

Venetia Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Venetia, set in regency England, is a romance novel about a woman on the verge of spinsterhood and a rogue. Venetia is twenty-five years of age, virtually "on the shelf," and is the only person who is unconcerned about this fate. When she meets and falls in love with Damerel, who is held to be a man of low character, she must be clever if she is going to convince him that it is okay for them to marry.

Venetia is a woman in her mid-twenties who has spent her life in virtual seclusion. Her mother ran off (although Venetia has been told she died) her father left her in Undershaw manor to take care of the manor, herself, and her lame little brother, Aubrey. She has two suitors, but likes neither. She has never traveled far enough to speak of, and was even denied the tradition of 'coming out' as a young woman.

For most of her life, she has heard stories of Damerel, who ran off with a married woman who left him for another before they said their vows. His crimes were never explained to her or her older brother Conway, so they devised their own stories of the "evil baron" when others would not divulge. It is generally advised that people of polite society stay away from him, which is easy at first because he rarely visits his estate, Elliston Priory.

When Venetia encounters Damerel for the first time, she is picking blackberries on his property. The sparks are instantaneous, and when Aubrey is hurt and is taken back to the Priory, they become close.

Venetia and Damerel fall in love with one another, and both entertain thoughts of marrying one another. However, Damerel will not propose because he fears that it will be social suicide for her. Venetia does not care about such things, but can't convince Damerel or her protective aunt and uncle of this.

When Venetia learns that her mother is not dead, but is shunned from polite society, she sees her chance. She convinces her mother, who cares nothing for her, to write her a letter inviting Venetia to stay with her and her husband. Although the invitation is not real, Venetia uses it to tell Damerel that she will go stay with her mother if he does not marry her. It will be a social disaster either way. And so in the end, Damerel gives in.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

Venetia, set in regency England, is a romance novel about a woman on the verge of spinsterhood and a rake. Venetia is twenty-five years of age, virtually "on the shelf," and is the only person who is unconcerned about this fate. When she meets and falls in love with Damerel, who is held to be a man of low character, she must be clever if she is going to convince him that it is okay for them to marry.

Venetia has been left, almost all of her life, in virtual seclusion with Aubrey, her lame scholar of a little brother. Although she loves Aubrey, he is really a poor companion with his nose always in a book. If you wish to speak to him, you must say his name over and over simply to gain his attentions. He would rather read a book that talk to someone. After Venetia's father, Francis' death, her older brother, Conway inherits the manor. Venetia inherited enough money that she could set up house for herself. She doesn't, but she plans to one day. Since Conway is in service, Venetia cares for the manor in his absence. Venetia plans to do this until Conway comes home.

As her father has left Venetia to fend for herself for most of her life, even denying her the tradition of 'coming out,' in London, she cares little for him. She doesn't even miss him, and shocks people when she says so. No one can really blame Venetia for feeling cheated in life, but that's not really how she views it. She knows that her father didn't care about her, so she doesn't care about him either. Very few people were allowed to visit at the manor while her father was alive. Among those who were allowed are her neighbor, Lady Denny, and her oldest suitor, Edward Yardley.

Lady Denny often comes over and discusses things with Venetia. She tries to act as a mother figure to Venetia, who never really knew her mother. Denny often advises Venetia and tries to convince her to act with propriety. Venetia, however, mostly tolerates Lady Denny. She likes her, but will not modify her behavior just to avoid gossip.

While Venetia and Aubrey are having a discussion, Yardley and Venetia's other suitor, Oswald Denny ride up to the manor. Yardley is much older than Venetia and very stubborn. He is sure that Venetia will marry him in enough time, though she tells him he won't.

Oswald is younger than Venetia, and fancies himself to be in love with her. Although she hasn't given him any indication that she will marry him, he hopes to woo her into it. He tries to be very romantic, and usually ends up looking silly. He is secretly self-conscious around Yardley because Yardley is much more confident than Oswald is.

When the suitors ride up, neither Aubrey nor Venetia is happy about it. Aubrey is unhappy about it because Oswald has a dislike for cripple people that shows through,



and Yardley shows much too much sympathy for him. Venetia simply finds no pleasure in their company.

The discussion between Yardley, Oswald, Venetia, and Aubrey is hardly enjoyable, and when the nurse, Mrs. Priddy, who likes Yardley, walks in looking for Venetia, Venetia jumps at the chance to end the conversation. Mrs. Priddy says that her business can wait but Venetia tells her suitors that she must go because she does not want to neglect her household. Yardley asks for a moment alone before he leaves. When they are alone, Venetia tells Yardley in no uncertain terms that she does not intend to marry him or Oswald. However, Yardley is sure that he knows better than Venetia what she wants and does not listen. He is also sure that she cannot mean it when she says that she did not love her father, although she does. They finally end the conversation, Venetia frustrated that he won't listen, and he vexed that she says things that he is sure she cannot mean, and that people with manners would not say.

Chapter One Analysis

This chapter lays the groundwork for the following chapters. Here we see how Venetia's personality clashes with the personality of her two suitors. We also see that Venetia has been unloved by both of her parents, one whom she thinks is dead, and the other who is dead. She is also unloved by her older brother Conway, who is enlisted in the military. She is misunderstood by her neighbor, Lady Denny and both of her suitors. The only person she has in her life who is close to her is her little brother Aubrey, and although they love each other, he is not much of a conversationalist. He is a scholar, and that is all he has time for. He reads, studies, and has little time for idle conversation.

The reader and Venetia will later learn that the reason that her father did not want her coming out was because of the shame of his divorce. It is also one reason why he kept her in isolation, although the biggest reason was simply that he was a selfish man who did not care one way or another about the happiness of his children. Venetia at one point acknowledges that he was never mean, just neglectful.

Another point that is important to note about this chapter is Aubrey's complete dislike of Venetia's two suitors. It stands to reason that a suitor's treatment of the one important person in Venetia's life will be important to her. Oswald has a complete disgust for anyone with a deformity, and Yardley insists on treating Aubrey as an invalid. This is important later on, because there is no conflict in this area when it comes to Damerel.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

After finally escaping from the complaints of her staff, Venetia decides to go pick some blackberries to make bramble jelly with. She puts on clothes to work in - nothing pretty or nice, and heads towards the Priory, where there is a blackberry patch that Venetia knows of.

Venetia sets out without an attendant, something that is not done by most ladies in polite society, but Venetia prefers it this way. On her walk, she is accompanied only by Aubrey's rambunctious spaniel, Flurry. Venetia enjoys these walks alone, with no complaints from staff or other tedious worries.

Venetia crosses into her neighbor's estate. It belongs to Damerel, but as he is rarely home, she never thinks that she might meet him. She never has before. When Venetia gets her clothes caught up in brambles and is trying to untangle herself, a voice startles her. She turns to see Damerel, who she immediately notices is handsome, ride up. Although they have never met, she figures out right away who it is.

Damerel dismounts from his horse to untangle her from the briars, but instead of letting her go, kisses her. Venetia struggles to free herself from his hold, but he is stronger. Flurry rescues her by biting his leg. Damerel is not hurt due to his boots, but shifts his attention to the dog instead. Damerel tells flurry to sit and then pets him.

As Damerel talks to Venetia, they speak in quotes to each other from famous works. Damerel had thought that Venetia was a village maiden, but realizes his mistake from her knowledge of these works. Venetia introduces herself and they talk for some time.

Damerel then questions why Venetia is without an attendant. When he first sees Venetia, he thinks she is one of the maids from his estate because of the way that she is dressed. He admits that he would not have kissed her had she had a maid with her. Venetia thinks it is because he wouldn't treat a lady of her standing that way if he knew who he was, but Damerel informs her that it would be the maid's presence, not her quality that would have stopped his advances.

After they are through bantering and Venetia is leaving, Damerel announces that although he only planned on staying for a few days, he will stay longer now that he has met Venetia.

