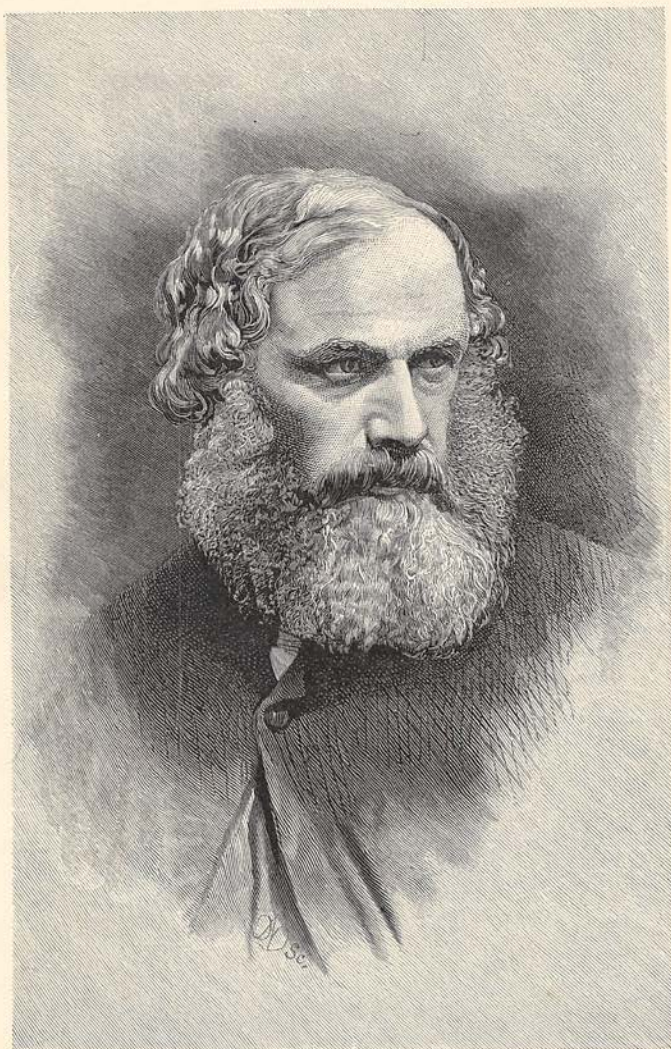


AN ILLUSTRATOR OF DICKENS.

HABLOT KNIGHT BROWNE ("PHIZ").



DRAWN BY HIS SON WALTER BROWNE.

ENGRAVED BY DAVID NICHOLS.

HABLOT KNIGHT BROWNE.

THE revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in 1685, sent to England, among many whom France could ill spare, a Huguenot gentleman named Simon Brunet. He settled with his family in Norfolk, and, like many of his compatriots, finding the French name a hindrance to commercial progress, speedily changed it to its English equivalent Browne. In spite of the name, however, the character of the family remained unaltered, his descendants being noticeable for the Gallic vivacity of their manners.

One of these, the father of "Phiz," was an East India merchant of good standing, who, meeting with reverses late in life, emigrated to America, where he was generally supposed to be a Frenchman.

During the Peninsular War a French captain named Hablot, a prisoner on parole, made the acquaintance of the family, and eventually became engaged to Miss Kate Browne. Returning to France in 1814, he obeyed the summons of his emperor, resumed his command in the old



THE INTERNAL ECONOMY OF DOTHEBOY'S HALL. ("NICHOLAS NICKLEBY.")

guard, and was shot at Waterloo while leading on his men in their memorable charge. Scarcely a month afterward, on July 12, 1815, in Kennington Lane, the subject of our memoir was born, and, in recollection of his sister's ill-fated betrothed, was christened Hablot. He was the ninth son, and while still young was destined for the Church, his eldest brother having already taken orders; but his unmistakable talent for drawing, shown in sketches made even at the age of eight or nine years, induced his parents to apprentice him to Finden the engraver.

