics led to discoveries of Gypsy language that remain among the most significant in linguistics. He was also an occultist. In his time, he was most famous for humorous sketches of German-Americans much in the vein of
Irving's sketches of the Dutch Americans. Leland's "Hans Breitmann's Party" (1857) was equalled in popularity only by Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinee" as a humorous poem. Prior to coming to *Vanity Fair*, Leland had written for many magazines, had assisted in editorial work on P.T. Barnum's *Illustrated News* in 1849 and had edited *Graham's Magazine* in 1857. Leland became editor of *Vanity Fair* in July of 1860 and retained this position until May 1861.

Leland's assistant, Charles Farrar Browne (1834-67), followed him as editor. Browne—or Artemus Ward, one of the most popular of nineteenth century American humorists—is today considered one of the significant figures of transition in American humor. He was one of the first humorists who shifted the focus of humor from a local region to the nation as a whole, and he was one of the best of a continuing succession of humorous lecturers. Born in Maine, he learned the printing trade and then worked for several years as a compositor on the *Carpet Bag*, where his first attempts at humorous writing were published. Leaving Boston, he spent a number of years in Ohio as a journeyman printer and as local editor of the *Toledo Commercial* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Browne went from Cleveland to New York to work on *Vanity Fair* in January 1861. His *Artemus Ward* letters had been printed in *Vanity Fair* and were very popular. Popularity of *Artemus Ward* on the lecture platform probably led Browne
to resign from the magazine in January 1862 in order to devote more time to his lectures. Perhaps also the fanaticism of the times began to affect even the staff of *Vanity Fair*, and the rather tolerant, liberal views went with Browne while the magazine took another direction.

Browne was succeeded by Charles Dawson Shanly (1811-1875) who served until the demise of the magazine. Born in Ireland, Shanley was "a charming essayist and a graceful poet, quaint in character, sweet in temperament, modest and gentle in bearing,—was a regular visitor to the Bohemian table." Later, Winter noted,

> Another much loved companion was Shanly,—of whose writings scarce any record exists,—modest, silent, patient, reticent—everything that is meant by the name of gentleman. His poems called "The Briar-Wood Pipe" and "Rifleman, Shoot Me a Fancy Shot" ought long to preserve his memory, and perhaps they will."

Shanly had been with the magazine from its beginning, and he continued the cartoons, quips, theatre reviews, short book reviews, and humorous sketches in the tradition of his predecessors, but the magazine became less humorous and more propagandistic. "Copperheads" and "Cavaliers" were attacked viciously, and "good humored raillery" was largely abandoned. Humor found its subject matter in the war, and by 1862 the war wasn't funny, even to the humorists. No Bill Mauldin came forward. Whatever the reason, the vigor and appeal of the Leland-Browne days appeared to have vanished.
Many of the drawings in Vanity Fair are by freelance journalists and cartoonists. Frank Bellew both wrote and drew cartoons. Some of the best cartoons are by E.J. Mullen. William Fish and J.H. Goater were freelance artists of the time who contributed frequently. Frank Bellew and H.L. Stephens had worked together on the Lanterne, and perhaps it was through their experienced efforts that Vanity Fair had such a fine quality of cartoon prints. William Murrell sees Vanity Fair as representing the maturity of the humorous weekly, and certainly the graphic art in the magazine is excellent.

Since a majority of contributions to the magazine were by members of the self-styled "Bohemian group at Pfaff's Beer Cellar (sometimes called "Pfaff's Cave), it is pertinent to describe this group. Unfortunately, members of the group did not write many personal memoirs of their exploits. (Leland and Winter are the exceptions, and both are highly romantic and sentimental.) Fortunately, on the other hand, Eugene T. Lalor recently has written an informative, well documented dissertation about "The Literary Bohemians of New York City." Lalor shows that Henry Clapp (1814-75), a young journalist and theatrical writer, was the "King of Bohemia." He was the famous editor of the Saturday Press and did much to bring Walt Whitman and Mark Twain, for example, before the American public. Albert Parry also has written of
American Bohemianism, and he feels that Ada Clare (1836-74, real name Jane McElhenny), the "Queen of Bohemia," was the "center of the entire picture."14 Certainly she was an amazing woman. "The country in general could only gasp at the unusual spectacle of a cultured and genteel female visiting a beer house, not to pray and exhort, but to drink and smoke."

Henry and Ada were joined at Pfaff's by numerous writers, actors, artists, and students. Bayard Taylor liked to visit; the most famous of the group was Walt Whitman, apparently resting between second and third editions of Leaves of Grass; the Bohemians eagerly claimed Whitman as their own (Winter being the exception). George Arnold was a leading light. William Winter, later the famous critic for the New York Tribune, Fitz-James O'Brien, short-story writer and critic who died a hero's death in the Civil War, Artemus Ward, Ned Wilkins, who was the "first American Bohemian to die of stricken lungs in a damp garret while heavy rain and wind beat upon the roof," and Fitz-Hugh Ludlow, the hasheesh eater often called the American DeQuincey, Shanly, Wood, Leland, and the Stephens were frequently present. All except Clapp, Taylor, and Whitman contributed to Vanity Fair.

Lalor notes,

The fellowship of Pfaff's constituted an intellectual hub, a center for the opposition and resistance, an emotional raison d'être for
ideas other than the Brahmins', a nucleus for the promulgation of the idea that there was more to New York than the genteel writers, literary imitation, and intellectual subordination.\textsuperscript{15}

As a generalization, this is true. However, E.C. Stedman and R.H. Stoddard led what might be called "genteel" groups, and they were contributors to \textit{Vanity Fair}. Taylor, T.B. Aldrich, Browne, Leland, and Shanly readily moved in both worlds. The generalization also has the curious exceptions that William Winter--the Bohemian--detested Whitman and his work; Stedman, on the other hand, was an early, powerful, and enthusiastic supporter of Whitman.

In any case, the collection of writers and artists was an auspicious one. The editors were competent and financial backing was forthcoming. The Christmas season of 1859 was a good time to begin. The first issue stated the goals and aims:

\textit{Vanity Fair} will be a humorous and satirical paper. A pleasant tonic to be taken once a week by the public. A corrective for what seems to us to be a rather dyspeptic state of society.\textsuperscript{(I, 3-4)}

Yet, this modest purpose contained within it the impossible purpose contained in the term "corrective." The magazine was intended much in the reforming spirit of the time:

The true mission of a satirical paper . . . is not extermination but reformation. Gentleness is quite compatible with courage, and depend on it, more can be accomplished by good-humored raillery than envenomed wit.
The magazine was not merely to publish humorous writings, but it was to have a firm editorial purpose. This attempt at reformation was a serious one, and some ideas and pressure groups would not be tolerated:

We can assume a very unpleasant expression of countenance when we are face to face with political tricksters, venal editors, public charlatans, silly authors, and all people whose stupidity necessitates their being treated as criminals.

In closing his "Preface" to the first issue, Wood compared his staff to a knight:

As a model, we can propose to ourselves none better than one of the knights of the old chivalric days. By a solemn vow he devoted himself to the cause of Truth and Virtue, and then, accompanied by a few brave companions, rode forth into the world to redress wrong. When he found Virtue, pining spell-bound in some dreary donjon, he slew the gaoler and gallantly burst her bonds. When he espied the giant Vice, feeding upon the tender population of the land, he couched his lance and laid him in the dust. Wicked dwarfs and bad enchanters yield to his potent sword; but, when he chanced to encounter the hero, or heroine of some noble action, then like a true knight, he sheathed his weapon, doffed his gleaming helmet, and did reverence to merit.

*Vanity Fair* was to view its day and age, condemn vice and praise merit, all for the ultimate purpose of reformation. This was the stated purpose of the magazine. The following chapters will discuss the forms of humor in the magazine, the magazine's attitude toward reformers and reform, and the achievement of *Vanity Fair*. Thus, the magazine will be presented generally, an attitude toward
one subject will be traced, and an evaluation will be attempted.
CHAPTER II: FORMS OF HUMOR

Popular magazines attempt communication to at least two customers, i.e., the one who goes through for the pictures and jokes and the one who reads for more subtle content. *Vanity Fair* catered to both tastes. Cartoons and jokes tended to poke fun at cultural (human, ethnic, etc.) variations and to satirize international, state, and metropolitan political figures and reformers. Forms used to convey this subject matter were puns, cacography, comment on a quotation from other media, proverbs, fables, parody, and verse. In addition to the brief humor, and constituting the heart of the magazine, sketches running more than a page or in series gave us such literary value as the magazine may possess.

Fops were favorite targets for jokes; subject matter was found in male store clerks who were called "counter-jumpers."

AN OVERWORKED CLASS

Merchant in the Retail Dry Goods Line.--So you would like to engage with us eh? Well, what department do you usually fill? Counter-Jumper--I--ah--stand at the door and smile.

The counter-jumper tended to have superior airs:

. . . oft he said a few strange words
Whose meaning lay beyond our reach.
He always knew too much for us;
His sleepy eyes great meaning hid;
He knew too much for us,—he did!

and, for all his superior airs, this dude usually came to
a bad and just end:

The "Black Maria" carted him
And forger Bill, and murd'rer Jim,
To Blackwell's shaded bowers!

The nineteenth century found it very incongruous for a man
to be too intellectual, to dress too well, be popular with
the ladies, or to do unmanly work. This cowardly, lazy,
unmanly man bears the brunt of many a joke in the seven
volumes of Vanity Fair.

Ethnic variations were always good for laughs. The
Irish were particularly humorous.

(Julia, who is rehearsing Tableaux for the
Holidays, engages Pat, for this occasion, only.)
Julia—"Now, Patrick, Miss Anna is the Goddess of
Liberty, you see, and we want you to stand for
Garibaldi."
Patrick—"Me, is it? Bedad I'll do Garrybaldy
first-rate if the Goddess'll dance an Irish jig
to the tune of Garryowen!

The French and Germans made humorous protagonists for
jokes, and frequently they were foiled by an Irish woman.

THE FRENCH (?) BONNE

Enraptured Frenchman.—"Ah! Ma petite compatriote,
que je suis ravi de vous trouver ici!—O Ciel!"
French Bonne (from Corque)—"O shell, yerself!—
Don't be bodderin' me wid yer furrin gab!"

Leland's "Hans Breitmann's Party" exemplified the German
humor.

Hans Breitmann gife a barty;
Dey had biano-blayin',
I felled in lofe mit a Merican frau,
Her name vas Madilda Yane.
She hat haar as prown ash a pretzel,
Her eyes vas himmel-plue,
And when dey looket indo mine,
Dey shplit mine heart in dwo. . . .

Hans Breitmann gife a barty--
Where ish dot barty now?
Where ish de lofely golden cloud
Dot float on de moundain's prow?
Where ish de himmelstrahlende stern--
De shtar of de shipirit's light?
All goned afay mit de lager beer--
A fay in de weigheit.

In later years The Hans Breitmann Ballads were very popular.

Children were frequent subjects for a quick laugh.

Often they were Smart Alecks.

Bella, (who has received a basket of choice fruit from Captain Brown.) "Now, Charles, tell me the shape of the earth's surface and--"
Charles.--"Round, like a apple--but I don't want a apple--I want one of them Bartlett pears and some grapes."

More often they tended to be cutely aggressive and precocious as when a youngster holding his skates says to the policeman,

O, you're a sweet set for Park Keepers, you are!--here I've come four miles for a skate, and there ain't a bit of ice on the ponds as big as your shield!

Women were funny because simple things frustrated them. A wife would be frustrated by the simple Irish maid who was frustrated by something even more simple.

Anxious Young Mother.--"Good Gracious, woman' what on earth are you about!'
Bridget.--"Sure you bid me wash the baby, and what would I do it with only the washing-machine? Superiority of the male was ever implied.

Of all the kinds of sense that men have got. Pray, name the sort the softer sex has not, What! tell me now you do not see the force Of my conundrum? Reticence, of course.

Nevertheless, the fairer sex was treated with gentleness. One cartoon that may have been a real gem during the war presents a young lady giving a jeweled pistol to an officer:

Clara.--"I know it is an odd gift from a lady, but, Charley, I thought that when you were far away, it might be pleasant for you to--to--to have My Arms always About You!"

Cacography was used extensively. The writer might be, or pretend to be, an ignorant frontiersman.