Chapter Two Analysis

In the very instant that Venetia and Damerel meet, there is chemistry. They both find the other attractive and find the conversation stimulating. Moreover, although Damerel kisses her against her will, she does not run away as most would in this situation. In



addition, she isn't in the least afraid. Meeting Damerel may be the most exciting thing that ever happened in Venetia's life.

Venetia perceives right away that Oswald Denny would be jealous of Damerel. Damerel is what Oswald wants so desperately to be, but isn't. Her theory turns out to be right. Oswald is insanely jealous and insecure the instant that he meets Damerel.

Damerel only plans to be at the Priory for a few days. After the exciting meeting with Venetia, he decides that he will stay longer and tells her so. Later, he will reveal that he stayed with the express purpose of seducing Venetia. After getting to know her, however, he doesn't want to "make a sinner of her." Then he decides that he will marry her, but realizes that he doesn't want to ruin her social standing. So though his motives were self-serving in the beginning, they transform to self-sacrificing.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

After her encounter with Lord Damerel, Venetia tells no one of the incident. However, Damerel's return is big news in town, so conversations often turn to him. Aubrey merely mentions that it is about time that he returns to see to the affairs of his estate. Others, however, aren't so easy about his return.

Yardley tells Venetia that she must stop wandering around without a chaperon now that Damerel was back. He speaks to her as if he is correcting a child. This only proves to annoy Venetia because he thinks that he has a right to tell her what to do. Yardley still thinks that she will marry him when Conway returns, and tries to assume authority where he has none.

Oswald sees Damerel's return as a force that he could possibly protect Venetia from. He has never met Damerel, but assures Venetia that he knows the type, but that she is much too innocent to understand. He tells her repeatedly that if he should ever insult Venetia, that he will take care of it. Venetia laughs at him for this. To Venetia, Oswald is simply a silly young boy making idle threats and playing in a make believe world.

Lady Denny is dismayed when her husband, Sir John, invites Lord Damerel into their home her susceptible young Clara home, but Lady Denny acts civilly, though she doesn't want to. Later, she comes to Undershaw to tell Venetia about her meeting and to discuss Damerel. Her daughters found Damerel to be ugly and old, which surprises Venetia, who found him attractive. They were also offended that Damerel didn't speak to them very much.

Denny tells Venetia of how he ran off with a married woman named Sophia Rendlesham, but that they never married. Denny thinks that Damerel cast Sophia off, and this is what she holds against him. She informs Venetia that it is best if ladies of good standing don't associate with Damerel. Through this Venetia takes up for Damerel, saying that fault also laid with Sophia, who was older, and with Damerel's parents.

Neither Venetia nor Damerel contact each other when Aubrey, who can walk, but has trouble, takes a horse riding, and takes a fall. He is hurt and can't seem to walk. He is found by Lord Damerel and Croyde. Damerel takes Aubrey back to the Priory since it is closest, sends for a doctor, and sends a letter to Venetia.

Chapter Three Analysis

Although it seems that all except Aubrey are shocked by the things that happened during Lord Damerel's younger days, Venetia is not. She does not hold as great a store in what is and isn't proper as most do.



We see in this chapter, that although Damerel kissed Venetia against her will, she is waiting for an opportunity to see him again.

When Lady Denny is telling Venetia about why her daughters didn't like Damerel, the dialog leaves the reader with the feeling that the girls would have liked Damerel more if he had acted more taken with them.



Chapters Four and Five

Chapters Four and Five Summary

By the time that Venetia gets the letter that Damerel has sent about Aubrey, she is very worried. Aubrey had not come home for lunch, and she is scared that something is wrong. Because Aubrey values his independence and being treated as the equal of other boys his age, Venetia does not want to go searching for him yet. If it had turned out that nothing was wrong and he had simply lost track of time, it would have offended Aubrey to have Venetia out worrying over him. Venetia is trying to decide how much longer to wait when she gets the letter.

While Damerel would never wish that someone got hurt, he is glad for the excuse to send for Venetia. When he writes the letter, he writes it in a very formal manner. He wonders if she will get the joke, but she is so worried that she does not even notice.

Much against Mrs. Priddy's advice, Venetia insists on going to see Aubrey. Mrs. Priddy can't very well insist that Venetia not go see her ailing brother, although that is precisely what she would like to do. To solve the moral dilemma, Mrs. Priddy accompanies Venetia to the Priory, worrying the whole way about them being around such an un-virtuous man.

When Aubrey and Damerel meet, Damerel is immediately scolding Aubrey. However, while Yardley scolds Aubrey for doing things that every boy his age does, Damerel scolds him for not using good judgment. Because of this, Aubrey immediately likes Damerel. Like his sister, Aubrey also doesn't hold much stock in what society values.

Since Aubrey likes Damerel and Damerel treats him well, Aubrey is much more compliant with him than he is with Mrs. Priddy or Venetia. Immediately Venetia sees this and is impressed.

The doctor comes and checks Aubrey out, saying that he must remain at the Priory to recover for a while. While Mrs. Priddy is fussing over Aubrey's care, Damerel invites Venetia to dinner with him and she accepts.

At dinner, Venetia and Damerel discuss a variety of topics. They learn a lot about each other and thoroughly enjoy each other's company. Venetia finally leaves when it is almost nightfall. Mrs. Priddy is staying to care for Aubrey.

The next morning, Venetia wakes up incredibly happy because for the first time in her life she has a friend. She has found someone that she can talk to, laugh with, and joke with. She goes about her day anticipating the time that she can return to the Priory. Finally, she loads up all of the books that Aubrey has asked her to bring and leaves.



When she gets to the Priory, Aubrey informs Venetia that he doesn't want most of the books after all. It turns out that Damerel is something of a scholar himself and has quite an extensive library.

Aubrey tells her about the things that he and Damerel have discussed, including the fact that Mrs. Priddy dislikes Damerel. After a short time, Venetia excuses herself to take a walk in the garden, but doesn't make it out the door.

Yardley, having heard that Aubrey had hurt himself and was staying at the Priory, goes to visit him. Before he meets Damerel, he decides that he will make sure that Damerel knows that he does not approve of him. Due to Damerel's great manners and charm, however, Yardley must be civil.

When Damerel and Yardley first meet, Damerel assumes that he is a friend to Aubrey. He realizes that is not the case by the time that he walks him to Aubrey's room. Damerel still shows great manners even when Yardley is saying things that annoy and offend.

Yardley fusses at Aubrey for taking chances and putting Venetia in the awkward situation that he perceives her to be in. He manages to upset both Venetia and Aubrey, but Damerel intervenes, saying that he is going to bring lunch up for her and Aubrey, and would Yardley care to eat with him? Of course, Yardley declines and takes his leave.

Chapters Four and Five Analysis

Damerel and Venetia have both thought about the fact that they have not seen each other since the day in the blackberry patch. They have both wished to see each other, but the opportunity had yet to present itself. Venetia, during the time lapse, goes back and forth from being mad at herself to being mad at him. She is mad at herself at times because it actually matters to her to see him again, and she is mad at him for not bothering to contact her again.

Damerel's treatment of Aubrey and Mrs. Priddy when they are first getting acquainted is important. As Damerel treats Aubrey like he is a normal boy, he wins favor with both Aubrey and Venetia. Because he has a room prepared for Mrs. Priddy and tells his staff to listen to her, he wins her favor, but just a little for now. Although Venetia won't do whatever Mrs. Priddy tells her to do, it is much easier on her when Mrs. Priddy is happy with her actions.

Damerel shows himself to be a good judge of character in these chapters. Although Yardley presents himself as a friend of Aubrey's, Damerel knows that this is not the case before Aubrey is even aware of his presence. Once he realizes this, Damerel manages to get Yardley to leave without Yardley ever realizing that that is what he is doing.

