

W. M. Thackeray (1811-63)

9 *The Lamentable Ballad of the Foundling of Shoreditch*

Come all ye Christian people, and listen to my tail,  
It is all about a doctor was travelling by the rail,  
By the Heastern Counties Railway (vich the shares I don't desire),  
From Ixworth town in Suffolk, vich his name did not transpire.

A travelling from Bury this Doctor was employed 5  
With a gentleman, a friend of his, vich his name was Captain Loyd,  
And on reaching Marks Tey Station, that is next beyond Colchest-  
er, a lady entered in to them most elegantly dressed.

She entered into the Carriage all with a tottering step,  
And a pooty little Bayby upon her bussum slep; 10  
The gentlemen received her with kindness and siwillaty,  
Pitying this lady for her illness and debillaty.

She had a fust-class ticket, this lovely lady said;  
Because it was so lonesome she took a secknd instead.  
Better to travel by secknd class, than sit alone in the fust, 15  
And the pooty little Baby upon her breast she nust.

A seein of her cryin, and shiverin and pail,  
To her spoke this surging, the Ero of my tail;  
Saysee "You look unwell, ma'am; I'll elp you if I can,  
And you may tell your case to me, for I'm a meddicle man." 20

"Thank you, sir," the lady said, "I only look so pale,  
Because I ain't accustom'd to travelling on the Rale;  
I shall be better presnly, when I've ad some rest:"  
And that pooty little Baby she squeegeed it to her breast.

So in conwersation the journey they beguiled, 25  
Capting Loyd and the meddicle man, and the lady and the child,  
Till the warious stations along the line was passed,  
For even the Heastern Counties' trains must come in at last.

When at Shoreditch tumminus at lenth stopped the train,  
This kind meddicle gentleman proposed his aid again. 30  
“Thank you, sir,” the lady said, “for your kyindness dear;  
My carridge and my osses is probibbly come here.

“Will you old this baby, please, vilst I step and see?”  
The Doctor was a famly man: “That I will,” says he.  
Then the little child she kist, kist it very gently, 35  
Vich was sucking his little fist, sleeping innocently.

With a sigh from her art, as though she would have bust it,  
Then she gave the Doctor the child — verry kind he nust it:  
Hup then the lady jumped hoff the bench she sat from,  
Tumbled down the carridge steps and ran along the platform. 40

Vile hall the other passengers vent upon their vays,  
The Capting and the Doctor sat there in a maze;  
Some vent in a Homminibus, some vent in a Cabby,  
The Capting and the Doctor vaited vith the babby.

There they sat looking queer, for an hour or more, 45  
But their feller passinger neather on ’em sore:  
Never, never back again did that lady come  
To that pooty sleeping Hinfnt a suckin of his Thum!

What could this pore Doctor do, bein treated thus,  
When the darling Baby woke, cryin for its nuss? 50  
Off he drove to a female friend, vich she was both kind and mild,  
And igsplained to her the circumstance of this year little child.

That kind lady took the child instantly in her lap,  
And made it very comfortable by giving it some pap;  
And when she took its close off, what d’you think she found? 55  
A couple of ten pun notes sewn up, in its little gownd!

Also in its little close, was a note which did conwey,  
That this little baby’s parents lived in a handsome way  
And for its Headucation they reglarly would pay,  
And sirtingly like gentlefolks would claim the child one day, 60  
If the Christian people who’d charge of it would say,  
Per adwertisement in the *Times*, where the baby lay.

Pity of this bayby many people took,  
It had such pooty ways and such a pooty look;  
And there came a lady forrard (I wish that I could see  
Any kind lady as would do as much for me; 65

And I wish with all my art, some night in *my* night gownd,  
I could find a note stitched for ten or twenty pound) —  
There came a lady forrard, that most honorable did say,  
She'd adopt this little baby, which her parents cast away. 70

While the Doctor pondered on this hoffer fair,  
Comes a letter from Devonshire, from a party there,  
Hordering the Doctor, at its Mar's desire,  
To send the little Infant back to Devonshire.

Lost in apoplexy, this pore meddicle man, 75  
Like a sensible gentleman, to the Justice ran;  
Which his name was Mr. Hammill, a honorable beak,  
That takes his seat in Worship Street four times a week.

"O Justice!" says the Doctor, "instrugt me what to do.  
I've come up from the country, to throw myself on you; 80  
My patients have no doctor to tend them in their ill  
(There they are in Suffolk without their draffts and pills!).

"I've come up from the country, to know how I'll dispose  
Of this pore little baby, and the twenty pun note, and the close,  
And I want to go back to Suffolk, dear Justice, if you please, 85  
And my patients wants their Doctor, and their Doctor wants his feez.

Up spoke Mr. Hammill, sittin at his desk,  
"This year application does me much perplesk;  
What I do advise you, is to leave this babby  
In the Parish where it was left by its mother shabby." 90

The Doctor from his Worship sadly did depart —  
He might have left the baby, but he hadn't got the heart  
To go for to leave that Hinnocent, has the laws allows,  
To the tender mussies of the Union House.

Mother, who left this little one on a stranger's knee,  
Think how cruel you have been, and how good was he!  
Think, if you've been guilty, innocent was she;  
And do not take unkindly this little word of me:  
Heaven be merciful to us all, sinners as we be!

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*1859*

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