. . . next Mornin i Enlisted. mi Hart was olmoast Bustin, and mi Pane in Bowls cum on tremenjes; The person tended to make mistakes in mechanics through both ignorance of such matters as capitalization, and because of an attempt to spell words as they sounded or to be consistent with other spelling; nevertheless, a word like "olmost" for "almost" sometimes seems to have been spelled thus because it looked humorous. Cacography also might attempt to catch the sound of a New York tough:

1st. Young Gent--(sings.)--"Veve lar Americkar." 2d ditto.--"Veve lar Mericker be blowed! Is that what you call encouragin' a pure Ballad Literatooor--tell you what it is, Stumpy, ef you're aoin' to soshiate with me, you've got to air your
vocal organs oftener with Hail Columby and the Star Spangled Banner."

Punctuation tended to be sophisticated, as did the syntax. Cacography even included the swell:

I don't appwove this hawid waw;
Those dweadful bannahs hawt my eyes;
And guns and dwums are such a baw,
Why don't the pawties compwamise?

Southern gentlemen, Negroes, Europeans of all nationalties, and sailors received the cacography approach.

As the previously cited quotations about females illustrate, puns were considered a sure-fire belly quaker. A few others will all too vividly convey this form of humor in the 1860's.

The only thing to "sweep the seas" with--A Brush with the Enemy.

Infanticide
South Carolina destroying the Buoys.
Why is a Rifleman in ill-health like a Revolver? Because he is a Sick-shooter.

Another favorite method of arriving at humor was either to quote a newspaper or to make up a news blurb and restate the sentiment in some disparate manner:

"His [Lincoln's] speech cannot be read without the conviction that he means what he says, and where we miss the politician, we find the honest man."

Would that an honest man were found wherever we miss a politician.

The New Yorker still uses this technique effectively.

Newspaper activities often led to an essay of 100 or more words.
In Wednesday's Times newspaper we read a very thrilling description of the flight from Charleston (induced by peaceful coercion of "Jasper," the late Charleston correspondent of that journal. . . . But "Jasper" omits other and far more thrilling scene. At Whiskey Pour Corners, where the secession feeling is intense, the following occurred:

Stranger--Are you the Times correspondent?
Jasper--No Sir. Not by no means. I'm Greeley!
Stranger--Not Horace Greeley, of the Tribune?
Jasper--Well, I am, hoss.
Stranger--I'm glad to see you, Sir. Excuse the mistake. Can't you stop and take tea with us? Oh do!

It was a lucky thought of Jasper's--the Greeley dodge . . . At other points he represented himself variously as Buchanan, Beecher, Personne, Pius IX, Mace Sloper, Lucy Stone, McArone, Kossuch, Mrs. Stowe, Artemus Ward, the Star Spangled Banner, a two-horse Columbiad, Elsie Venner, etc. Altogether. "Jasper's" escape from South Carolina was a neat thing. (III,202)

A Tribune reporter made the mistake of asking a blank tombstone several questions, and Vanity Fair was quick to evaluate the situation.

If Churchyards were modelled after the Tribune idea, . . . tombstones would have to be published in numbers, and Smith's biography in marble might be continued through several months and more than one cemetery . . .

In the Herald, Vanity Fair found such ambiguities as the following:

The Herald in reporting a lecture, delivered in Boorklyn by Dr. Cahill, says:--

"He commenced by practically illustrating how a man could walk on the ceiling with his head downwards, as a fly."

This practical illustration must have been highly entertaining to the audience, who probably expected only a lecture from the learned gentleman.
We congratulate the Doctor on his gymnastic skill . . . (I,117)

A newspaper line often moved the humorist to verse.

It is announced that two tons of powder have been discovered buried on Gov Jackson's farm. --

**Daily Paper**

"What! Gunpowder dead?"
Exclaimed one, as he read
The announcement above that is quoted,
"And the sleeping two tons
By some rough sons of guns
Disinterested and to warfare devoted!"
Says another, says he
With Finesse--"Don't you see
That as Gunpowder lives but by flashes,
Leaving nothing behind
But some smoke on the wind.
"Twere absurd to cry "Peace to its Ashes?"

An announcement could bring forth a verse-pun.

One Tuesday, June 11th, 1861, in Pottstown, Pa., by the Rev. Edmund Leaf, at the residence of the bride's father, Mr. George H. Potts to Miss Rose Leaf.

Hymen has kindly cherished this fair Rose;
Not like rash Cupid, with fierce love besotted;
As, from the altar, a veiled bride, she goes
The Leaf has vanished, but the Rose is Potted!

Numerous other forms of humor were used less frequently. Proverbs such as the following from "Advice to the Members of the Present Congress" were coined:

Do not seek to pry into your neighbor's faults too keenly; Congressional and Confessional are not synonyms.

Classic fables, such as "Reynard the Fox, were applied to current events, or fables were created to offer a debate and moral decision concerning some current problem. One called "Cotton and Corn" permits the North to
be shown superior to the South in agriculture. Nursery rhymes were parodied as follows:

Rock-a-bye, Jeffy, on the tree top,
Keep up your lies or the Rebellion will stop;
When you cease lying the Rebellion will fall,
And down come Jeffy, Confederacy and all.

Another, given as a quote from General Scott, states:

Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub, this is my plan;
I'll master the rebels as fast as I can;
Catch 'em, and whip 'em, and mark 'em with T;
And hang all the Leaders, as soon you shall see!

Another type of humor was to compare contemporary personages with book characters. "Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman" might be John Bull and W. H. Seward, respectively, or the Negro could be "Sambo Agonistes," or Stephen A. Douglas could be "The Modern Brutus" with the Negro on his conscience.

Parody and poetry in *Vanity Fair* are subjects deserving of a complete thesis. It is impossible here even to indicate scope of the parody. A typical example is "P.W. Emerson's Titmouse" singing "A Woodland Song" about the new iron warships as follows:

From north, and south, and east, and west,
A sound of joy is coming:
The partridge in his russet vest
Down in the glen is drumming;
The squirrel and the cedar-bird,
And the woodpecker, all, are merry,
And I, too, sing, as I flirt my wing,
Chick-a-dee-dee-down-derry!

Because, no more, for walls of wood
The nations now will ravage
With ringing axe the solitude
So dear to bird and savage;
Since iron, only, on the sea
Henceforth the day will carry,
Then sing, old passenger, with me,
Chick-a-dee-dee-down-derry! . . . (V,213)

In *Vanity Fair* were parodies of Lowell, Longfellow,
Wendell Phillips, Ingoldsby, Wordsworth, Coleridge,
Aeschylus, Hood, and Milton. Familiar songs lent their
meter and rime schemes to current events; for example, the
"Star Spangled Banner" came in for some good-natured
spoofing. However, the parodies had a current-events
focus. In the above Emerson parody, the steel ships are
the subject rather than Emerson's poem.

At times events brought forth serious patriotic
poetry. The death of a famous person usually led a George
Arnold to write an elegaic sonnet such as

One more great heart on Freedom's altar laid,
Hot from the throb of battle! One more name,
Deep carven, O Glory! with a point of flame
In burnished splendor on thy page displayed!
From gaves beyond the sea, in whose calm shade
Our battle-echoes caused no leaf to wave,
Husband and Father, came he! Rich, he gave
With prodigal hand to the Good cause he made
His own! His was no hypocritic zeal
That hath "no stomach for the fight," and so
With eager gold would craven heart conceal!
He was a soldier that had faced the foe!
Once more he girt his harness for the strife
And gave his last and noblest gift--his Life!

August 30, 1862. (VI,135)

Fitz-James O'Brian died a hero's death. He had been
a buoyant spirit at Pfaff's and a leading contributor to
*Vanity Fair* and other magazines. His death brought forth
an interesting experimental poem by an unknown poet. In
an effort to convey the spirit of elegy and personality of the dead one, he alternated his lines as follows:

Toll, bell, with solemn knell
For him who fell in the galloping fight,
Trumpets, ring to the dead march, we sing
In our hearts that cling round the spirit so bright.
Roll, drum, as the vaulted tomb
For his early doom is gaping drearily,
Cold, and dead in his stoney bed
Lay him who lately sang so cheerily. (V,190)

Usually R.H. Stoddard wrote the elegies, and he may have composed this one; however, he was by no means one of the Bohemians and Shanly seems more likely.

Serious poems were written on other subjects. "The Two Armies" delineates both causes in the Civil War. An unknown poet wrote about standing "Before the Grave of Washington." Among his many contributions, William Winter wrote a poem about a boy's parting from his mother to enter the wars. Edmund C. Stedman wrote a long, witty narrative about the visit of the Prince of Wales to New York City. The poem covered six well-filled pages. Stedman was ever surprised that "The Prince's Ball" and "Peter Stuyvesant's New Year's Call" made him more money than any of his other many works. 15

In content the seven volumes of Vanity Fair are about twenty percent verse. Probably no one will ever find a lost great poem herein. Nevertheless, this was an age that liked verse. If it rhymed, if it was witty, and if the
subject matter was timely, the editors considered a poem worth publishing.

Thus far the major and longer contributions to the magazine have not been discussed. The longer sketches took four broad forms. A few writers, such as R.H. Stoddard, submitted varied poems, short stories or sketches. Other writers, such as Leland and Winter, created impersonal bylines that would run through several issues with comments on current events and places of interest. A third method of contributing was to create an interesting and vivid human being and carry him through many episodes. Charles Browne was most successful with this in his "Artemus Ward" adventures, but George Arnold's "McArone" adventures were frequently as funny, and perhaps at times funnier. Another category of extended use of a single idea or character was a very broad one containing those articles anonymously written, probably by different writers at different times. The "Jonathan" poems were typical of this. Since the highest literary value found in _Vanity Fair_ is in these longer sketches, they deserve to be appraised more closely.

Ada Clare wrote a sketch of "The Home-Made Shirt": an anonymous author described how a brownstone house could send a young man to "Bedlam"; Shanly described a visit to the New York City Academy of Design. A homemade shirt looked terrible at many points, was uncomfortable
in numerous ways, but had been made in love. A
brownstone house was cold, drafty, damp, expensive, and
full of ghostly memories that would drive a man crazy.
An academy had eccentric members working in a complex
maze of unlikely and possible projects. Shirts, mansions,
and academies were too frustratingly complex for the
ordinary humorist to understand.

R.H. Stoddard's "John Hardy's Christmas Eve" is a
sentimental treatment of a poor but righteous bookeeper,
John Hardy, who on Christmas Eve forgives his beautiful
sister her three-year-old sin of "falling." She sinned
because she read novels at weak moments. Poor John was
poor because the world was a cruel world. All is pre-
vented in full, illustrated descant, with first-person,
heart-felt detail.

Matthew Whittier was an occasional contributor to
the magazine. His "Ethan Spike" commentator appeared six
times in Volumes V and VI. (V,280; VI,16,88,112,219,257)
The first event to bring forth comment from "Ethan" was
the appearance of the Merrimac:

"Isril Washburn," says I, "the Merrimuack is
abroad?" says I.
"Po" says he, "that critter was blowed up three
weeks ago."
Says I, "Isril, it haint so, it's a federal lie,
that briny behemoth of the deep is naow on our coast."
"Wal sposin" she is--haow is she going to get to
Hornby?"
"By the canawl," says I.
"But hacw kin she get through the locks?"
"Isril," says I, "she'll pick em!"
"God bless my soul!" shays he. "I never thought of that, I'll call a counsel meetin' to night."

The next letter was to Lincoln and told the President not to pay too much attention to the abolitionist Governor Andrews. Then Spike commented on the Rebels' vanishing at Manassas and how to avoid the draft by hiding out in "Canady." The last two sketches describe the danger of an affair with a "nigrer woman" and life among the trees and Indians and the "natteral" life. Spike was a sub-human who assumed superior airs toward Negroes and Indians because he was "saxton." When he spoke of his days with the Indians, he wrote:

I don't think I done as much good to those interesting pagans as I would ef there hadn't bin such a wide difference in aour ways of expressing thoughts. My dialect, as everybody knows, bein pure saxton, whilst they dealt moastly in a kind of furin patmouse made up of Dutch, blackbirds, and Kernuck. Baout the only words in common atween us was run an terbacker. When we want eatin, we confined ourselves pretty closely to them two topicks.

I was loth to leave this free and natteral style of living, but some of the dusky lords was gettin unpleasantly familiar with my hair, and I felt it a duty to go. It was a struggle--the bass and the rum lured me affectionately--but better is a stalled ox an greens therewith than a dinner of briled fish with a prospect of tommahawks for a desert.

Spike was very practical and tolerant about the Indian, but this wasn't very flattering to the redman or to the "saxton."
An irregularly issued series appeared under the title of "Punning Made Easy." (I,356,395,411; II,28,52,70,120) Leland probably wrote them, and they show a phenomenal amount of erudition. The series began with the author's stating that he would write a "General Text Book on the Art" in order that he might achieve the end of "Every Man His Own Punster." He continued by defining his term as follows:

"What is the Pun?"--Nine out of ten philosophers I have personally questioned replied, "A Pun is a play upon words." The tenth who is an inveterate transcendentalist, mistook my question for a conundrum, and is now searching for its answer.