Yardley makes a comment about Venetia's social situation being one of "particular delicacy." He is referring to the fact that her mother has brought shame by divorcing her

father for another man. As Venetia doesn't know about this, it doesn't mean anything to her.



Chapters Six and Seven

Chapters Six and Seven Summary

After Yardley departs, Venetia, Aubrey, and Damerel discuss him for a short period of time. Aubrey is very upset with the way that Yardley assumes authority when he has none. Venetia, too is upset. In fact, she even told Yardley to leave when he was upsetting Aubrey. The lack of hospitality isn't like her. Damerel reveals that he has guessed that Yardley is one of Venetia's suitors that she has told him about. She had described him as "worthy." He agrees that "worth" is a very accurate way to describe Yardley.

Venetia and Aubrey then find out that Damerel's intrusion was designed simply to get rid of Yardley. They are both grateful. In getting rid of Yardley when Yardley was upsetting Aubrey, Damerel gains Mrs. Priddy's favor, and Yardley loses it, because Damerel makes sure that Mrs. Priddy knows how much he has upset her patient.

Damerel then takes Venetia for the walk in the garden that got put off. There, they talk for a while about several subjects. They talk about their fathers, which neither of them cares for. They also discuss their kiss the day in the blackberry patch. Damerel tells her in more than one way that she is beautiful. They also discuss Lady Sofia, a subject that Venetia is very interested in. Damerel reveals his side of the story, and that Lady Sofia was actually the one that jilted him, not the other way around. He was a kid, and was terribly embarrassed at the time. Since then, he has not wished to be reconciled into polite society.

They also discuss Venetia's mother, whom Damerel remembers, but Venetia does not really. Venetia knows that she is pretty because Mrs. Priddy told her once that she would never be as pretty as her mother. However, that is all that has been said about her, because her father demanded that no one speak of her again after she left him.

Aubrey spends ten days at the Priory, and Venetia visits every day. Although she visits on the pretense of seeing Aubrey, seeing Damerel everyday is really what she looks forward to. She does see Aubrey everyday, but as he would assume to spend his time studying rather than visiting, it is for a limited amount of time everyday. The rest is spent with Damerel. This would be perfectly acceptable if Damerel was in better standing with society.

Since Damerel has the reputation of a rake, Yardley, Oswald, and Lady Denny are all worried about the propriety of Venetia's daily visits, but none can stop it. That doesn't stop them from thinking about it though. At a dinner at the Denny's residence, Yardley stops worrying about it long enough to have a conversation with Clara Denny. Clara Denny finds Yardley clever and funny. She assures Yardley that Damerel could not possibly compare to Yardley.



Back at the Priory, Venetia confides in Damerel that he is the first to perceive how Aubrey hates his lameness and doesn't wish to be treated differently than other boys. They also discuss that Mrs. Priddy now holds Damerel in high regard, which is a complete turnaround.

Damerel reveals to Venetia the reason for his return to the Priory, which Venetia had thought is business. He is merely returning to escape his aunts who wish to reconcile him into polite society. They wish to do so by marrying him to a "butter-toothed female with a pug nose and a deplorable figure." This doesn't sound like something Damerel wants to be involved in, and that is why he came back.

Chapters Six and Seven Analysis

Damerel knows Venetia's mother and the story that goes with it. However, he doesn't feel that it's his place to tell her, and so he doesn't. He only answers the questions that she asks, and assures her that she is prettier than her mom, contrary to what Mrs. Priddy says.

It is obvious that Edward Yardley is concerned that people will talk about Venetia visiting the Priory daily. When he confides in his mother that he is also worried about being an acquaintance himself, she urges that he should not go at all. Later the reader will find that she dislikes Venetia because of her mother and wants Edward to have nothing to do with her.

It is in this chapter that the reader sees that Edward Yardley may be better matched with Clara Denny. Clara Denny thinks that Conway will speak for her when he returns home, and Yardley is sure that Venetia will eventually marry him. Both are wrong, but the author doesn't divulge whether the two marry or not. The reader does see that Clara thinks that Yardley is wonderful and Yardley loves the attention and praise.

Although Venetia talks as if spinsterhood is upon her in these chapters and throughout the book, Damerel urges that she take the time to live her life and find a good suitor. He tells her that she is not too old, and that she regrets the choice to live alone.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

Oswald Denny goes to the Priory, like Yardley, to see Venetia, but on the pretence of visiting Aubrey. While Yardley sees no romantic threat with Damerel, but only the threat of gossip, Oswald sees a clear romantic rival. Because Oswald would like to be like Damerel, but doesn't meet the mark, he is a serious threat.

Throughout the novel, Oswald talks about the places that he has been and the things that he has seen. Most of this is just talk designed to impress. He also brags about how he could take anyone that offered the slightest insult to Venetia. This is also just talk designed to impress. These things would be much more truth coming from Damerel than from Oswald. Damerel doesn't need to brag about things like this. One can tell simply by looking at him that he is the real thing.

When Oswald is escorted into the room where Aubrey is, he immediately decides that all parties are entirely too comfortable with each other. From the relaxed way that Aubrey, Venetia, and Damerel and wiling the hours away together it is obvious that they have spent a lot of time together and know each other well. This makes Oswald very jealous.

There is some awkward interaction between the four until Oswald asks for a word in private with Venetia. When they are alone, Oswald tells her of his fear that Damerel will behave inappropriately. He even says that he almost hit Damerel in the face. Venetia laughs at this and tells him that she would like to see him try.

Oswald continues and asks Venetia once again, if she will marry him. Venetia is kind to him, but tells him that he doesn't really want to marry her. She tells him that she doesn't want to marry him either and that he should go away and find something else to entertain his thoughts.

Oswald goes, making plans of putting on a dramatic show and swearing off girls because of his broken heart. However, the picture of winning her is more appealing, so although his feelings are hurt temporarily, he is determined that he will win her over.

Once Aubrey is taken back to Undershaw, Venetia stops going to the Priory, and Damerel starts visiting Undershaw. As soon as Aubrey is home, Oswald goes to Undershaw. He is walking around the estate looking for Venetia when he hears her laughing and recognizes Damerel's voice answering.

Walking to the barn, Oswald looks in and sees that Venetia has climbed a ladder to save some kittens. However, Damerel has removed her ladder, as it is unsafe, trapping her in the loft. They are teasing, flirting, and playing, and Venetia finally jumps into Damerel's arms. He immediately releases her, which does not work to Oswald's plan as he storms



in at that moment with the plan to save her from Damerel's clutches. After a moment, Damerel shows some understanding and leaves them alone to go visit Aubrey.

After Oswald is left with Venetia, he makes a speech about how in love with her he is. Venetia listens patiently while Oswald talks and then she makes a speech about how it would never do. Oswald is too young, and his father, Sir John would most likely leave him penniless. This makes an impression on Oswald, but he refuses to admit defeat. When Venetia says that he is just a boy, that is all that Oswald can think about. Oswald, then frustrated, grabs her and forces his kisses on her, refusing to let her go, and almost making her drop the kittens.

Finally, Damerel walks in and physically throws Oswald out, saving her from Oswald's clutches.

Chapter Eight Analysis

Oswald asks Venetia to marry him again partly out of desperation. He is very worried about his competition in Damerel and sees his chances with Venetia dwindling with Damerel around.

Venetia tells Oswald that he doesn't really want to marry her because he will then be settled with a wife before he ever gets a chance to date any other girls or live much at all. Oswald realizes the truth in this, but is unwilling to admit it. Deep down he knows that she may be right, but he cannot focus on anything but winning Venetia.

Oswald hopes to make Venetia see that he is not just a boy, but a man with his kisses, but if anything, they have the opposite effect. He is clumsy, almost makes her drop her kittens, and won't heed to the fact that she wants him to stop.

