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MARY LOUISE MACHANUS.

By

THACKERAY.

"THE FRENCH INFLUENCE ON

T H E S I S

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Main
Thesis

THE FRENCH INFLUENCE ON THACKERAY.

There is no doubt that among our great writers, Thackeray occupies a unique position in regard to his knowledge of the French language, of life in the French capital, of French manners and customs, and of the French way of thinking; and, yet, strange to say it is almost impossible to discover any pronouncement which gives evidence of careful research on the influence which this intimacy with things French had upon him. Basing their conclusions only on Thackeray's well-known love of a visit to Paris, and on the fact that Becky Sharpe is an adventuress, and that there are many French characters appearing in his novels and sketches, some rather rash reviewers state that Thackeray's style of writing was the direct result of contemporary French fiction. Others, again, basing their judgements upon excerpts from Thackeray's papers and essays, declare that, as he disliked and ridiculed the French, he was not at all, in any way, influenced by them. Somewhere in the wide spaces between these more or less snap-judgements must lie the truth which we shall endeavor to find, though it, indeed, were "hid within the centre".

If we are truly, "part of all that we have met"; and, if the converse, that all we have met is part of us, is true, no one can deny that a large part of Thackeray, as artist, novelist, poet, and essayist, was the result of his French contacts. He made his first acquaintance with Paris, Easter, 1830, when he left Welmar, where he was spending some