The "play upon words" theory was refuted, and it was pointed out that "lexicographers who define the Pun as a quibble, . . . merely lower themselves below the level of the brute." The exact definition was finally drawn from no less a person than Carlyle:

Thomas Carlyle defines man as an incarnate word. Every word is a pun, consequently the pun is a man. The word not being given by Carlyle, it cannot be stated as a conundrum. The Pun may then be correctly defined as a man, a male individual of the human race, of adult years of growth; a moveable piece at chess or draughts.

Then the "Punster" proceeded to reveal a long mathematical formula, added a simple "Diagram of a Pun," and emphasized practice in pun "Development." The second chapter described the origins of the "Pun," acknowledged those "German sceptics" who denied its existence, and listed some of the dangers of excessive punning. The third
essay discussed the great punsters, "Hood, Charles Lamb, and Myself."

The puns of Hood are scattered through his works, like flowers through nature; spontaneously they arise into beauty, and for one that is seen, there are ten that bloom unnoticed. Lamb presents his puns with more attention to effect, and prepares a paragraph with artistic reference to its climax. He lies awake one night and makes a pun about three o'clock, when all else is asleep; the next morning he writes an essay to suit it. Hood bestows his puns as Fortunatus his money, from an inexhaustible and fairy purse; Lamb puns like a benevolent gentleman with a moderate income. Hood adapts words to his pun; Lamb suits his puns to the language.

These essays also contained instructions on how the "true Punster" may easily expose the pretender:

Then to him suddenly, "Where does Hamlet express a preference for mutton?"
The disconcerted imposter will reply, "Why really, sir . . . I don't remember that he says anything about mutton, indeed . . . Regarding him with the aspect of the Eminent Tragedian, You must fiercely quote, "O, Villain, villain, smiling damned villain."
. . . The Imposter colors crimson, feels for his hat, and blindly gropes for the door.

The fourth essay discoursed upon the morality of punning. In order to best murder the language, the rising young punster must practice "Lying, Larceny, and Murder." "To the advancement of civilization, to the improvement of the Pun, much must be sacrificed." The next essay described the dire "want of the age," "a Punnery in which public instruction in the noble art may be given." Then a sketch was presented devoted to the trials of the Punster: generally, they were caused by the "aggravating
stupidity of the world." A man could not even stand up in Church to point out to the congregation a good pun in the sermon without upsetting everyone and being "deprived of religious instruction, and perhaps made an infidel for life." The last essay concerned itself with the tragic life of the lonely punster who may be trusted by no one. He asked a friend, "How is your wife?" and was turned out of the house for jesting. No one can believe that the punster is serious about anything but punning. He must go through life bearing in big black letters

BEWARE OF THE PUNSTER

In another series in *Vanity Fair*, an unknown writer, expounding under the name Aid: Barondi Posca Phorniosticus, penned three essays entitled "The Aesthetics of Boots. (II,279; III,23,129) The first two articles were four weeks apart and the third did not appear for another two months. They were narrated by a historically minded character who became fascinated by the boots of great people and who started a sort of boot fan club. The subject did not offer much humor, and it is somewhat puzzling that the author should have persisted over such extended intervals of silence.

A series of letters under the heading "Letter from a Country Editor" (V,253,289,301; VI,52,100,124,177) was in the Yankee-common-sense tradition. Signed Perley C. Tucker, they used most of the devices of the
cracker-barrel philosopher, maintaining a common sense scepticism about "school learnin'" and an intellectual dependence on "natur'." Misspellings and the struggle with opaque metaphysics were utilized frequently. For example,

School learnin' and argooment, my dear fren', we know nothin' about, because like the needle to the Pole, we go in for sheer common sense. A caph that is born with five legs is ater all, not so much wally as a caf taint got no mor'n four legs. We wuz once argooing this pint with a very good nabor, who meant well, and didn't kno' nuffin, and we done it to draw him eout. "One leg," sez we, "wouldn't be good for nuffin to speak of, in man or beast, would it?"

"Certingly not."

"Very well, if two legs is better'n one leg, why isn't three legs better'n two legs?"

"That's proved," sed he, "ef they wud do good in or'nary suchumstances an' accorn' to Natur."

"Wal," sez we, "you talk jullike a fool. We don't warn't no natur' aboout it. Isn't it so, accorn to Logick?"

"Oh, jis so," sez he, "accorn to logick, but we done no more about logick than we doo about Paregorick."

"Yes, my dear sur," sez we, comin to the pint, . . . "We wouldn't giv a red cent for logick, when it's agin natur, and coming sense, an' religus instinck."

Letter II was full of advice to people who "wunt do nuffin until the war is over."

Don't make no excuses about doin' your common duties, because your feller citizens are fightin' for you and see that you gin the right kind of answer ef any body should ax you in these dreffful times--How's your little pig?

Tucker next wrote his opinions of grammar, and he was quite articulate on this subject.
"Grammar," sed we, "is like every thing else, ony good in its place. We don' warn be a slave to it, when our thoughts is too much for it. A bold independen' spirit will defy it. Reason why?--Becase it is made up of rules, an' ef he is any think of a man, he can invent his own rules, or else he'll say suthin nother that school masters will havy to ramsack areound and make some rules that will suit it.

The remaining letters deplored disharmony among greedy politicians, unchanging human corruption, the causes of the Civil War, and how the United States through indolence has drifted from the Constitution. Aside from the cacography, which he used carelessly and eratically, Tucker wrote well, and his "Letters" are well worth reading in any generation.

"Cabinet Conversation Pieces" (IV, 270; V, 12, 27, 50, 217; VI, 4) were curt dialogues between Lincoln and his cabinet members. They comment facetiously about events of the day, and the pieces are of interest only for the attitudes toward specific members of the cabinet.

C.G. Leland was by far the most prolific contributor. He wrote prolifically for the magazine, and his regular features frequently became very thin. "The Telegraphic Tour" (II, 3, 13, 33, 37, 49, 67, 73, 85, 99; III, 123, 135, 147, 149) contained by far the most words of any such series. It was narrated by "Broadway Spuytentuyfel" who, with his cousin "Peytona Randolph de Accomac," toured the country, particularly the resort areas, and reported to Vanity.
Fair. A typical quotation will be sufficient indication of the content and style of these articles:

Look further on—see another New York friend--Santa Neroli--an odd girl some people call her--a very nice girl Lucy De Bloom says--one of the kind who have very few friends--go through life quiet as violets under green leaves. Don't think I ever quite understood her till I knew her brother Eustace. When you want to understand one member of a well ordered family study the others, unless the brother is a very aqualactic youth . . . Eustace Neroli not soft, not hard, not muff; on first acquaintance vexatiously immaculate.

The now-staccato, now-many-worded style, incorporating the idea of the telegraph, permitted Leland to relax the need for syntax in order that he might write rapidly. Certainly this style of presentation becomes monotonous and boring after a few readings. The overall concept of the wandering observer in New York City continues today in The New Yorker.

"Our College Department" (II,206,220,239,247,266) was apparently an attempt to attract readers on the campus (or graduates thereof). Fictitious letters from Yale and Trinity College were printed and discussed such subjects as gate stealing, "Ye Wayes of Ye Freshmane," and "professorial conversation."

"The Third House" (III,9,21,29,46,57,69,108,120,165) is best outlined by the closing summary in the final essay.

Header! The parts of the machine are before you. You know, more intimately, I trust, than
you will ever know them in the flesh, the great representative Lobbyman: the Fashionables, the Alimentaries, the Bores, the Literary, and the Womanality.

We are not much interested today in the manners discussed in these sketches. As a matter of fact, we can rarely laugh about anything pertaining to lobbies, but to *Vanity Fair*, the Washington professional was considered fair game for satire and wit.

"The Town Shows" by Pyps (14 articles in volume VI) were apparently composed by William Winter. These articles are interesting for the enumeration of show activity in New York City from week to week. Secondarily, they are interesting for the brief comments on what Pyps thought of events in the theatrical world.

I don't think of anything else to say in the tragic line, except that Miss Bateman is to be followed, at the Winter Garden, by Edwin Booth ... he will have ample chance to "show his skill," and with Forrest over the way, a big incentive to do so. He comes of good stock, does Booth, and truth to say, has always done credit to it. Still, there was plenty of room for improvement, and it is pleasant to know that during his residence abroad he has neglected no opportunity of observation or study ... he may do as much for the American stage as Fletcher, with all his faults, has done for the English

Winter went on to become one of America's outstanding drama critics, and it would be interesting to evaluate what these early years on *Vanity Fair* contributed to his development.
Only Artemus Ward, of the characters who spoke through *Vanity Fair*, retains a spot as a minor humorist in modern anthologies and literary histories. President Lincoln supposedly read from the writings of Artemus Ward before he presented his draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet.\(^{17}\) Ward was a western crackerbox philosopher, travelling about the country as a showman with a few "Wax Statoots" and "Sagashus Beasts," including "three moral Bares" and a "Kangaroo." Ward worked with *Vanity Fair* very well, since his motto was "Cum the moral on' em strong."

Ward made three kinds of contributions to *Vanity Fair*. The first consisted of autobiographical writings concerning the showman's adventures.

"Artemus Ward Visits Brigham Young"
"Artemus Ward on His Visit to Abe Lincoln"
"Artemus Ward on the Shakers"
"Artemus Ward in the Southern Confederacy"
"Artemus Ward in the South"
"Artemus Ward Among the Free Lovers"
"Artemus Ward Sees the Prince of Wales"
"Artemus Ward Sees the Prince Napoleon"
"Artemus Ward in Washington"

The second group specifically offers comment on important subjects.

"Artemus Ward on 'Forts'"
"Artemus Ward on the Crisis"
"Artemus Ward's Weathersfield Oration"

A third category of Ward contributions consisted of satirical and anecdotal romances narrated by Ward.
"Cruise of the Polly Ann"
"Moses The Sassy, or The Disguised Duke"
"The Fair Inez or The Love Lady of the Crimson Cliffs"
"Woshy Boshy or The Prestidigitating Squaw of the Snakeheads"

All of these Ward was to recite from the stage and influence Mark Twain and others.

Politically Browne sought a broadly middle path. He was decidedly unsympathetic toward "Our Afrikan Brother," "a orful noosance." He satirized the South and the North. He commented on international figures (here a forerunner of Will Rogers). Throughout his life he was loyal to the Union. Ward felt that he expressed the feelings of most Americans in their sane moments. "My perlitical senti-
ments agree with yourn exactly. I know they do, becauz I never saw a man whose didn't." This is similar to Will Rogers' "I never saw a man I didn't like."

Of the 169 issues of Vanity Fair, George Arnold managed to publish his "McArone" letters in 83. After the demise of Vanity Fair this series continued in the New York Leader. Although it is questionable whether the series was originally signed "McAroni," they did begin as humorous commentary on "The War in Italy" and continued thus until May 25, 1861, when the title became "Our War Correspondence." It would be impossible to render briefly an account of McArone's adventures, but a typical incident may be quoted.
We arrived at Manasses Gap on Friday morning, and found a large force of rebels congregated there. They recognized us for Union men at once, by our gentlemanly appearance, and surrounded us. My men formed in squads of thirteen and a half, faces outward, with the ball of the left foot resting on the right hip; and drew their slung-shots.

By way of testing their discipline I allowed them to remain in this order while the rebels fired one volley.

Unfortunately, the volley was fired by upwards of fifteen thousand troops, at a distance of only about ten or twelve paces.

The result was that when the smoke blew away, there was nothing there.

I escaped by a miracle. I always make it a rule to do so.

The incongruity of McArone's "squads of thirteen and a half" and the rebels' "upwards of fifteen thousand troops;" and the disparity with the bloody, dreary, real war formed a sound basis for humor and laughter. McArone was supposedly a war correspondent, and the above was a popular satirization of the inflated, personal style of the war correspondents.

Fitz-hugh Ludlow's "The Primpenny Family" (14 appearances in volume III) was a long chronicle of a family. The main conflict was between a father,

Isaiah Primpenny, Esq. had made a fortune in coal scuttles. You may have noticed the singular fact in natural history that when a man has made his fortune in coal-scuttles, it becomes inconceivable to him why every other member of the human family does not rush into coal-scuttles immediately.

and a son.