The irony of this chapter is that Oswald has spent much of his spare time daydreaming about being the hero that saves Venetia from Damerel or perhaps a house fire or some other great catastrophe. However, the need to save Venetia never arises until this chapter, and then it is Oswald that causes her to need saving and Damerel plays the hero.

This irony is not lost on Oswald who is terribly embarrassed and disappointed with the outcome of these events.



Chapters Nine and Ten

Chapters Nine and Ten Summary

As soon as Oswald regains his feet, he runs towards Damerel, intending to fight. Venetia intercepts, however, and tells Oswald that if he doesn't apologize and go home, she will tell his father what he did. If he cooperates, she promises that neither will tell anyone. Oswald apologizes, but tells Damerel that he will hear from him.

After Oswald is gone, Damerel almost kisses Venetia for the second time, but does not. Although Venetia wonders at this, she doesn't worry for long. Soon Damerel leaves, saying that he will go before he is asked to drown kittens that are too young to make it without a mother.

Damerel reflects as he is on the way home that he had intended to get Venetia, but does not want to bring her down by ravishing her.

On the way, Damerel is intercepted by Oswald, who is looking for a duel. By now he has calmed enough that he does not want to fight, but does not want the shame of being a coward.

They banter for a short spell and although Oswald insists he wants to duel, Damerel will not accept the challenge. Oswald then complains to Damerel about his actions with Venetia. Although Damerel tells him that Aubrey may question his motives, but he may not, he does intend on marrying Venetia. Damerel then dismisses Oswald and continues on his way.

Back at the Priory, Damerel discusses his situation with his faithful servant Marston. They discuss the many scrapes they have been in and the fact that Damerel may well be in one now, but he is not sure.

When Sir John and Lady Denny get word about the challenge to a duel, it is through their daughters who were informed by Oswald. They are worried about his behavior and therefore send him to stay with George, Lady Denny's brother.

Later at Undershaw, Lady Denny visits Venetia, while Damerel takes Aubrey to York. It is then that Lady Denny realizes that Venetia is in love with her, and is worried that they will marry. Although she tries to talk Sir John into doing something about it, he says that there is nothing to be done. The reader will later learn that Mrs. Denny now writes Venetia's aunt and uncle to tell them that something must be done to stop this affair.

Aubrey also has noticed the pair and asks Venetia if they will marry. During a buggy ride home, he tells her that it would make him happy if she did. They get a shock upon arriving back at Undershaw to find that Conway has married, and although he is still serving his term elsewhere, has sent his new wife Charlotte, and mother-in-law Mrs. Scorrier to live at Undershaw and await his arrival.



Chapters Nine and Ten Analysis

Damerel continues to treat Oswald with mercy although most would think that he doesn't deserve it. However, due to the fact that he himself was cast off by an older woman, Damerel feels a sense of sympathy.

Although Oswald feels that his love for Venetia runs deep, he gets over this quickly. He is elated at the chance to visit his Uncle George and be a part of a larger society. This is the last time in the novel that Oswald plays a part except maybe in memory.

Damerel is the first of Venetia's suitors that either Venetia or Aubrey cares for, and he is also the first that has not proposed yet.

Venetia has always intended to set up house for herself when Conway married, however, she always thought that she would have a little more notice of it happening. Now she is torn in what to do.



Chapters Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen

Chapters Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen Summary

Charlotte and Mrs. Scorrier throw Venetia and Aubrey's lives into turmoil. Charlotte is pleasant, but scared. However, Mrs. Scorrier is anything but pleasant. This is why Conway sent them to Undershaw. Mrs. Scorrier was causing trouble for him at the post, and she causes more at Undershaw.

Mrs. Scorrier spends her time trying to make Aubrey, Venetia, and the rest of the house uncomfortable. She is determined to see that her daughter has all of the control. Charlotte, however, doesn't really want it, but will do whatever her mother says.

The household is determined to do everything they can to stop the change from coming, checking with Venetia before doing anything that Mrs. Scorrier says. Mrs. Priddy, upon finding that Charlotte is with child, spends her time doting on a willing Charlotte.

Mrs. Scorrier tries to interfere with Aubrey's affairs, but lays off to an extent when Venetia tells her that Conway is awed by Aubrey's intellect, indulgent, and would tell her to leave Aubrey's affairs to Venetia.

The trouble intensified after Damerel's first visit to Undershaw after Charlotte and Mrs. Scorriers' arrival. Although Charlotte had been very quiet, Damerel managed to bring her out of her shell in just a few moments. Mrs. Scorrier was very upset to find that a man of Damerel's social standing had been to Undershaw. She demanded that Venetia make him cease his visits, but Venetia declined.

Venetia received a brief note from Conway in the mail, saying that he trusted Venetia to take care of his new wife. She also received a lengthy letter from Yardley telling her that he was sick and could not visit.

During the long days, Venetia finds comfort in Damerel's presence. He makes her laugh when she doesn't feel like laughing, and so she asks him for advice. Mrs. Scorrier says that Charlotte has a horror of deformity, so Venetia and is ready to get Aubrey out of Undershaw as quickly as possible. She cannot decide where to go and what to do, so she asks Damerel. Damerel tells her that Aubrey may come to stay with him, if they can convince him to go.

Venetia tells Damerel that she intends to set up house for himself, but he tells her that she must not. She needs to find a suitor other than himself, for it would never work for her, though she can't understand why.



Chapters Eleven, Twelve, and Thirteen Analysis

Venetia feels that Conway put her in the position she's in on purpose. She also believes that the only reason that he married Charlotte was because she came up pregnant.

Clara Denny, Lady Denny's daughter has believed for sometime that Conway will come home and marry her. Now, however, Conway has married and told no one, leaving Venetia to break the news.

Damerel wants to marry Venetia, and Venetia wants to marry Damerel. Damerel thinks that Venetia wouldn't be happy, though because of what people will think and say. Because she is of high virtue and he is not, it is generally held that he is not good enough for her, and he believes it.



Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen Summary

The drama of everyday life is wearing on Venetia. It does not have the same effect on Aubrey. When Mrs. Scorrier picks a fight with Aubrey, he is more than happy to fight back. This puts Mrs. Scorrier in an even worse state, and she takes it out on Venetia. Venetia continues to confide in Damerel who never fails to make her feel like her problems are more trivial than she first thinks. He even makes her laugh at some of the silly things that have her in such a worry before their talks.

Damerel makes Venetia feel better about her problems and goes a little further. He tries to get Aubrey to behave himself. He tells Aubrey that his lack of manners, though he might enjoy it, is making it hard on Venetia. Therefore, Aubrey tries over the next days to be complacent. He keeps his quiet when he doesn't want to and is generally polite. Either it is too late to change Mrs. Scorrier's opinion of him or she simply doesn't like him, because it doesn't change her attitude.

One day Bess, Aubrey's dog scares Charlotte, who is scared of all dogs. All the dog does is look at Charlotte, and she screams and backs up. The dog, being curious, follows. This continues until Mrs. Scorrier comes in to see what is wrong with Charlotte. After Mrs. Scorrier begins to hit the dog, the dog begins to bark. Aubrey walked in on this scene and called the dog off and told Charlotte that there was nothing to worry about.

Mrs. Scorrier is not appeased, and verbally attacks Aubrey. She then tells him that all of his dogs must now be kept in a pen, except for Bess who cannot be kept at all. Aubrey is very polite in spite of all of this until Mrs. Scorrier tells him that he can't possibly know about Charlotte's delicate state (meaning that she is pregnant). Aubrey informs her that he does know because Bess is pregnant too.

Aubrey walks in after this scene to tell Venetia what has happened. He doesn't know that he has just interrupted the couple when Damerel was thinking of proposing. Aubrey relates the scene to the couple. After Aubrey reveals that he already knows that they dislike him because he is crippled, Venetia goes to soothe the matter out with Charlotte and Mrs. Scorrier. Damerel goes home.

