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"A VIXEN-VOICE": HARDY AND THACKERAY

By CARL H. KETCHAM

HARDY'S "Outside the Window," Number VII of his "Satires of Circumstance"—first published in the *Fortnightly Review*, XCV o. s. (April 1911), 581—describes a man who, returning to his sweetheart's house for a walking-stick he has just left behind, hears "a vixen-voice" and sees through the window, by the light of the fire, the girl "rating her mother with eyes aglare/For something said while he was there." Warned in time by this glimpse of her real self, he comments on the narrowness of his escape and "steals off, leaving his stick unclaimed."

Hardy seems to have derived his poem from an episode sketched briefly by Thackeray in *Pendennis*: see the Centenary Biographical Edition of Thackeray's works, IV (New York and London, 1910), 298. Lightfoot, Sir Francis Clavering's valet, is describing Blanche Amory to Major Pendennis' man Morgan: "The second season in London, Mr. Soppington was a goin' to propose for her, and actially came one day, and sor her fling a book into the fire, and scold her mother so, that he went down softly by the back droring-room door, which he came in by; and next thing we heard of him was, he was married to Miss Rider."