Stuyvesant Primpenny found a fortune already made, and did not stop to inquire how it was
done. In the abstract he had no objection to coal-scuttles . . . the fortune was made. He did not care what had done it.

The young man proceeded to enter into several adventures with spies, radicals, conniving women, and revolutionists. The elder man was befuddled by all this, but in the end he and his son reached a mutual understanding, and the boy settled down (somewhat) to coal-scuttles.

Shanly's "Mrs. Mehitable Ross" (14 appearances in volume IV) was a New Hampshire woman who wrote regular letters to "Mr. Vanity." She was a Yankee woman in the "faculty" tradition of Mrs. Partington and Aunt Polly. She wrote of the Civil War,

The conclusion I come to, Mr. Vanity, was this: Ef a baby is brung up to be rocked the hull tote of the time when it is asleep, it ainter gunter sleep without it. Ef you take your toe off of the rocker the little critter is up on its knees a starin at you. Now we ony thought of our comfort. Weve ben rockt ter sleep in our cradle of Liberty, and now we're all up in eend ter see whath ter pay . . . I think thers fools on both sides. Ef mothers hed larned their children perli teness, as I did my son, Simon--to sed, yes sir, and no sir, and yes marm and no marm, and ter mind their own consarns--this war woulden never bin.

Women could be as smart and perceptive as anyone. (Of course the male authorship was clear, and authorship was not always clear in Vanity Fair.)

The series "Hardee Made Easy" appeared twice at the end of volume III and 22 times in volume IV. Although authorship is undesignated, the prolific George Arnold
appears to be the author. In these columns, he parodies manuals on military tactics.

Cavalry is a very fascinating subject, and has been the theme of poets and painters time out of mind. Of course, the classical reader needs not to be reminded that the mythical Pegasus of old was in reality a dragoon officer. . . . There is a fine picture of him, by Axelles, in a beer saloon at the lower end of Houston street.

It is significant that a parody of an arms and tactics manual was popular; armchair strategists were apparently everywhere in the reading public.

Twenty-three poems appear under the pseudonym, "Jonathan." Six appear in volume I, three in IV, nine in V, and five in VI. Authorship of the poems is unknown. If one person wrote them, then it was probably one of the Stephens brothers or Shanly. Henry Stephens is a distinct possibility since Jonathan is the subject of some of his cartoons. Jonathan was the patriotic, common-sense Yankee boy viewing and evaluating the world. In Vanity Fair he invariably spoke in verse, but the rhyme and meter scheme varied. One stanza would read,

"It don't do no good for to cuss an' git mad;  
In right sick o' the job, an' no wonder:  
I've jawed till I'm lame, an' my wife's done the same  
An' I've got the dyspepsy like the thunder.

Another would run,

My gran' sir' sot a-leanin' on his cane,  
and Dad sot readin' aout the furrin noos  
That told haow Garrybaldigh'd fit in vain,  
And jess sot hummin' some old humsick strain,  
And all on us had the bleues.
A third poem would run,

The little cus wooz weak as lemonade;
He kep' all usefel projects in the shade.
An everige Greek sould wa'nt no more to him
Than last year's lightin', 'less he took a whim.

Jonathan's language was full of folklore comparisons,
"jawed till I'm lame" and a man was worth no more "than last year's lightin." Other titles included the following:

"Jonathan on Biddies"
"Jonathan to Stephen" (Douglas)
"Jonathan's Mexican Notions"
"Jonathan on the Prize-Fight"
"Jonathan on the State of the Country"
"Jonathan Seeing Service"
"Jonathan on Slidell and Mason"
"Jonathan on Mean Men"
"Jonathan's Fourth of July Oration"
"Jonathan on Female Loafers"
"Jonathan at Home Wounded"
"Jonathan's Parable on Mediation"
"Jonathan on the Greeks"

Jonathan frequently served the purpose of stating a Yankee point of view to the rest of the United States, but perhaps more significantly he was often an opponent of the English John Bull. In one instance he openly debated as Tityrus against Meliboeus--"Mr. John Bull Punch" ("A New Cotton Eclogue," IV, 162). In 10 of the 15 poems listed above Jonathan had some reasonable, practical suggestion to make to John Bull.

The sincere, practical attitude and the topicality of his comments were best reflected in "Jonathan on Mean Men." (V, 237)
We live an' l'arn, they say;--I never knew
T'll lately, wat an all-fired pesky crew
O' mean men Uncle San hed sprinkled raound
'Mongst folks that everybody s'posed wooz saound.

A leavin' all the Rebels a'bout o' the scene,
(an' goodness knows, they're mostly wus'n mean!)
Jest pint your spy-glass almost anywers--
You'll bring up forty o' the sneakin' curs.

There's the Contractors, chucklin' to theirselves,
With not a rotten remnant on their shelves:
They've sold a'bout clean an' sold the Government;
An' naow they'll swear they hain't laid up a cent.

The cap-sheaf, though, of mean Americans,
Is the blowin' Congress-man, that goes an' stan's
Afore the wisdom o' this mighty nation,
Forgittin' all abaout his lofty station,
An' wut he's paid for doin',--an' jest jaws,
Withaout one mite o' honor in his cause;
Playin' the bully, every naow an' then,
Praisin' hisself; abusin' better men;
Givin' the same old plunderin' scheme a boost
That people hoped last year 'ad gone to roost;--
An' here's his masters, waitin' for the cuss
Hopin' he'll stop, hime-by, an' 'tend to us!

A pooty sight, for averige decent folks,
That can't deo nothin' but fret: that's haow it
chokes!

By next election, everybody knows,
'Twon't make no odds to him, w'at cold wind blows.
P'r'aps not. But w'en we've finished up this war,
We sha'h't be jest like wut we wooz afore.
One thing I' sart'in on, that wa'n't so then,
We sha'n't be quite so easy on mean men.

Jonathan was only one of the figures used as devices
to embody attitudes of Vanity Fair contributors.
Browne's showman, Whittier's frontiersman, Arnold's cor-
respondent, Shanly's Yankee housewife, Leland's vaca-
tioners, and Ludlow's young, rich adventurer were only
the most prominent figures. To the list could be added
various figures representing England, France, Spain and Russia; speaking for America were "counter-jumpers," southern and northern soldiers, politicians, farmers, preachers, industrialists, sweet-young-things, children, thugs, sailors, frontiersmen, major and minor politicians, and characters from nursery rhymes, legends, and history. They spoke for the authors to America and the world through verse, parody, jokes, cartoons, sketches, short stories (anecdotes), and puns. These were the devices and forms of humor applied to the mild reforming and the hopefully enthusiastic laughter of America.
CHAPTER III: REFORMERS AND REFORM

In the mid-1800's almost all publications had a relationship with reform and reformers, but a satirical magazine would have a complex relationship since satire usually aims at reform. Certainly the staff of Vanity Fair took the matter seriously.19

It was important because reform was a major activity of the time. John Brown was hanged the month the magazine started. Theodore Parker (Unitarian minister, abolitionist, temperance leader, women's rights advocate, labor reformer, etc.) ended his busy career within the first year of Vanity Fair. All four Beechers were in full swing: Lyman (1775-1863), temperance leader, and his three children, Henry Ward (1813-1887), orator and modernist Presbyterian minister, Catherine, educator and reformer, and Harriet Beecher Stowe (1813-1887), author of Uncle Tom's Cabin (1850). Other female reformers were in midcareer: Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906), Ernestine Rose (1810-92), and Elizabeth Stanton (1815-1902). Much of journalism was in the hands of reformers. William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) and Wendell Phillips (1811-84) had The Liberator. Popular New York newspapers were devoted to reform and reformers, and some of the names
often cited by Vanity Fair should be identified. Horace Greeley (1811-72) had founded the New York Tribune. Richard Henry Dana (1815-82) was on his staff. Henry Raymond (1820-69), who had worked for Greeley, was founder and publisher of the New York Times. James Gordon Bennett (1795-1872) had founded the New York Herald and had revolutionized the newspaper business by sending reporters out to find the news. William Cullen Bryant managed the New York Post (and would until 1870). Benjamin Wood edited the New York Daily News; his brother was Mayor Fernando Wood, who advocated that New York City secede and join the South. Robert Bonner (1824-99) had the New York Ledger, a weekly story paper which hired big names like Edward Everett and then used sensational advertising in other papers to gain New York City's biggest audience. None of the newspapers could avoid an attitude toward the Civil War and slavery. Poverty, corruption, temperance, suffrage, and labor were equally difficult to avoid. Vanity Fair satirized each of the above persons, their newspapers, and their speeches and writings.

Vanity Fair's role in reform was important for another reason. The aim of the magazine was reform; it had a "mission to reform or cure social evils."

The role was also complex. The magazine did not trust the reforming zeal of its age. When the magazine chose to comment on the organized reforms and reformers
of its age, it was to satirize and to urge moderation. Abolitionists, suffragists, and temperance leaders were anathema to the magazine; thus, the American public had a magazine with a reforming purpose that was, at the same time, editorially opposed to the reforming movements of its times.

Even though reformers were opposed, it would be a mistake to assume that the magazine had as its particular crusade the reform of reformers. It was not a reactionary publication. Vanity Fair asserted basic principles of conduct for the individuals of its time, and these principles, though usually conservative, frequently paralleled the principles of the more radical groups. The magazine saw its age with all its weaknesses much as did the reformers, but it was unable to agree that the drastic measures proposed by the reforming groups were solutions. The reforming method proposed by Vanity Fair was a disarming one,

The true mission of a satirical paper such as we intend ours to be, is not extermination but reformation. Gentleness is quite compatible with courage, and, depend on it, more can be accomplished by good-humored raillery than envenomed wit. No man is more to be pitied than he who is wholly a cynic, for he loses all that exquisite pleasure which noble natures experience in sympathising with what is good and true. (I,IV)

Such a gentle statement of attitude in a time of reforming zealots was bravely, perhaps foolhardedly, out of place. This was, in fact, an independent voice attempting to
find what it thought was sanity in what it considered an age of venality, charlatanism, and treason. It was, with various degrees of emphasis, under the latter three categories that Vanity Fair divided its comments on the reformers of its day.

Venality--individuals who would sell all for profit--was an important concept to Vanity Fair. Instead of leading in honesty, leaders in government led in corruption. The magazine asserted "Distinguished Representatives of their Country's Interests" were making money by supporting gambling in Washington. Tax collectors were notorious profit makers. The greedy, money-grasping alderman had a rough time:

AN EPISTLE FROM AN OUTRAGED ALDERMAN
(Who as he never did anything that was considered meet, can't be expected to do anything that will be considered Metre.)

I vow and declare it would make a saint swear to have to sit quiet and listen to all the vituperation,
And lavish abuse, which is flung around loose against us unfortunate members of the City Corporation.
It's a sin and a shame, the way people make game of all our proceedings and deliberations,
We're ridiculed freely by Bennett and Greeley and all the rest of them stupid Editorial Donkeys, which blindly shuts their eyes to the noble and patriotic objects of our expenditures and civic operations.

All our little jobs and contracts is opposed by them as has to pay the taxes, as if Aldermen ought to be prevented from making a decent living in peace and quiet;
And I'm grieved to notice that You, in the matter of our brownstone stately, jine in the general
hue and cry against our bad taste and extravagance in appropriating the public funds to buy it.

And let me tell you that all the newspaper abuse isn't of no kind of manner of use, and besides, you're a-flying in the face of Scripture, which says expressly that prophets isn't never known in their own country and generation.

And we havn't the slightest intention our private arrangements to mention, or make our profits known to this perverse and stiff necked nation. (III,88)

Other articles and sketches asserted the police had a friendly deal with gangsters, and for good, clean fun, the marshall would permit the public to see real prisoners in jail for a fee.

On the national level, the politician rewarded his friends with military and diplomatic positions. However, contract frauds were the most flagrant results of the relationship between politician and capital. The government contractor perpetrated the greatest fraud and corruption, and only a very horrible creature could compare with him.

. . . He then draws a lively parallel between the contractor and the constrictor. Both are slimy, both scaly, both mixed up with blankets, both moving in large circles, both addicted to pigeons, both capable of sucking eggs, neither of them spotless. In one respect . . . the constrictor has the contractor on a string. The former gorges himself but once a month, while the latter no sooner gets through one gorge than he goes in for another, like a mule driven upon a mountain range. Those are subtle coincidences, and they apply well to the average army contractor, who is often a sutler. (VII,35)
Contractors' products were frail bridges, miserable army food which rusted the stomach, ragged army clothes, and poor blankets that could be seen through. The venal contractor's dream would turn sour.