Mrs. Scorrier begins to try to make amends with Venetia when she realizes that her daughter is more on their side than hers. It isn't that she suddenly wants Venetia and Aubrey to stay. She just doesn't want anyone to find out that she has chased them from their own house. She is especially worried about what her daughter will tell Conway when he returns. Her attempts to be friendly with Venetia appear to be too late to gain the dispirited Venetia's attention. When she does get a reply from Venetia, it is short, to the point, and dispirited. This is a complete change from Venetia's early attempts to converse with Mrs. Scorrier.



Venetia, after a ride to see a neighbor whose child broke a bone, returns to find that her uncle, Philip Hendred is waiting for her. This is a surprise, as her last letter to him hasn't even been answered yet. Philip has come to ask Venetia to come stay in his house at London. He has also informed Mrs. Scorrier that Charlotte does not have the legal right to take over the estate as Conway has left Venetia power of attorney.

As soon as her uncle retires to his room, Venetia head to the Priory to seek Damerel's advise. She is crushed when Damerel tells her that she must go to London and tell him goodbye, for they cannot last. After much protest, she does go, but reluctantly and sadly.

She will go to London with her uncle and Aubrey will stay with Damerel. The reader will find out later that Philip has been to see Damerel and has extracted the promise that Damerel will not ask her to marry him which is exactly what he was about to do the night before when Aubrey interrupted.

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen Analysis

Mrs. Scorrier says and does things without much thought about anyone else's feelings. The fights that she picks she thinks that she picks for her daughter, but they do Charlotte more harm than good. After the fight about the dogs, Aubrey and Venetia have the same thought. Charlotte had better get used to dogs, because Conway takes his dogs everywhere. In addition, unlike Aubrey's dogs, Conway's dogs are ill-behaved.

Venetia has never met a person who is as hard to get along with as Mrs. Scorrier. She doesn't understand her at all. It is interesting to note that Conway's wife is not the one that Venetia can't tolerate as Venetia always thought it would be when Conway married, but his wife's mother.

Damerel, when the fight over the dogs is related, offers to let Aubrey come stay with him. Aubrey feels that this would be abandoning his sister in some way, and although Venetia feels that there would be less tension without him there, she doesn't say so.

When Philip Hendred arrives, it is clear that Mrs. Scorrier knows that he is wealthy and has great social standing. She makes every effort to become close to him, but he dislikes her immediately. The news that Conway has given Venetia power of attorney, which no one bothered to tell her, probably makes Mrs. Scorrier furious. It makes all the previous attempts to run Venetia off useless, because Venetia has the legal power to do as she wishes.

Venetia is broken-hearted over Damerel telling her to go, but she does her best to let no one see it. Aubrey does see it, and tries to make her tell him what happened. When she declines, he lets it go and lets her go to London.



Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen Summary

Venetia had longed to stay in London as a young girl. Now it is not such an enjoyable trip. She can't sleep due to the city noises, and she can't put Damerel completely from her mind, either. When she is busy, she is almost content, but when she is not, she is unhappy.

Venetia finds that she enjoys dressing up in the new styles in London. She also finds a lot to see and do in London and finds some enjoyment out of this. She often finds herself thinking, however, of what she will tell Damerel about it, and this brings the blues. Her aunt, Mrs. Hendred, is constantly worrying about making Venetia a good match even though Venetia insists that she doesn't want to marry.

Mrs. Hendred is very disturbed by the fact that Venetia goes out without attendants. Also disturbing is how she says that she is not looking for a husband, but is looking to set up house for herself and Aubrey. Venetia finally compromises and stops telling Mrs. Hendred of her attempts to find a house.

Yardley visits Venetia at the Hendred residence. He has come to London both to try to win over Venetia and for a doctor's appointment. Although Mr. Hendred does not care for him, Mrs. Hendred does and encourages his advances. Venetia, though usually polite, tells him again that there is no way that she will marry him.

Mrs. Hendred is trying to convince Venetia that it might be a good idea to marry Yardley when she lets it out that she knows about Damerel. Lady Denney wrote Mrs. Hendred to tell them what was going on, and that is when the Hendreds decided it would be a good idea to invite Venetia to stay with them.

Mrs. Hendred tries to soothe Venetia by telling her of other similar stories that worked out just fine. It is not these stories but the realization that Damerel does want her that gives Venetia's state of mind a sudden change. She realizes that Damerel gave her up for the sake of a 'scruple.' Now Venetia is trying to decide how to overcome this problem and get him back.

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen Analysis

Throughout Venetia's stay with her, Mrs. Hendred is constantly talking about how a girl in Venetia's situation must act with utmost propriety or people will talk. Venetia doesn't completely understand what she means by this. The reader will later learn that Mrs. Hendred is referring to Venetia's mother. Like mother, like daughter is what Mrs. Hendred fears will be said. In addition, how is she expected to make a good match if respectable men think that Venetia will run out on them like her mother ran out on her father?



Edward Yardley proves more stubborn than ever as he ignores her claims, once again that she has no intentions to marry him.

Venetia has left Undershaw broken-hearted because Damerel does not want her. Now she finds this isn't the case at all, and sets herself to finding a plan to get him back.



Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Eighteen Summary

Venetia finally agrees with Mrs. Hendred that it wouldn't do for her to take up house as she had been planning to do. Mrs. Hendred, though she had been arguing this since Venetia arrived, is not as elated if she would have been if this response had come earlier. Venetia has already talked of setting up house for herself, and even of joining a nunnery. Now she is worried what her next scheme might be.

Venetia spends the next few days coming up with and discarding plans to get Damerel back. She must convince Damerel to marry her. If Damerel was unwilling to listen to her before that what society thinks doesn't matter to her, he will probably be unwilling to listen now. She has to come up with a way to show him. In Venetia's mind, she is on a time limit to come up with and carry out any plan. She figures that she won't have a chance once Aubrey leaves for school and is no longer living at the Priory.

While Venetia is trying to figure out how to get Damerel back, Mrs. Hendred is still trying to find a good match for Venetia. At the top of her list is Edward Yardley. Paying little attention to the details of the day, Venetia absent-mindedly tells Mrs. Hendred yes to accepting Yardley's invitation to accompany him and Mrs. Hendred to eat and to a play. Mrs. Hendred is elated. She thinks that the show of money and a good time may make Venetia change her mind about Yardley.

The three dress up and go to the fanciest restaurant in town and eat at the best table. Mrs. Hendred is very impressed and cannot fathom how any girl could not be. Venetia isn't.

After dinner, the three are seated in a theater box. Venetia is looking at the box across the theater and her attention is captured by a striking woman, lavishly dressed, accompanied by a man who is described as looking like Prince Regent. Because of their appearances, the couple is getting attention from a lot more than just Venetia. Many are looking their way. The couple are staring directly back at Venetia, though, and the woman waves at her.

Venetia wakes her aunt, who had been dozing during the play, to ask her who the lady is. Upon seeing the woman, Mrs. Hendred becomes very upset, and after whispering to Yardley, the two tell Venetia that it is time to go because Mrs. Hendred is not feeling well.

Back at Mrs. Hendred's house, Venetia questions her aunt. She finds out that the lady waving is her mother, who is not dead, as Venetia has been told. She left Venetia's father, after more than one affair, and is now Lady Steeple. Edward and Mrs. Hendred warn Venetia that she must not meet her or it will ruin her reputation. It is not until this point that all of the comments about Venetia's social situation being delicate make any



sense. Other than her daily trips to the Priory, there has been nothing out of the ordinary about her situation. In addition, her trips to the Priory can be justified because of Aubrey. It is okay to visit a man's house if you have a chaperon.

