

**THE PARVENU FAMILY;
OR, PHOEBE:
GIRL AND WIFE; IN
THREE VOLUMES: VOL. I**

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The parvenu family; or, Phoebe: girl and wife; in three volumes: Vol. I by Percy Fitzgerald

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PERCY FITZGERALD

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OR, PHOEBE:
GIRL AND WIFE; IN
THREE VOLUMES: VOL. I**

THE PARVENU FAMILY;

OR,

PHŒBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD,

AUTHOR OF "BELLA DONNA," "NEVER FORGOTTEN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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THE PARVENU FAMILY;

OR,

PHOEBE: GIRL AND WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPONE HOUSE.

CHAPONE HOUSE was the name of an important academy for young ladies, directed by the Misses Cooke.

It belonged to the class known as "finishing"—an epithet of terror for parents of contracted means. There were well-accredited instances of fashionable families despatching a whole series of daughters to receive the high-class instruction to be imparted at the academy, but who had been themselves "finished," as regards their worldly means, by the enormous bills sent

in by the presiding ladies. Indeed, as the "Newly-Rich" would put their sons in the Guards, not with a view of serving their country, but for the purpose of contracting intimacies with young men of rank and fashion, so were they equally zealous to receive admission in the household brigade commanded by the Misses Cooke, where opportunities of the same favourable kind were opened to the young ladies. Naturally, therefore, the purchase-money was high, the style of living costly, the extras of an appalling kind; and the Misses Cooke, having always a list of candidates waiting for vacancies, were able to make such demands as they chose. If dissatisfied or grumbling, parents and guardians were at liberty to remove their children, the principals rather plaintively conveying that they had been mistaken in their opinion of the poor and paltry persons who had thus imposed on them; and, in fine irony, mentioning other establishments which, they were certain, would be more suited to the class of thing such parents were in search of.

Daughters of the nobility then, of leaders of fashion—children of the untitled aristocracy, of the great county families, of baro-

nets and members of Parliament gliding upwards to the peerage—such were the clients the Misses Cooke sought to “finish,” and whose accounts were never submitted to the indignity of audit or vouching.

At Chapone House there was, indeed, even a region known as “the office,” with a general air of mahogany, like a banking house, where a regular office book-keeper dealt with ledgers, and a store of cash, and to which Miss Cooke sent up or down in a dignified fashion, for accounts or other financial information.

The principal herself had been finished at a great academy, and had officiated as governess to the Ladies Clara and Mary Draper, daughters of the Countess of Canonbury, who had, later, been finished successfully into a duchess and a marchioness respectively. This feat at once brought her reputation, and with some savings and borrowings, she founded her well-known establishment, situated close to Sydenham, in fine bracing air. She was, of course, permitted to refer to the august ladies just named, who had a sort of regard for her; also to the Most Noble A.,