Old Hucklebury, the Army Contractor, lay snoozily back in his chair,
After a sumptuous dinner, such as became a millionaire.
Wines were upon the table, gathered from sundry foreign lands,
A vulgar splendor of bottles bearing curious trade-marks and brands.
At first his dream was auriferous: he fancied himself afloat,
Hauling up gold-fish, hand over hand, into a rose-wood boat;
And as the fishes went flippety-flop among the ebony thwarts,
Their scales in yellow dollars flew off, and he pocketed them by quarts.
But, lo! a distressing circumstance alloyed the bliss of his dream,
His clothes were turned into army cloth, and they gaps at every seam;
And the golden dollars fell clinkety-clank from tattered trowsers and coat,
And, where they fell, they burned round holes through the bottom of the boat.
Then, as the old Army Contractor sank, with a shriek, into the deep,
He felt the grasp of a skeleton hand that doubled him into a heap,
And he heard the croak of a skeleton voice--
"Look here, old Hucklebur-ee,
You never was born to be drown-ded, so come along with me!
"I am the bones of a soldi-er, as died in the sickly camp,
Reduced by the pizenous food and the clothes that didn't keep out the damp:
Likeways the sperrits that to us was sarved, worse liquor never I see;
The thirst was on me--I drank it, and died--and now you must drink with me!" . . . (IV,77)
Another major belief of *Vanity Fair* was that newspapers were allied reciprocally to politicians. A paper would give space to congressmen who would extoll the newspaper in Washington.

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**

The U. S. Congress profits by the example of Mr. Bonner. The Ledger system of advertising is now pursued at the Capitol with admirable exactness. Attractive announcements of interesting publications all over the country are every day put forward, with the same excessive length, and the same eternity of repetition—one line modelling the whole—as those with which Mr. Bonner has won for himself an undying glory. The only point of difference is, that while the Ledger advertisements are generally double-leaded as to space, those of the honorable members are only double-leaded as to weight. Especially is this the case with . . .

Mr. Vallandigham, of Ohio, who does double duty, advertising the N. Y. Tribune and the Cincinnati Commercial;

Mr. Haskin, of New York, who appears to be a general agent, promoting the interests of the Washington Constitution, the N. Y. Herald, the Journal of Commerce, and other periodicals; and

Mr. Larrabee, of Wisconsin, who advertises the Milwaukee Free Democrat, and a variety of other remote journals.

This may be strictly Constitutional, and as it is uncommonly tedious, we presume it is. But it is likely to intrude seriously upon the business of the regular advertising agencies, which ought to be secure from such interference. We hope no honorable gentleman will volunteer to assist, in this manner, the circulation of *Vanity Fair*. There are degradations too deep for endurance.

(11,19)

In addition to dubious political ties, the newspapers were tied to reform "brooms" with which they were
attempting to sweep the country. Beginning in journalism was a humorous subject:

A CATECHISM FOR YOUNG JOURNALISTS

Q—How would you fit yourself to write editorial matter for Herald?
A—I would buy a plantation and niggers down South, and then try to keep both parties from confiscating them.

Q—How would you fit yourself for the Tribune?
A—I would turn myself into a nigger and go crazy.

Q—How for the Times?
A—Buy a share in the Stevens Battery.
Q—How for the World?
A—I wouldn't write for the World!
Q—How for the Evening Post?
A—Get a place on the Ledger, and practice my hand at doing dirty paragraphs about General McClellan. (V,223)

Bennett, the Herald's editor, was the worst sort of opportunist and sensationalist.

THE EDITOR'S REVERIE
INSCRIBED, WITHOUT ANY RESPECT, TO J.G.B.

... Then the editor lifted his aged head, And unto himself he said, said he; There are millions of words that I have said That are false as the veriest lies can be; And many more that I'm going to say Will be equally truthful, don't you see! "For, in fact, I'm a wise, consistent scribe, On a curious pattern built, I know; There are times when I firmly believe in a bribe, And times when it isn't exactly so; And now I am this, and now I am that, And always I'm ready my trumpet to blow.... "In short, I tell 'em whatever I please, And I please to tell 'em whatever will pay, Which--especially so in times like these-- Is the only authentic, reliable way. So the ink I spill with my gray-goose quill, And I laugh and weep, and curse and pray." (VI,99)
Venality was portrayed as a characteristic of the reformers. *Vanity Fair* indicated that abolitionists dashed to find ambassadorial positions after the Civil War started; labor reformers used labor unions to their own advantage. (III,132,71) Indeed, any reform law seemed to be attached to some kind of profit, even reform of capital punishment.

**CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

In general we like hanging.

Therefore we have no sympathy with the framers of the bill for the Abolition of Capital Punishment, lately brought before the Legislature at Albany.

Imprisonment for life is a good thing to talk about, but they don't do it. The men who are most likely to commit murder are those who cannot be kept in prison. They control the elections, and no man who wants to be re-elected to the gubernatorial chair dares refuse a petition for the pardon of such a valuable assistant.

Suppose one of those clean-collared, shiny-hatted, fresh-gloved large-diamonded, fur-trimmed gentlemen who stand all day about the Corner of Houston-street and Broadway, with smiles upon their faces and bowie knives down their backs, were to take it into his head to slay the first man who looked at him. Imprison him for life, and how long would he stay in durance more or less vile? Why, just until the next campaign!

As for the humanitarian pretexts, they are a little shaky. The framers of this bill are not so celebrated for their gushing love of their species, as for some other characteristics.

It is just possible that they have a good many friends among the election-managing boys, whose pistols are liable to go off when somebody is in the way,--and about election time, it would be so handy to have a batch of these brave fellows come down from Sing-Sing, with their pardons in
their pockets, each ready to suppress his man, if required.

Hence this humanitarianism. (I,231)

Equaling venality in permeability, and often indistinguishable from it, charlatanism was seen everywhere by Vanity Fair. Reform groups, churches, lawmakers, and newspapers led in charlatanism. Reformers led them all. Theodore Parker and John Brown were quacks, and this quackery was contagious.

BEWARD OF IMITATIONS!

John Brown of Ossawatomie was hung by Henry Wise of Virginia for invading the South, at the head of twenty-two men, in order to carry out his peculiar views regarding the Peculiar Institution.

Although Wise claimed to have done this act with the intention of making an example of Brown, we confess that we did not expect to see him follow that example so promptly. The following extract from his speech before the seceding Southern Sawbones will explain our meaning and his intentions:

If I can get one hundred men--aye, or ten men--to follow me, whether the Legislature authorizes it or not, I will go North, and if the Southern people are the men of purpose, the men of will, the men of moral power I take them to be, then, rather than let this Union be dissolved, they will drive into Canada every black republican, every abolitionist, every Northern disunionist!

It will be seen by this that Henry Wise is only an imitation of John Brown, although a braver man--wanting, indeed, less than half of Brown's army to accomplish twice as much... (I,20)

The magazine felt the whole Beecher family was made up of fanatics, the worst of which was Henry Ward.
HENRY WARD BEECHER

Who is H. Ward? Really, my dear friend, you are a little behind. Why, H. Ward is one of Brooklyn's exceeding great, big things. Indeed he is. He has a church and a half Over There, and all the Great and Good go therein to learn about the weaknesses of the Politicians, and the little Narrow Gate. And that's not all neither. H. Ward has a newspaper, a newspaper whose circulation is One Hundred Thousand copies weekly, and he is the Columbiad who is to, and does now, and has for an inconvenient length of time, bombarded the Fort Sumter of Sin and Slavery. Oh yes. And that isn't all neither. For he has a farm where he cultivates Pigs by scores, and raises Flowers in fields that are mown down by scythes, and other agricultural implements of Husbandrical skill. -- though whether they, the Flowers not the Fields, are at once cast into the Oven or not, I cannot say, not knowing the country. And he has also "Kine" and live Muttons, and a Donkey, which he rides, but he does not drink. (III,208)

Vanity Fair felt Ward had no sense of humor, and when he did assay humor, it was to strike a profane jibe at the "sacred Union and Constitution."

Other reformers fared almost as badly. Along with his other reform efforts, Charles A. Dana was portrayed as a fanatic on punctuation. The confabulations of Wendell Phillips were seen as horrifying if they had not been so ridiculous, since they were based on his gullibility.

Mr. Windmill Phillips recently informed an audience, in tone of pious horror, that President Lincoln had told him, in a horribly calm way, that he (Mr. L.) "expected to lose about three hundred thousand men during the summer campaign!"

It is a pity to have to take the wind out of Windmill's sails! But our stern duty toward the humorous aspect of life compels us!
... the President did spring ... that remark

... W. P. sought Mr. Lincoln, in hopes of extracting a sensation for his next speech.
The President pleasantly resolved to gratify him.

... knowing the solemn incapacity of W. P. in the joke line ... He remembered that by the expiration of their various terms of enlistment, about three hundred thousand soldiers would be—temporarily—lost to the Union armies ...

... the President assumed a refreshing nonchalance of air and tone, and thus incidentally as it were, uttered the prophectic observation that collapsed W. P. with sensational horror. (VI, 90)

In addition to being a traitor, Wendell Phillips was also believed to be a maniac and the ugly symbol of disunion.

This yeasty orator has become a raving maniac, and is yet, owing to the shameful negligence of the authorities, at large. When last seen, he was rushing about the country with corn-stalks in his hair, and very little clothing of any kind to speak of on his person. His hallucinations have some very remarkable features. For instance, he imagines that Illinois lawyers must be anatomists, and has been travelling round among them with eager gesticulations and haggard eyes, beseeching them to inform him whether President Lincoln is furnished with the normal allowance of spinal vertebrae. (VI, 83)

Vanity Fair felt Phillips' serious, humorless style of speech was the very essence of demagoguery.

Women reformers were the subject of satire. Gentler than most toward reformers, Artemus Ward had a comment about women's spheres'.

... On the cars was a he-lookin female, with a green-cotton umbreller in one hand and a handful of Reform tracks in the other. She sed every woman should have a Spear. Them as didn't
demand their Spears, didn't know what was good for them.

"What is my Spear?" she axed, addressin the peple in the cars. 

"Is it to stay to home & darn stockins & be the ser-lave of a dominerrin man? Or is it my Spear to vote & speak & show myself the ekal of man? Is there a sister in these keers that has her proper Spear?" Sayin which the eccentric female whirled her unbreller round several times, & finally jabbed me in the weskit with it.

"I hav no objecshuns to your goin into the Spear bizniss," sez I, "but you'll please remember I ain't a pickeril. Don't Spear me agin, if you please." She sot down. (III,15)

Ward was kinder than others. For example, Susan Anthony, "a female person named Jones," a Brooklyn sensation preacher," "Mrs. Stanton, of Ohio (they make Woman's Rights folks out there)," Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison were all lampooned in a "Woman's Rights Convention" sketch by Shanly. (I,331)

The cover of September 28, 1861, shows women at a party wearing shackles. The caption is

PROBABLY EFFECT ON THE MODE OF CERTAIN RECENT ARRESTS IN FASHIONABLE CIRCLES

Although Vanity Fair did not generally attack religion, it did satirize overstatement.

Meeting was very well till it came to the Doctor's turn to speak. He cut it rather fat I thought. He drew a picture. He didn't draw it mild either. See if he did:

"Of the 800,000 inhabitants of the city, there was 600,000 who never attend church. If this state of things continues, Infidelity, Intemperance, Murder, and Rapine will run riot in New York."
Bless the reverend gentleman's soul alive--
Doesn't he know that a large portion--a
screeching proportion--of this number are
babies-in-arms, who can't crawl, much less
run riot."

"This is a Maelstrom which threatens to engulf
the City."

There are divers ways of being sucked in,
Doctor!

"We are on a volcano. You can hear it rumbling."

I listened, but heard nothing but an old
gentleman in the next pew winding up his watch.
But I couldn't help getting nervous.

The speaker was a big man, and I am a little one,
and of course I couldn't help looking up to him
some. It made my blood run cold to hear him go
on.

"Behold this great army, chained side by side,
marching on to destroy us! Can we resist! No!
They are too many for us."