Yardley and Mrs. Hendred are afraid that Venetia will be upset about the news they have shared, but it has the opposite effect. Venetia is elated because if her reputation is already marred by this, surely marrying a rake will do it no more harm, and Damerel should know this. Since he already knows her mother, Venetia realizes that he probably already knows about her past too.

Chapter Eighteen Analysis

It is not until the news of her mother is revealed that Venetia understands some odd behavior from others. She now understands why Edward Yardley's mother dislikes her. She also now understands why her aunt thinks that she needs to be more careful in appearances than other girls.

Many would expect Venetia to be upset at the news that her mother didn't die, she abandoned her. The fact that everyone has been either lying to her or keeping secrets from her would also be upsetting to most. Venetia is a unique person, though. She is not hurt by either. The only thing that she can think of is the fact that this may be exactly what she needs to get Damerel back.

It never occurs to either Yardley or Mrs. Hendred that Venetia might wish to meet her mother. They assume that social consequences will naturally be more important to Venetia than meeting her mother. While Venetia doesn't feel an emotional connection to the mother that she never knew, it does show how presumptuous and self-serving the people around Venetia are.

Venetia has been having trouble figuring out how to convince Damerel that marrying her will not ruin her socially, and if it does, that she really won't care. Now that she knows that she is already blemished socially, she is sure that it won't matter. The news also inspires her next plan.



Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Nineteen Summary

Venetia has finally come up with the plan to ruin her reputation and get Damerel back. The morning after she finds out about her mother, Venetia sets out in search of the hotel she thought her mother and stepfather might be staying at. She is dressed in the latest fashion. This, coupled with the fact that she is very pretty ensures that every head turns to her as she passes. She finds out about the local hotels, and her research pays off when she is led to Lady Steeple and Sir Lambert's room.

Sir Lambert, though nice, was perhaps a little too nice and flirty. He makes it no secret that he finds her attractive. They talk while waiting for word to send Venetia in to see Lady Steeple.

When Venetia meets her mother for the first time, they talk about Venetia's childhood. Lady Steeple finds it horrible that Venetia has led the isolated life she has led. She tells Venetia that she never wanted her to be unhappy, but that she never wanted children. Venetia assures her that there are no hard feelings. Venetia tells Lady Steeple of her problem with Damerel and convinces her to help. The reader will later learn that the help came in the form of a note to Venetia inviting her to come and stay with them in Paris.

Although the invitation is not real, it is the first time in her life that Lady Steeple helped any of her three children out. Instead of having any maternal inclination at seeing her daughter, Lady Steeple is upset because she is getting old to have a grown-up daughter. She breaks down in front of Venetia and Sir Lambert. Sir Lambert assures her that she is not old, and that she is prettier than Venetia. He later apologizes to Venetia for this particular comment, but Venetia does not much care.

When Venetia starts to leave, Sir Lambert offers to walk her back. He takes her arm in his and walks her down the street. As they walk, Venetia hopes to see many who will see her in Sir Lambert's company and start the gossip chain. They go to a jewelry store and together pick out two items. On the way out, they encounter Edward Yardley, who cannot believe that she is walking with Sir Lambert.

Sir Lambert gives Yardley a hard time, but lets him walk with them. He thinks that Venetia could do better than Yardley, but is sure that she knows what's best for her own life. When Sir Lambert departs and leaves her in Yardley's company, he gives her one of the two tokens that they picked out at the jewelry store to remember him by.

Yardley cannot believe that Venetia would have such low moral character as to visit the pair, and finally loses interest in Venetia. He is disgusted and cold and tells her that his mother was right about her. Though he is displeased and upset when he leaves, Venetia is just as happy to see him finally go.



When Venetia gets back to the Hendred's house, she lets her aunt know that she is going home. Her aunt protests, wishing her to wait until Philip returns. Venetia will not wait any longer to see Damerel, and leaves.

Chapter Nineteen Analysis

In order to make sure that Damerel realizes that she doesn't care about society, Venetia seeks out those who could ruin her socially the fastest - her mother and step-father. Although her mother doesn't care for her, or any of her children, her stepfather proves to be kind, although something of a rake himself. As they are walking down the street, Venetia is hoping to see someone she knows who will get the gossip started.

Sir Lambert and Venetia get along well. Venetia wishes that he had been her father, and he says that if he had a daughter he would have wanted her to be like Venetia. In the time it takes for them to walk most of the way back to the Hendred residence, Venetia makes more of a connection with Sir Lambert than she has with her father or mother.

Although Venetia has told Yardley over and over again that she does not intend to marry him and doesn't care what people think, he doesn't believe her. It is not until he is faced with the consequences of her social blunders that he finally decides to stop courting Venetia.



Chapters Twenty and Twenty-one

Chapters Twenty and Twenty-one Summary

Venetia takes the mail coach all the way to the Inn in her hometown. There she stops to get cleaned up and take a nap. However, she sleeps longer than she means to. She gets up and gets a chaise to take her to the Priory in the middle of the night, hoping that someone there will pay him, for she has spent all of her money.

When she arrives at the Priory, it is to find a drunken Damerel. He is excessively happy to see her, but also not himself. He tells her that she cannot stay, but she does not listen. Marston pays the chaise and takes Venetia under his care. He tells her that he will have food ready for her in a half hour. Venetia takes this time to fix her appearance and Damerel takes that time to sober up.

Venetia returns downstairs to a much-sobered Damerel. Venetia tells Damerel that she knows about her mother and wishes that he had told her that he wouldn't marry her because he was worried about his reputation. When he acts as if this is crazy, she tells him that Yardley jilted her because of that and the fact that she associated with the pair.

Venetia then asks for Damerel's advice on accepting an offer from her mother to visit them in Paris. Damerel doesn't believe her, so Venetia shows him the letter that she begged her mother to write. As Damerel is begging Venetia not to take her mother up on her offer, Philip walks in.

Philip has followed Venetia as soon as he learned what her intentions were. He implores her not to marry Damerel, telling her how unhappy she will be. The conversation is in Venetia's hands, however, and before long at all she and Damerel are discussing their future together.

Damerel tells Philip about Lady Steeple's invitation to Venetia. Philip agrees that that would be a disaster. He also agrees that he and Damerel's aunt who earlier had wished to reconcile him into polite society could see to it that Venetia is not banished from these circles. Marston comes in to see Philip to his room and wish the happy couple well.

Aubrey comes in then, and Venetia breaks the news to him that their mother isn't really dead only to find that he already knows. Conway told him, he just wasn't interested enough to think to tell her.

Damerel, after plenty of interruptions, finally proposes to Venetia, with plans for their honeymoon already being made by Aubrey.



Chapters Twenty and Twenty-one Analysis

When Marston tells Venetia that Damerel is in the biggest trouble that he has ever known, Venetia assumes he means business matters. An earlier conversation between Marston and Damerel reveal that he probably means Damerel being in love with Venetia.

Throughout her life, Venetia has been told that men are going to stray sometimes and that wives should simply turn their heads to this. Because of her strong character, one might think that she wouldn't believe this particular code of society to be right. She does, though. She tells Philip that she is sure that Damerel might still have orgies because he can't be expected to change all of his habits, but she doesn't need to know about them. Though she says that it is okay, he assures her that she'll be present for these activities.

With the influence of Venetia's uncle and Damerel's aunt, it is unlikely that either will be shunned because of the marriage. So much time and effort was spent trying to avoid something that probably could've been solved with just a call to relatives.



Characters

Venetia

Venetia is the main character of this novel. She is a woman whose virtue is questioned only by a few. Those few question her because of who her mother is, although she doesn't learn about this for a long time. When Venetia's mother leaves her father, he leaves Venetia to live at Undershaw in seclusion, with only a handful of people allowed in. She has taken care of herself, Aubrey, and the estate for years. She feels no emotional connections to any of her family except Aubrey, who she has taken care of for a long time. When her father dies, she remains at Undershaw and cares for it for her brother Conway.

Venetia is a respectable woman, but cares nothing for what society thinks. This trait causes Damerel to love her, but causes others to think ill of her. The fact that she always says what she is thinking without giving herself time to think about how others will react makes her an oddity. People cannot believe that she means the things that she says, but she does. The fact that she journeys out without an attendant also gives many in her society pause. They believe that she is compromising her morals by doing so.

Venetia is a strong woman. She is a woman of good breeding who has good manners, although she does have a problem watching the things that she says. She is very accustomed to running a household and has no trouble holding her own with her staff or the staff of others. She has confidence in herself that shows by the fact that she never takes back what she says. Others may not like it, and she may wish that she hadn't said it, but she still means it.

Venetia has never been in love, nor has she ever had a real friend until she meets Damerel. She finds herself happier than she has ever been with him there. She only has to convince him that his reputation doesn't matter and she'll have what she wants.

Damerel

Damerel is by all accounts a rake, and someone that a virtuous woman does not want to associate with. When he was twenty-two years old, he seduced an older married woman named Sophia. They ran off together, but tired of each other quickly. When the news of his elopement reached Damerel's father, the shock brought on a stroke. It was not fatal, but one right after proved to be. After that, some people, and even Damerel himself claimed that he had killed his father. Before Sophia and Damerel were wed, Sophia met and married another, leaving jilted Damerel embarrassed and unwilling to go back to a society that outcast him.

Ever since this event, Damerel has continued to get into messes that give the rest of society plenty to talk about. As a girl, Venetia and her older brother weren't allowed to



hear the details of these stories, so they often made them up. By the time Venetia was old enough to hear what really happened, the truth was nothing compared to their make-believe tales. Venetia is one of few who aren't shocked by the things in Damerel's past.

Damerel is considered a man of very low moral standards. However, throughout the novel he shows much virtue to be admired. He is gracious and merciful to Oswald who behaves horribly. He treats Aubrey like he was a normal boy, just like Aubrey wants to be treated. He also sacrifices his own happiness to spare Venetia the heartache of being publicly shunned.

When Damerel's meddling aunts want to reinstate him into polite society, he flees London and goes to the Priory. After meeting Venetia on his property, he decides that he will stay and win her. Only after he does win her, he realizes that he doesn't wish to corrupt her, so he decides that instead of simply seducing her, which was his original plan, he is going to marry her. After some reflection and a meeting with Philip Hendred, Venetia's uncle, Damerel decides that he is afraid that marrying Venetia would make her an outcast. As he knows how this feels, he is unwilling to do that until Venetia convinces him otherwise.

Aubrey

Aubrey is Venetia's little brother. He has a diseased hip joint and is somewhat lame. He can walk and ride horses, but he is slow and more easily hurt. Aubrey is a scholar, and relates a lot of what he reads to Venetia, so she knows a lot of famous works because of him. His studious ways are a drawback when it comes to companionship. He walks around in his own world, reads all the time, and it is hard to get his full attention. Once one does get Aubrey's attention, it is highly likely that he won't care at all about what you are trying to tell him. He never even bothered to tell Venetia that their mother was alive because it didn't interest him enough for him to think about it again.

Venetia has taken care of Aubrey for a long time and is very happy about Damerel's influence on him. He treats him as if he was a normal kid and can therefore get him to do things that others cannot. Damerel even manages to get Aubrey to hold his tongue with Mrs. Scorrier when she is causing trouble. The way that people treat Aubrey has a lot to do with what Venetia thinks of them.

Edward Yardley

Edward Yardley is Venetia's oldest suitor because he was the only one that her father would let visit in earlier days. Although he isn't sure about Venetia because of her unscrupulous mother, he sets after Venetia. Although she tells him time and again that she is not interested, Yardley does not believe her. He continues in her pursuits until he finds that Venetia does not see anything wrong with spending time with her mother and stepfather.



Oswald Denny

Oswald Denny is the other of Venetia's suitors. Oswald is younger than she and fascinated by her. He tells her again and again that he is in love with her, though she tells him he is not. He spends most of his time dreaming up fairy tales where he is the hero and she the damsel in distress. This fascination continues until he makes a fool of himself over her. After that, she is quickly forgotten for the sake of a new adventure.

Mrs. Priddy

Mrs. Priddy is the nursemaid at Undershaw. She takes care of Aubrey when he is sick, and later takes care of Conway's pregnant wife. She warns Venetia away from Damerel at first, but he gains her favor later.

Lady Steeple

Aurelia Steeple is Venetia's mother. Although Venetia thought for a long time that she is dead, she is not. Her father told her that when Aurelia left him for another man. When Venetia meets her again, Lady Steeple is persuaded to do one act of kindness for the daughter that she never wanted. She writes her an invitation that she doesn't in the least mean, for Venetia to come visit for as long as she wants. Aurelia is a selfish woman who doesn't care about her children.

Sir Lambert

Sir Lambert is Lady Steeple's new husband. Venetia finds him to be very nice and wishes that he had been her father, rather than the one she had. He says that if he had a daughter he would have wanted her to be like Venetia. He is a flirt, but a kind man.

Conway

Conway is Venetia's older brother. Undershaw is his estate, and she is looking after it while he is away in the military. Another selfish person, he sends his mother-in-law, who is becoming a problem to Undershaw, along with his new wife, for Venetia to deal with.

Mrs. Scorrier

Mrs. Scorrier is Conway's new bride's mother. Upon her arrival, she makes sure to it that Aubrey and Venetia are as uncomfortable as possible. She causes trouble right up until she realizes that she is alienating her daughter in the process.



Charlotte

Charlotte is Conway's new wife. She is quiet and sweet, but will not stand up to her mother.

Mr. and Mrs. Hendred

Mr. and Mrs. Hendred are Venetia's aunt and uncle whom Venetia stays with in London. They are protective of Venetia and want her to stay in good social graces. Mr. Hendred warns Damerel away from Venetia, and Mrs. Hendred does everything she can to find Venetia a suitable match.

Lady Denny

Lady Denny is Venetia's neighbor who tries to be something of a mother figure to Venetia. She worries about Venetia's social standing and sends a letter to the Hendreds when she realizes that Damerel and Venetia are serious about each other.

Clara Denny

Clara is Lady Denny's daughter. She expected Conway to come home and speak for her. She finds Edward Yardley funny and witty, however, so there is speculation that they will end up together when Venetia and Conway are with others.

Sir John

Sir John is Lady Denny's husband.



Objects/Places

Undershaw

Undershaw is the manor where Venetia has lived all of her life.

Elliston Priory

Elliston Priory is the estate that belongs to Demerel.

York

York is the town that Undershaw is 15 miles from.

Trinity College

Trinity College is where Aubrey has been admitted to attend.

Michaelmas

Michaelmas is where Aubrey will be studying the year after he is at Trinity College.

London

London is where the fun is, where a girl is presented into society, and where Venetia's aunt lives.

The Pulteney

The Pulteney is the hotel where Sir Lambert and Lady Steeple stay during their time in London.

Cambray

Cambray is where Conway is stationed.

Thirsk

Thirsk is a town near York.

Scarborough

Scarborough is the farthest town from York that either Aubrey or Venetia have been to at the beginning of the book. It is not far away.



Themes

Morals

Much time is spent teaching children about morals now and at the time that this novel is written. In many ways, the moral codes of the people in this novel are much stricter than most people's now.

For example, divorce was something that happened, but was definitely a taboo topic. In addition, although wives turned their heads when husbands were unfaithful, wives were expected to be faithful with no exceptions.

Another difference is that in Regency England, women of high status were expected to have a chaperon everywhere they went. This is a common theme in this book because Venetia often broke this rule. The fact that she broke this rule was the reason that Damerel first kissed her when she did. He admitted that he would not have had she been walking with a maid. Also, in London the fact that she walked around unaccompanied vexed her aunt to no end.