I was completely unnerved by this. I trembled
with fear. The only running comment I could
make was to rush from the sanctuary, and cut for
home before it got any later. My sensations
weren't any of the pleasantest, for the only
weapon I had was a walking-stick. I looked down
every street I cam to, to see if I could see the
forlorn hope of the "army." I was in Pouché's
pickle. "The air was full of poniard." (II,295)

The circumstances of Theodore Parker's death in 1860 were
described in this way:

MODERN WITCHCRAFT

It is to be presumed that all the readers of
Vanity Fair, have heard of the death of Theodore
Parker of Boston. But with the exception of the
small number who read The Congregational Herald,
and the larger number who take in the Tribune
with their other slices of reading, they may not
be aware, to use the words of the latter, that
the late lamented Parker "did not die a natural
death through the ordinary processes of disease,
but was prayed to death, by a praying circle of
ladies," held in the parlor of a prominent citi-
zen of Boston. Yes--incredible, horrible,
diabolical as it may seem, we are told that certain hags under the monstrous delusion, that they were performing a religious rite, actually prayed for the death of a fellow creature, and the Congregational Herald exults over the fact, avowing its belief that their prayer was approved, exclaiming with joy: "Was not this one among the numerous answers which God gives to secret prayer?" (II,150)

Another writer indicated the ridiculous thing was that people wanted both "Sunday Laws" and "loud preaching." Blue laws or "The New Sunday Law" were indicated to be most unpopular. (I,311,244) Religion received mild attention, but charlatanism was nailed openly where it might be found.

Other articles satirized health reformers, vegetarians, nature lovers, anti-tobacco-smokers, and temperance advocates.

AT THE SALOON

The lamps were bright on the cold, grey stones,
As bright as the glare of day,
And the night was alive with the patter of feet,
On the pavement of Broadway.
I stood by the porch of a palace of light,
With the laugh and the revel within,
And there came a woman in shame alone,
Who sang this song of her sin.

A curse on its marble walls,
A curse on its gilded halls,
A curse on the cup they gave to me,
Where the golden gaslight falls.

I was pure as the flakes of the falling snow,
With a spotless heart and name,
Before the day I was taught the way
To this gilded house of shame.
Like you, my lady of haughty mien,
Like you, I was proud and fair:
My beauty, I left at the grave of my love,
My pride, I buried there. . . .
Now mark you, my sneering gentleman,
That beautiful, pale-faced girl,
In an hour from now, her cheek will flush,
And her brain will madly whirl.
Let me whisper a secret within your ear,
Should he be a villain as well,
Ere the morning sun shall shine in the sky
There will be another in hell.
Perhaps, like me, she may come so low
They will spurn her away from the door,
Perhaps, like me, she will tramp the street,
As dirty, and drabbled, and sore.
And then, like me, she may stand in its glare,
And beg for the veriest boon,
At the hands of the thousand reckless ones,
Of the great Broadway Saloon.
A curse on its marble walls, . . . (I,262,293)

As other quotations already have indicated, New York City newspapers were zealously satirized for efforts at mass appeal. Robert Bonner and Edward Everett in the Ledger were asserted to lead the way in publication quackery. Bennett of the Herald was a master of quackery also,

COOL!

The Herald of the 1st inst., alluding to the fact that a negro was frozen to death in Brooklyn, says, "Southern Slaves are not permitted to suffer in this manner." We never heard of a negro's freezing to death down South, except in one instance, but then ice was forwarded from the North expressly for the purpose. The Herald's veracity, reliability, etc., however, must have weight: we venture to agree with the Herald. (I,44)

However, Everett had the audacity to print his own picture on a biography of Washington, and that was hard to top. Newspapers were portrayed as proud of their disregard for truth, e.g. "(This was a playful allusion to my beautiful canopy bedstead presented to me by the
editors of the Chicago Tribune for telling less truth in ten consecutive letters than their war-correspondents did in five.)" (VII,84)

Vanity Fair felt that, charlatan-like, reformers and newspapers pretended to knowledge and effect they did not have. For profit (venality) they would do or say anything. In their worst effects, they were treasonable. Treason was a word that Vanity Fair used far more freely than we do today. A traitor was "one who would make us small among watching nations." (III,106) Traitors included gangsters and policemen, soldiers and civilians, politicians, ministers, authors, copperheads, and reformers. Leading the list were abolitionists. A poem points out that abolition actually sided with Jeff Davis:

ABO BO LITION

Abo Bo Lition (may his tribe decrease!)
Awoke one night not very well at ease,
And saw within the shadow of his room,
Making it mean, and like a stink-weed in bloom,
A devil writing in a book of brass:
Exceeding cant had made Bo Lition an ass
And to the shadow he said, a little pale,
"What scribblest thou?" The phantom raised its tail,
And answered with a leer of sour discord,
"The names of those who own Jeff Davis Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abo. "Not quite so,"
Replied the devil. Abo spoke more low
But cheerly still, aching to grasp his pen,
"Write me as one who hates the Union then."

The devil wrote and vamoosed. The next night
He came again--this time a little tight--
And showed the names who served Jeff Davis best,
And lo! Bo Lition's name led all the rest.

(V,126)
Vanity Fair felt abolitionist newspapers assaulted respectable American citizens for not being "nigger lovers" and this frequently led to treasonous aid to the rebellious South. William L. Garrison was shown shaking hands with Southern leader M.K. Kutt over "destruction of 'This accursed Union'." Perhaps, however, the most powerful figure Vanity Fair attacked was Horace Greeley and his Tribune. A reporter characterized Greeley as follows:

This detonating paraphrase of the great but troublesome philosopher in Spruce street, as we observed, makes too much noise. He is reverberating, like a gong; flippant, like a fire cracker; vacuous, like a kettle-drum; and out of place, like a gorilla at a tea-party. This recapitulation of his characteristics is not respectful, we admit, but it is accurate. It is likely that his admirers may consider us a little personal. We mean to be. There are sublimities of conceit and presumption which are only to be reached by the rudest means. The Tribune's "own" sits, stupid and serene, upon a very Olympus of bombastic arrogance. Who is going to pick the softest missiles to hurl at a pleonastic, antistrophic, gasconading Jupiter like this?" (IV,47)

Vanity Fair charged that Greeley started the Civil War with his "warships of the nigger." Greeley did all in his power to subvert the Union,

Q.—If you were connected with an Abolition paper, how would you serve its aim?
A.—By doing all I could for Disunion.
Q.—In what way?
A.—Covertly: first, by retarding Congress, which I should do by sending petitions to imbecile Senators for the emancipation of slaves: second, by assaulting the Commander-in-Chief and egging on Investigation to fritter away his time: third, by working against any possible Reconstruction of the Union or harmonious relation
whatever between North and South; which could be
done by advocating negro insurrections, hanging
of prisoners, confiscation of property and
annihilation of States.
Q.--Are you aware that you are describing the
course of two daily papers; the Post and Tribune?
A.--Yes siree; that's where I got the idea
(V,223)

Vanity Fair sneered at his denial of attacks on Lincoln,
and when Greeley asserted he would raise an army of
900,000 abolitionists to fight the South, many pages of
the magazine were devoted to comment. Songs-to-march-by
were written, and one little essay mentioned 900,000
eight times. When Greeley despaired, Vanity Fair was
quick to quote him,

"Where, where are the million I said one day
I'd send from the North to the blood-red fray?
Unwilling alike to be polled or shot,
Though I sought them wildly I found them not;
And as years roll on, and the war at last
Becomes a thing of the time long past,
Men will say, as I totter along, aside,
'Alas! alas! how that old man lied.'

O the terrible blow! . . . (VI,220)

Abolition was part and parcel of treason to Vanity Fair,
and even the Devil was going to start an abolition news-
paper. The preface to volume VI best summarizes the
magazine's feelings:

We think that the Nation is, at present, of more
consequence than the Negro: that the glory of
the former should be considered in preference to
the glorification of the latter, and that all
the gammon preached about immediate emancipation
is a dodge for bringing political capital to the
miners of the black-diamond.
We consider that the so-called "abolition"
journals are, for the most part, traitors to
their country and abettors of treason, their
energies being very generally directed to the purpose of tripping up President Lincoln, by digging trap-holes in the field over which he and his Right-hand Man are steadily advancing to victory.

Vanity Fair was hostile to the reform movements of its day and age. The magazine distrusted the motives, means, and ends of Garrison, Phillips, Greeley, Beechers, Stowe, Anthony, and Parker. Their motives seemed venal, their means charlatanistic, and their ends treasonable. Reform had become self gratification by any means, including quackery, and this could only end in chaos, internal conflict, and disunion for the United States. Nevertheless, Vanity Fair was interested in reform, and if it could never praise other reformers, still it did advocate reform. The formula was simple, "get rid of "Treason," thus leaving "Reason." "Thus, we have the reform drive which is to lead to 'A Good Time'." But, as the facetiousness of this quotation may have indicated, dissolution of concrete treason was not so simple as the formula indicated. It was well to stand against the Herald, "It is consoling, however, to think that we have but one Herald--would that we had none! When will men rouse themselves enough to rid the community of this sheet of moral leprosy, by severely letting it alone?" (v,61) However, Vanity Fair saw that reform was necessary. Social evils did exist, Vanity Fair clearly recognized
their existence. They were so pervasive and enduring that some human beings had little or no hope to escape poverty and material evil.

A VOICE FROM COW-BAY

My Joe he's up on the Island,
And Sal—she'd better be there;
And worse than all hags, is my wife in her rags--
It's nothing but scold and swear.

The shanty is all full of rats--
My baby is used to their gnawing;
We've vermin and dirt—not a skirt nor a shirt--
But plenty of lighting and jawing.

Old hats hide too much of the light,
And they let in too much of the weather;
Cold comes through the floor, tho' the window and door,
And we shiver and freeze together.

They're hungry and sick every day,
They fret and they curse every minute;
They hate what they clutch, be it little or much,
And the very Devil is in it.

I see the good things in the markets,
And think, when I'm passing them by,
Of my child and my wife, and this hell of a life--
I wish to Heaven they'd die.

People come in fine clothes to ask questions--
They give us a tract and a dime;
They look in and look out, and they poke all about--
They are ready to faint all the time. . . .

They're a-going to tear down the shanties,
And make all the neighborhood new--
Clear away all the rats, the black walls and old hats
And the vice and the misery, too.

We go with the mould and the dirt,
With the rats, and the smoke, and the cold;
And we'd rather be there, with our want and our care,
Than be near you in houses of gold.

Why not settle the matter at once:
If the way you are slow to determine,
I'll give you a plan that will suit every man:--
Burn us up with the rest of the vermin.
Come on with your men and your carts,
Rake the eye-sores all off, right away!
Yes, drive us all out, and then hunt us about;
But there must be another Cow-Bay! (I,53)

This was their way of life, and they clearly needed help. Certainly, the reprehensible side of mankind was, at times, an awesome spectacle to these *Vanity Fair* reformers.

This awe before the magnitude of man's evil, and the resultant doubt of easy reform, made the social criticism of *Vanity Fair* very acute while suggestions for correction were both rare and moderate. It was clear to a poet that it was wrong for one man to be rich in the midst of another's poverty; of a tenement an author wrote,

While, within sliding, gliding
Like pale thing of pantomine,
Poverty doth hear the chiding
Of the world that calleth it Crime.

The same poem described a rich man eating,

Let us worship humbly, dumbly,
Smitherkins the weathy snob:
Pauper, avaunt!--small crime is homely;
Honor is theirs who largely rob. (VII,5)

Luxury entertainments were grotesque social displays; to make matters worse, the churches were on the side of the rich, with the result that the rich could oppress the poor without criticism from a social conscience. This lack of conscience made a callous business man:
A Broad-street merchant on being informed, the other day, that he had broken one of the Commandments, replied: "Never mind, charge it to Breakage." (I, 27)

Stockholders had no sense of social responsibility,

Come ye jolly Stockholders, all over the land,
Give conscience the go-by, and tip us a stave,
In union there's power, so join hand in hand
And sing a gay requiem, over the graves
Of our victims. Ha! Ha!
The funeral car
Jogs drearily on; 'tis to us all the same.
We've nothing to fear--
At least while we're here--
For the verdict, we know it, is "No one to blame." (I, 85)

The prosperity of American business was a death trap to the majority; one cartoon showed death discussing the building of the Pemperton Mills with a financier. After the mill crashed, a curse was placed on the builders of this same mill,

A curse on ye, ye Millionaires
Who sit at home in your easy chairs,
And crack your nuts and sip your wine
While I wail over this son of mine!
A curse on ye who laid the stone
That crushed my darling husband's bones!
A curse on you who made the plan
You more than devil, you less than man!

The whole family was tied to the factory,

Through the Factory's various parts,
Busily beat a thousand hearts:
Father and son, and daughter and wife,
A microcosm of labor and life,
All day long, from the rise of sun,
Honestly work till the day is done;
Nimble fingers and busy hand
Weaving and working for all the land. (I, 52)
During the War, *Vanity Fair* charged that the rich did not bear their patriotic share of the American responsibility, and when they tried to be patriotic, they only oppressed.