Morals are the very reasons why Venetia and Damerel have such a hard time marrying. Because he is known by others to be of low moral character, Venetia's reputation would be tarnished by marrying him.

Disabilities

Because of Aubrey's lameness, the treatment of those with disabilities is one of the main themes of the book. Venetia's two longest suitors' lost their good standing with Aubrey because of their treatment of him. This also had a great impact on the way that Venetia looked at them.

Yardley continued, no matter what Venetia and Aubrey told him, to treat Aubrey as if he was a complete invalid because of his disability. Aubrey had a diseased hip joint but could walk around by himself. Yardley, however, insisted on trying to help him stand and telling him not to do things or that he couldn't do things because he was lame. Although he felt that he was doing the right things, he never stopped to consider how his treatment of Aubrey must make him feel.

Oswald had a complete disgust for people for deformities. Although he never said so to Aubrey or Venetia, it showed in his mannerisms and conversations.

Charlotte's aversion to deformities was also easy to see. She winced or shuttered every time she saw Aubrey walk. Her aversion and her mother's stating it were what finally convinced Venetia that their move from Undershaw must be immediate.



Love

Venetia has grown up not knowing love except from her brother Aubrey, who doesn't show his love in an outward manner. Her father showed her and Aubrey no love when he left them to live secluded lives cut off from himself and society.

Venetia's mother loved none of her children. She resented the fact that they ruined her figure, and she never wanted a child in the first place. She abandons them, and doesn't show any affection when she and Venetia are reunited years later, either.

Yardley, Venetia's oldest suitor shows no love. He wants her for his own purposes, but it is definitely not to let her be herself. Oswald, her other suitor feels that he loves her, but it is only infatuation, fueled by the fact that he cannot attain her. Both eventually are out of the picture, and it is unlikely that either will be very sad for very long about it. One is quickly excited by a visit to family, and the other is expected to speak for Clara Denny who finds him clever and funny.

Damerel is the first person in Venetia's life who has accepted her for who she really is. They laugh at the same things. He listens to her and doesn't tell her what to think. He is the first person she has loved and who loves her. There is Aubrey, of course, but there is no companionship in that relationship.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in this book is third limited. The focus of the reader is mainly on Venetia, but also on other characters in the novel as appropriate. Using this point of view the reader can see the thoughts and feelings of the characters. This allows the reader to better understand the actions of the characters. This is important because some of the things that these characters worried about aren't usually as big of worries to readers now. Although the view is limited, it is broadly limited.

The story is told through a mixture of dialogue and exposition. Often, following the thoughts of one individual bring the reader to the thoughts or actions of another. Sometimes this shift can be a little confusing, but all in all, it isn't that difficult to follow.

Setting

Venetia is set in regency England. The setting of this story is very important because of what was important to the citizens of this day and time. Propriety and social conduct are two very important matters. If one did not conduct themselves properly, they could be the target of gossip, or worse, castaways from the good social circles.

Money and status was also a big deal then in social settings. People who were considered to be of good breeding and who had prospered were held in higher regard than others. It wasn't as likely to change status in those days from the status you were born into. It did happen on occasion, however. If one were to come into a lot of money, or if a scandal was to be had, it was possible to change.

Language and Meaning

Venetia is a pretty easily read novel. However, there are places that many readers will have trouble making sense out of due to words that are not often used today. For example, 'pinks,' and 'dandy-sets' are words used to describe men who dress in the latest fashion.

In addition, Venetia, Aubrey, and Damerel often talk to each other using quotes from famous writers. It is generally easy to figure out where they are going by the quotes they use, but not always. Some quotes you would have to have read that story or poem to understand. Also, some references throughout the book don't make a lot of sense if you don't know the works.

In several places, the writer uses Latin words that many readers may not understand. However, they are limited and the rest of the conversations are generally easily

followed. There are a few exceptions where the reader might get lost, but all in all, it is easily followed.

Structure

This novel is comprised of twenty-one chapters, each about fifteen to twenty pages long. The plot of the novel is fairly simple with no subplots. It is about a man, often referred to as a rake because of his immoral past, and a virtuous woman who has never been in love.

The fall in love and wish to marry, but the rules of polite society of the time warns against such a match. The two are held apart for these reasons for a time before love finally wins out. At times the novel may seem somewhat slow since the same problem is being mulled over through the whole novel. On the most part, however, it captures the attention of the reader quite easily.



Quotes

"Yes, but I don't suppose he has any more fondness for us now than he had when he was alive, ma'am. He never made the least push to engage our affections, you know, so he cannot really expect us to grieve for him." Chap. 1 Pg. 6

""Edward, pray - pray make at least a push to disabuse your mind of illusion!" begged Venetia earnestly. "You can't know me in the least, if that's what you think, and what a dreadful shock it will be to you when you discover that I do mean the odd things I say!" Chap. 1 Pg. 17

"Damerel, entering rudely on to the scene, instantly dominated it, and whether he was the villain or merely a minor character it was useless to deny that he had infused life into a dull play." Chap. 3 Pg. 38

"As for telling you about my life - why, there's only one answer to that, and it's A blank, my lord!" Chap. 4 Pg. 59

"She was content for some moments to listen, not questioning the source of her happiness; but presently she came to full consciousness, and remembered that she had found a friend. Chap. 5 Pg. 66

""Wishing to kiss someone you never saw before in your life. It seems quite mad-brained to me, besides showing a sad want of particularity." She added charitably: "However, I daresay it is one of those peculiarities of gentlemen even of the first respectability which one cannot hope to understand, so I don't refine too much upon it."" Chap. 6 Pg. 93

"He suddenly perceived that Damerel had played the part he had imagined for himself: it was the villain who had rescued the lady from the hero." Chap. 9 Pg. 144

"If Damerel were to marry you, everyone would say that it was the wickedest thing imaginable and the most shocking take-in! I assure you, my love, there is something particularly repugnant in the marriage of a rake to a beautiful girl, years younger than himself, and perfectly innocent, as you are, my dear, whatever you may choose to say!" Chap. 17 Pg. 289

"Don't waste a thought on any of the eligible suitors you've found for me, dear ma'am! There is more of my mama in me than you have the least idea of, and the only eligible husband for me is a rake!" Chap. 18 Pg. 310

"Sir Lambert thought she might have done better for herself, but he wasn't an ill-looking young fellow, and no doubt she knew her own business best. He looked down at her, a roguish gleam in his eye. "Shall we let him go along with us, my dear, or shall we give him the goby? What do you say?"" Chap. 19 Pg. 325



"Long before the season ended - if not before it started! - Demerel would be heaven knows where, strewing rose-leaves about for some abandoned female to tread on! Well, one thing at least I'm determined on! If he must indulge in such wasteful habits he shall strew his rose-leaves for me to tread upon, not one of his ridiculous Paphians!" Chap. 19 Pg. 333

""In fact," he ended, with asperity, "you cannot make head or tail of anything she says! As for knowing what your reason was, I don't know what you may have seen fit to tell her, Venitia, but so far as I understand it you could think of nothing better to do than beguile her with some farrago about wishing Damerel to strew rose-leaves for you to walk on!"" Chap. 21 Pg. 353



Topics for Discussion

Why does Damerel tell Oswald that he is putting up from so much from him after Oswald assaults Venetia?

Why do you think that Venetia was never presented into society?

Explain why Oswald found it ironic that Damerel saved Venetia from him.

Why do you think that Damerel did not come home after being jilted by Lady Sophia?

Why does Aubrey like Damerel but neither of Venetia's other suitors?

What is it that Mrs. Priddy says will happen to any of Damerel's offspring and why?

Why does Mrs. Scorrier try to make amends with Venetia?