Patriotism has begun to work in Fifth Avenue. A family of high standing, and whom we shall designate by a row of bs, thus BBBBB, has begun to retrench expenses and bring its domestic economy down to a war footing. *Paterfamilias* sets the example, and *Materfamilias* seconds it nobly. The old gentleman insists on shaving himself in cold water, to avoid the expense of heating it, and has beat his newspaper carrier down one cent a week for his *Tribune*.

The partner of his bosom takes her tea weak, and intends resigning her position as member of the "Blue Steeple Society" for the relief of the neighboring poor—which will be a nett gain to herself of two dollars a year.

The young man of the family buys wooden matches with which to light his cigars, and has about made up his mind to wear patent leather boots in order to save extravagance in blacking. . . . (V,57,85)

In a time of business failure, matters were worse and the poor had to care for themselves. (I,178)

This inequality of capital caused even more grotesque situations on the individual level. A rich soldier was a hero whether he fought or not, and the common man might lose an arm, becoming thus a pauper, but never a hero. A young girl could lose her purity, thus being ostracized, while her rich deceiver lived revered by the world. The deceived girl became a "Street Walker" or a starving mother with a child; both would end in suicide. One poem told how to get rid of "The Baby," but
the magazine offered no solution to the woman's poverty and vulnerable social position.

Labor problems bothered the editors of *Vanity Fair* an early supporter of labor rights in America. Labor strikes were accepted as necessary, and the magazine pointedly scoffed at the citizens' fear of workers going on strike. One poem strongly favored a group of striking omnibus drivers,

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Bosses, thriving in clover!
Look out, while you're thinking it over,
And study the humble rover--
Roving the same old way:
Think of his life so trying,
Think of his poor wife sighing,
Think of his children dying--
And give him two dollars a day! (VI,255)
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Other matters bothered the magazine's staff. Any responsible publication had to be aware of the corruption on the New York City wharves, and the equally corrupt police abetted such conditions, or so *Vanity Fair* indicated. The morality of war did not much bother the editors, although one cartoon showed a weather-beaten soldier praying, "SIX MONTHS IN ARREAR/ Cod help the Little Ones at home." One cartoon expressed outrage that American soldiers could descend to pillage; however, a major frequent criticism was about the fact that a man could buy his way out of war service.

One incident did upset the *Vanity Fair* writers a great deal. In New York City in 1860 nine Protestant
teachers were fired from the ward schools for reading the Bible in their classes. The magazine itself felt the firing was an intolerable measure; indeed, it was felt that the public had been outraged, and *Vanity Fair* did not hesitate to speak for Americans in the matter.

TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE FOURTH WARD SCHOOLS

Do you know what country you live in? Do you know what the Constitution of the United States is? Do you know what are the rights and privileges which that instrument accords to every citizen of this Republic?

Do you know that you have disgraced yourselves and outraged the rights of others? Do you know that All persons are free and equal in the eye of the Constitution? Do you know that in matters of religious belief the same liberty that you enjoy is, in this country, allowed to your neighbors?

Do you know that the State laws forbid your appointing persons related to any one of yourselves to positions in the Public Schools? If you do not know these few simple facts, you are fools—if you do know them and have acted wilfully in defiance of them you are an unscrupulous set, and unworthy to be called American citizens. Who gives you authority to dismiss a young lady from her post as a teacher, because she is a Protestant? Who gives you power to fill the place thus vacated by appointing the niece of one of your number, because she is a Catholic?

Yours, etc.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(I,407)

Then, as now, the press tended to support free speech and freedom of religion.

Other reforms were indicated. It was felt that spies received very light punishment, and better security
measures were needed in the American government. It was felt that poor foods were being fostered on the public, and one poem was, in its criticism, much like what Sylvester Graham had been preaching until his death in 1851. Mayor Wood was urged to do something about the "mock waters" sold to "Maine Reubens" on Broadway. The speculations of the City Judge, George Law, in "Ferry and Hose-cars" were compared to the odors of the fish-market, and reform of the railroad was urged because of the cruelty of the conductors. Finally, the founding of Vassar College was praised as a means of freeing American women from their state of servitude.

Reform in the arts was important to the contributors to Vanity Fair although not a great deal of space was dedicated to this. Much of the responsibility for poor art was laid at the feet of the audience. In opera "uncouth and poorly dressed" audiences were directly responsible for "lazy singing." One poem entitled "Boston on 'Les Miserables'" satirized the narrowness of a public that censored Hugo for his "indiscriminate charity." The poem ended,

Away with all this idle stuff!
The moral world has had enough!
Abate the panic!
Be led no more by purient bosh!
And made no more in "sewer" slosh!
The only Virtue that will "wash"
Is Puritanic! (VI,226)
Each copy of *Vanity Fair* stated that its contributions were entirely original. In an age of extensive borrowing among humorists, this was a most worthy achievement. But, it followed that the magazine was very sensitive to having its own pages reprinted, and even more significantly, it felt that plagiarism in any form was reprehensible. Edward Everett particularly was cited for plagiarism. The important principle was that a writer not claim what was not his own, whether it be words or glory. It was important that prose writers be "straight-forward" and "unaffected," as female writers no longer were (as *Vanity Fair* put it).

Although the progress of American literature was observed by such *Vanity Fair* contributors as Ludlow, Stoddard, Winter, and Browne, there is no clear attitude in the magazine except to encourage American writing and to advocate honest writing. Honesty was apparently not writing for Bennett or for personal gain. One small essay satirically expressed disgust that American writers wanted to emancipate themselves from English tradition. *Vanity Fair* was nationalistic in its literary attitudes and wanted to encourage American writers.

*Vanity Fair* sought a "straight-forward" and "unaffected" literature.

*Vanity Fair* does not feel much like shying fun at Tom Brown at Oxford. It only wishes that for the credit of manhood there were more Rugby
Schools, more Dr. Arnolds and as a necessary consequence more honest sturdy fellows like Tom Brown in the world, and so, with our best wishes, Thomas, pass on to posterity.

Moral stories told with "charm" were the best literature; moral stories involving plagiarism and characterized by pomposity were the worst. Praise for the former and satire of the latter and its audience was the extent of *Vanity Fair* literary reform.

*Vanity Fair* had a complex role in an age of reform. Progress and improvement were desirable, but radical change was undesirable. Thus the contributors could see where social reform was needed, particularly in New York City, but they also opposed the organized reforms and reformers of the time. This seems consistent, if not altogether effective. If, as the staff felt, wit and satire could bring the American public to a reasonableness through which it would achieve happiness, then more drastic means should be unnecessary. There is an element of the romantic in the satirist, and it seems consistent that William Winter, for example, would become a bitter opponent of realism in the theatre. Satire and humor are tied to realistic data, but the facts are used for laughter.
CHAPTER IV: ENDINGS

In Summary

Vanity Fair, in its brief life, was one of the finest magazines ever to appear in American journalism. It was well edited and printed, using the best cartoonists and magazine writers of its age. As editors, Frank Wood, Charles Godfrey Leland, Charles Farrar Browne, and Charles Dawson Shanly made contributions to American humor. Yet, we cannot be certain of the extent of the contribution of each; Browne, for example, could hardly have edited a weekly closely and have carried on his famous lecture tours. Obviously the editors were aided by the three Stephens brothers, Henry Louis, the art editor, William Allan, the general editor, and Louis Henry, the publisher. Exactly how this team operated, we do not know. We do know, however, from comments by Leland, Stoddard, and Winters in their memoirs, that the magazine depended greatly on a group of writers who gathered at Pfaff's cellar for much of the material in the magazine. Ada Clare, Fitz-James O'Brien, George Arnold, and William Winter, along with Wood, H.L. Stephens, Browne, and Shanly, were frequenters of Pfaff's and contributors to the magazine. Among the more genteel writers, Fitz-Hugh
Ludlow, E.C. Stedman, and R.H. Stoddard contributed humorous poems and serials. Matthew Whittier and Thomas Bailey Aldrich apparently were sort of swing men between the two groups. The cartoonists comprised a who's who of cartooning for the time: Frank Bellew, Ned Miller, John McLenan, Edward F. Muller, J.H. Howard, and the best of them all, H.L. Stephens himself. This auspicious staff put the magazine through 169 issues; however, it was the Stephens brothers, Shanly, and Arnold who worked with the magazine from its start to its demise. It was probably the patience, hard work, and unflagging interest of particularly the Stephens brothers that kept the magazine going and kept it on its high editorial level.

As we have seen, many pieces in *Vanity Fair* are of unknown authorship, and the staff relationships and duties are generally unknown; yet the magazine's identity and the opinions expressed on public matters are clear and unequivocal. Frank Luther Mott has described the style of *Vanity Fair* as "a gift for wedding clever phase to just statement." This achievement of simultaneous wit and judicious treatment of issues was made by a careful scrutiny of current events. From its inception the magazine was to be a "humorous and satirical paper. A pleasant tonic to be taken once-a-week by the public. A corrective for what seems to us to be at present a rather dyspeptic state of society." Yet, this was a serious
effort, "We are engaged in a noble work. We are doing for literature what actors are doing for the stage—we are simplifying matters—stripping them of their excrescences, and proving that anything is susceptible of being burlesqued." It was to be a literary production, a pleasure to its public, and a corrective for society's pains. Opinions expressed in the magazine were concise, pointed, courageous, and often humorous.

On a more practical level, the magazine searched for and used incongruities in current news, believed in the common-sense man, emphasized the glorious future of America, displayed fervent patriotism, jealously guarded America against foreign encroachment, and satirized those humans who appeared to subvert America and humanity itself. Perhaps a single one of the Jonathan poems conveyed most of the interests of Vanity Fair. It was called "Jonathan's General View." Characteristically, the poem opened with a reference to Jonathan's common-sense Americanism, giving him a view superior to that of the intellectuals.

Whenever smart Professor Lowe
Is up as high as he can go,
I top him so, without his gas,
He couldn't find me with a glass.

Jonathan was able to see America's international standing.

Whenever above his little view—
Put to it, some, to see it, two—
I see the Country, clear an' bright
An' furrin shores aint a'bout o' sight.
The spirit of Jonathan's speech was one of faith in America's destiny; America would always be gloriously victorious,

W'en the sun comes up says I,--
"Jon'than, look for Victory!"

This optimism was accompanied by patriotism and pride,

There's a'our armies great an' strong,
Movin' giner'ly right along--
Like streams that wash the dams away,
Detarmined on't to reach the bay.

However, this optimism was never such as to overlook the many problems that hindered progress, and these problems were always represented by human beings.

An' dirty folks--not all of 'em male,
Refuse to wash, but stand an' rail.

These dirty, railing enemies were only part of the problems. Economic factors were always present; for example, in speaking of the South,

Right hungry, too, they seem to be:
A pooty techin' sight to see!
The poor fools can't see w'ere they go,
This Burnin' Cotton blinds' em so. (V,284)

The poem closes with an image of the helpless South looking toward Europe for aid, the source of possible foreign encroachment in the United States. The poem shows a knowledge of current news, a belief in the common-sense man, a patriotic fervor for America, and a policy of ridiculing enemies.

With such a vision, the magazine found subject matter in local and national government, foreign affairs,
Buchanan's administration, Northern battles and leaders, the South, treason, Lincoln, and Lincoln's cabinet. In politics and government *Vanity Fair* felt that government acted much too slowly for the needs of the American people, and when Congress grossly failed to meet the needs of the hour, then *Vanity Fair* felt that, in a spirit of true democracy, the members of Congress should return to their homes and explain their failings to their constituencies. The editors of *Vanity Fair* realized that ultimately the government was in the hands of the American people; the slowness of government was finally the responsibility of the voters.

*Vanity Fair* was, by intent, thoroughly "National":

*Vanity Fair*, believing that it is the duty of the Patriot to forego every other consideration for the time being, and to strike at the heart of this rebellion until it is thoroughly crushed, will lend its humble aid to sustain the Government in this necessary work, and at the same time pay attention to our enemies without, making the paper in every particular Thoroughly National.

It was pro-Union:

Nor will we be in any way alarmed by these politicians, either for ourselves or for the next dearest object to our heart (after *Vanity Fair*), this glorious Union; for whatever they may say and whomever they may do, we shall still believe that the country is safe . . . So the best thing the Union-savers can do is to subscribe to *Vanity Fair*, which hereby promises to take the Union . . . under its wide-spread and protecting wings.
When the Civil War broke out, the South was described as striking at the "Liberty" of the North, and it was to be punished for this. The magazine felt that by declaring war the South had declared that it would not recognize a government by all the people of the United States; this was intolerable.

Acknowledging that the Negro issue was important to many people, Vanity Fair indicated that it was a problem that should be contained or sealed up again:

A good old story always bears a new application. Few are better than that in "The Arabian Nights" of the Fisherman who netted from the deep sea "a bottle of brass" from which when opened flew a tremendous evil Afrite, "whose nostrils were as trumpets; his eyes like lamps, and he had dishevelled hair." He had been sealed up by Solomon.

Years ago the Wisdom of America sealed up a terrible Afrite--the devil of dissention and anarchy, and threw it into the ocean of the future. The fishers in troubled waters--the Yanceys, Toombs, and Deitts of our day have found the bottle--they have opened it . . .

Ha! what tremendous Fiend is it that bursts madly out! Furious and devilish he threatens ruin--death! The fierce Afrite--the Awful Discord. The fisherman of the old story had the wit, however, to conjure the Afrite back into the bottle. Have we the wisdom to do it. (III,30)

The Emancipation Declaration was received with the highest sort of praise.

Some Sense About The Nigger, At Last

While the Abolitionists have been excoriating their knotty knuckles, year after year, in frantic efforts to scrub off the Great Black Spot, out come President Lincoln with a little
vial of Benzine, and offers to do the job handsomely and completely, and without barking anybody's knuckles, if Congress will only furnish the necessary Soap. (V, 130)

And perhaps it was here that the Stephens brothers began to have confidence in Lincoln as President, a confidence that culminated in the last political cartoon in the life of the magazine, one that showed Lincoln with upraised arms.

The President—"Freemen of the North, arise, again!"
The Nation.—"We Come!"

We should remember, however, that Lincoln's cabinet was not nearly so fortunate. Cameron, Stanton, Chase, and Welles were roundly attacked. Only Seward, an old Democratic friend, received a measure of praise for his representation of America in foreign affairs. The poem, "America to the World," was written as from the mouth of Seward:

Tell them this Union—so great—cannot sever,
Though it may tremble beneath the rude shock,
As hath lived, so it shall live forever
Strong as the mountain oak, firm as the rock...

(III, 230)

This was typical of the firmness which Vanity Fair urged toward the other countries of the world. England and France, and, to a lesser extent, the other countries of Europe, were trying to catch America in a weak moment when they could make her permanently weak. But, be this as it may, crippled or weakened, "the Eagle could always whip the British Lion," and thus any lesser country.
This nationalistic spirit indicated the definition of a traitor as "one who would make us small among watching nations." This category of humanity included gangsters and cops, soldiers and civilians, politicians and authors, reformers and "copperheads." Charlatanism, venality, and political trickery made traitors of any sort of men, and this also was intolerable.

Although the efforts of organized reformers were severely satirized for falling into the above categories, Vanity Fair was itself an organ of reform. It had as its goal the remaking of real government into the ideal through "inextinguishable laughter." Dana and Greeley, Garrison and Phillips, Beecher and Brown were all too serious to greatly help the country and thought too much of small groups of needy people rather than the total welfare of the country. Vanity Fair advocated honest government under the existing constitution, and it was felt that only corrupt men kept the American government from being ideal.

There were areas where gradual reform was needed. Not the least of these was treatment of the negro, but there were also such matters as the oppression of laborers by capitalists, the oppression of the poor, the poor taste of the public in literature and the stage, and corrupt officials in local government.
Later Years

The magazine's staff went on. On July 8, 1865, Mrs. Grundy was started as "Vanity Fair revived."

Henry L. Stephens drew a full-page unbacked cartoon. The $100-prize-winning cover was drawn by Thomas Nast. The last issue appeared September 23, 1865.

By 1870, the Vanity Fair remnants had decided the problem was a lack of capital. William A. Stephens, Henry L. Stephens, and Charles Dawson Shanly obtained backing from four New York financiers. It was an imitation of the British Punch and was called Punchinello. Perhaps because of the backers (Jay Gould and Jay Fisk of the Erie Railroad and William M. Tweed and Peter B. Sweeney of Tammany) the revived magazine lacked humor. It began April 2 and ended December 24, 1870.

Another magazine began in 1889 as Weekly Sports and, after some title changes, became Vanity Fair in 1896; it was a "naughty picture magazine." After some changes of title again, it changed ownership and became the very fine Vanity Fair (1913-36) edited by Frank Crowninshield. Condé Nast merged it with Vogue in 1936. As late as the 1960's, Vogue had "Formerly Vanity Fair" on its title page.
Effects

Some influences can be seen directly. Artemus Ward's influence on Mark Twain has been shown, and the comic common-sense showman continued clearly with Will Rogers, Bob Burns, Herb Shriner, and Mort Sahl. In another direction, previous mention has been made of H.L. Stephens' influence on Thomas Nast, who in turn led to Herbert Block, Paul Conrad, and other political cartoonists and caricaturists. *Vanity Fair* showed that cartoons can be used in war; in fact, this may well be the only art that can encompass the warrior's compressed life. *Vanity Fair* watched the war closely. In a sense, Bill Mauldin and Ernie Pyle carried on the tradition in part begun by *Vanity Fair*.

The magnificent *Vanity Fair* of 1913-36 also viewed the world with urban wit. The main differences between the old and new were those brought about by photography, color, transportation (distribution), and communication; the more recent magazine was more widely national and international. The old *Vanity Fair* simply repeated in style; Nast very much was an heir of Stephens. During its glorious life the *American Mercury* used satirical sketches and quips in the *Vanity Fair* tradition. The *New Yorker* and *Saturday Review*—both centered in New York City—have had
extensive humor content in the *Vanity Fair* tradition. They also have been political—basically Democratic.

**In Retrospect**

As one looks back at the publishing history of *Vanity Fair*, one is a little depressed by an editorial at the beginning of volume three:

... "Live a year, and you can live forever." There be those who have doubted the possibility of either of these terms of existence for a journal undertaking America's laughing censorship. We have demonstrated the one possibility. We are demonstrating the other.

And why is it impossible in America to be eternally funny? Our people all stand on a level, say the doubters—we have no privileged higher classes to laugh at. Our rulers are of home-manufacture—if they show long ears, we hold the power of abasing those elegant appendages to the shames of private life so soon that we have not time to joke at them.

But look! We are all rulers. We enjoy the daily possibility of laughing at kings. We are all kings—we laugh at ourselves. A man will laugh at himself when he will permit nobody else to laugh at him... To do with yourself what you please—that is the great franchise of American liberty. To laugh at yourself—that is the highest franchise of all franchises!

This was a writer who saw only prosperity for his publication, a publication that would actually exist only another two years.

Why was he wrong? Did he overestimate the springs of wit in his writers? Or did he overestimate the desire of Americans to laugh at themselves? One of the magazine's favorite targets considered the question.
James Gordon Bennett had been the target of a satirical epitaph in *Vanity Fair*:

As a scurrilist perhaps James Gordon Bennett was unequaled. He enriched his pocket at the expense of his character and that of the profession he followed only to degrade.

In volume II, *Vanity Fair* quotes his forecasting a short life for *Vanity Fair*.

We do not know why it is that illustrated comic and satirical publications should be so invariably unlucky and short-lived amongst us. We have seen scores of them started in our time, which have all flickered out one after the other. One of them, published in this city, which had dragged out an unusually protracted existence of a few years, is either dead or on the point of expiring. Another, which was started a couple of months since with some promise of vitality, is already giving evidence of coma. Its first few numbers were smart and telling, but in its later issues the fun is dying out, and the satire is pointless. The descent from champagne to small beer has, in fact, become so marked that people have lost all taste for it.

Although Bennett was attacking a struggling young magazine, he was right in his judgment that comic and humorous publications did not have long lives. He was probably right in his prophesy that the public would find the fun dying out and the satire pointless in the magazine.

Just as Bennett writes that he cannot answer the question he poses, this study will not attempt to answer definitively. Why did the public lose interest in *Vanity Fair*? Certainly the public was then, as it is now,
impossibly varied of interest (fickle?); Vanity Fair composed a satirical letter from a resigning subscriber,

I have sought in vain for articles of a serious nature; essays upon Hydrostatics and Bridge Building; Reports of Chemical Experiments and Geographical Explorations. You have entirely neglected the important subject of Predestination. You have thrown no light upon Infant Baptism. What are you doing for the benighted Sandwicher? Where is your interest in Presbyterian Theology? You are silent. Alas! these things, indispensable to a comic journal, you have treated with indifference, and I, to retain my consistency, must cease to be Your Subscriber. (II,9)

Demands by the reading public, along with normal publishing difficulties, may have become insurmountable problems. In summary, for complex reasons which we probably will never know completely, the "proprietors," managers, advertisers, readers, and authors ceased to publish.

Fortunately for Americans, and unfortunately for the Devil and the humorless, the shutdown was not final. Gloomsters are unaware that humor and laughter are never lost. Laughter bounces from one human spirit to another, on and on forever. Today, Charles Schulz, Johnny Hart, Hank Ketcham, Paul Conrad, Herbert Block, Mort Sahl, Bob Hope, and Woody Allen could read an issue of Vanity Fair and each would surely recognize a progenitor.

In addition, the Vanity Fair sort of humor goes on in literature. Blair and Mill, at least partially speaking of Vanity Fair, describe "Phunny Phellows":


In piece after piece, they got their laughs by performing feats with word play. . . . To find a school of American writers as fond of philological contortions, we have to peer back to early Puritan days. Seventeenth-century colonial savants . . . also doted on games with words—in that era puns, conceits, anagrams, palindromes, and "inkhorn coinages." . . . The seventeenth-century word jugglers put on their act to flaunt their own learning; nineteenth-century comic writers parodied their performance—staged their act to flog displays in their period of pedantry and literary affections.23

A few writers—and they are among our major writers—practice this sort of humor: John Barth, Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Peter DeVries, E.L. Doctorow, William Gaddis, John Gardner, Joseph Heller, Thomas Pynchon, and John Updike. Do they owe anything to Vanity Fair? I believe so. Vanity Fair showed us that Americans can laugh at the world and themselves even in the worst of times. In the seven volumes of Vanity Fair is a marvelous store of our laughter that made someone shake with laughter, a laughter that passed to others, bouncing from person to person, so that we can laugh today.
Notes


Leslie's Budget of Fun (1858-96), Hombre (1851) (San Francisco), Humbug's American Museum (1852), Budget (1852-53), City Budget (1853-54), Bubble (1853), Everybody's Own (1853), O.K. (1853), Curiosity Shop (1854), Curiosity Shop (1854) (San Francisco), Quampeaq Coyotes (1855) (Mokelumue Hill, Calaveras County, California), Shanghai (1855-56) (Eticott's Mills, Maryland), Wang Doodle (1858-59) (Chicago), Jolly Joker (1862-77), Merryman's Monthly (1863-77). An interesting thesis could be done on California humor publications alone.

5 Vanity Fair. Volumes 1-7. December 31, 1859-July 4, 1863. Lengthy quotations from Vanity Fair are referred in the text by volume and page number.

6 Mott, p. 520. Historical records erase power and reputation from history. Business men, who operated in private and lived by secrets, especially are unmentioned in the records handed down to the student.

7 Frank Wood is unmentioned in modern secondary sources. Like most of the Bohemians, he left no memoirs. Apparently he was a free-lance essayist and humorist.


John Quincy Reed, "Artemus Ward: a Critical Study," Diss. State Univ. of Iowa 1955. Also valuable is James C. Austin, *Artemus Ward* (New York: Twayne, 1964). Ward wrote humorous sketches; then he became famous and successful as a lecturer. Biographers have extensive data about his showman years, but the years when he was doing most of his writing are not as well known. Thus, biographies of Ward are of limited use to the literary researcher.


18 Mott, p. 525. The only time "McAroni" was used in Vanity Fair, II, 271; however, this was preceded by a "McArone" signature (II, 265). Apparently the "McAroni" was a misprint (which I consider likely) or Arnold did make a brief experiment with the name.

19 John Q. Reed, "Artemus Ward on Reform and Reformers," The Educational Leader, 22, no. 1 (1958), 20-26. Dr. Reed has given more details on Browne's attitudes. Much of the work cited by Reed is from Vanity Fair, and he emphasizes Browne's antipathy toward reformers. Significantly, Reed notes, "On the subject of economic reform Ward was virtually silent." As I note in this study, other Vanity Fair staff members could see that Americans--especially New Yorkers--had economic problems.

20 Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper, 1943), p. 394, states the majority of Americans were either "indifferent or hostile to the reform movements."

21 Mott, p. 213.

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"Artemus Ward on Reform and Reformers."

The Educational Leader, 22, No. 1 (1958).