Here Hablot Browne passed most of his time from the age of sixteen to eighteen. He made little progress in line-engraving, and Finden was in the habit of sending him with plates to the printers to superintend the taking of proofs. These absences from the studio seemed very congenial to Browne's taste, and he received many commendations for the despatch and diligence he displayed, although had his masters been aware that their apprentice, leaving the printer to work his will, was spending his time, and filling his sketch-book, among the antiques at the British Museum, they would prob-

ably have had their proof-pulling overlooked by some steadier youth, and the sadly neglected plate on Browne's desk would have been the gainer by some few strokes from his burin. The fact was, he detested the mechanical work, and this detestation could not long be concealed. In 1832 he etched in his leisure moments a large plate entitled "John Gilpin's Ride," for which he received a silver medal from the Society of Arts. This plate, his desk-drawer stuffed full of sketches, and the thousand other evidences of the boy's budding genius, showed to the brothers Finden that here was one whose thoughts could not wait for the slow progress of line-engraving, but required the brush and the palette, the pencil and the etching-needle, for their proper expression. He was released from his apprenticeship, his indentures were canceled, and, free at last to follow his natural inclinations, he burst forth with the self-confidence of youth into an artist.

His first proceeding in this venture was to give himself up to the realization of his cherished dreams, working hard all day, and of an evening going generally to the old life school in St. Martin's Lane. Although a nominal stu-



MR. PECKSNIFF DISCHARGES A DUTY WHICH HE OWES TO SOCIETY. ("MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT.")

resentation of the social life of their day.

The history of the "Pickwick Papers," the change in the original design, the tragic death of Seymour, the hasty appointment and dismissal of Buss, have been graphically described by Forster in his life of Dickens. The work which had started dependent for the most part on illustration, and had gained success on its letter-press, was now in a perilous state. Its originator dead by his own hand, and his successor declared incapable, the need of an illustrator was soon noised abroad among the artistic fraternity, and two competitors sent in their designs, Hablot Browne and William Makepeace Thackeray. Thackeray, as we know from his own lips, had at this time the intention of becoming an artist. With a few sketches he called upon Dickens, who told him that the choice had fallen upon Browne. Leaving Furnival's Inn, Thackeray made his way to Newman street

dent, the old dislike to technical instruction was still strong upon him, and his time was rather spent in watching the efforts of others than in regular study. That at this time he found the labor of his brush insufficient to support him is apparent from the fact of his again turning his attention to book illustration.

In the early part of 1836 he began the illustrations to Winkle's "French Cathedrals," to which he contributed twelve plates. In the same year also he drew three small illustrations for a pamphlet on the Sunday-observance bills—a brochure, now very scarce, written by one calling himself Timothy Sparks, but who was known to his friends as Charles Dickens. In this wise began the connection of two men who, by the mutual commingling of their talents, have given to the world a matchless rep-

resentation of the social life of their day. Together these young men immediately repaired to a neighboring public house, where a banquet, consisting of sausages and bottled stout, was held for the better satisfying of their appetites, and to do greater honor to the occasion. The feast finished, the good wishes pledged, and Thackeray gone, Browne started off to communicate the news and to get the assistance of his quondam fellow-apprentice, Robert Young, who was then boarding in Chester Place. Bidding him bring his latchkey, Browne hurried him back to Newman street, and throughout that night the two worked upon the plates, Browne etching while Young bit them in. By morning the first was finished, and in Sam Weller a creation was given to the

world, a new character had entered what may be called the realm of historic fiction.

Browne seems at first to have been undecided as to the adoption of a pseudonym, as his first plate bears the word "Nemo," but in the second, which was published in the same number, he had decided upon "Phiz," in imitation, as he afterward said, of Dickens's "Boz." Once started as the illustrator of Dickens, he continued till the year 1859 the principal expositor of his text; and, as most of his works were produced in weekly numbers each con-

of this independent publication was sufficient to encourage its repetition, and accordingly another set of portraits was engraved during the progress of "Barnaby Rudge," and again of "Dombey and Son," for which latter he also published, independently even of Young, eight full-length etchings of Dombey, Carker, Mrs. Pipchin, and the more rugged persons of the tale; selecting the portraits of Edith, Florence, Alice, and little Paul, as capable of more delicate treatment, to be the subjects of his series of steel-engravings.



MR. MICAWBER DELIVERS SOME VALEDICTORY REMARKS. ("DAVID COPPERFIELD.")

taining two illustrations, he had but little leisure for his old pursuit of painting. Though at first he does not appear to have taken this much to heart, the time came when, harried by publishers, he exclaimed, not once but many times, "I 'm awery, I 'm awery of this illustration business."

Following on the "Pickwick Papers" came "Nicholas Nickleby," in 1838, and then "Master Humphrey's Clock," in which Browne was associated with Cattermole. During the publication of the latter, Phiz determined, with the assistance of Young and the sanction of Dickens, to publish separately four portraits of the principal personages of the tale; these were line-engravings, and were brought out in a small green cover at one shilling. The success

Little remains to be said of Browne's connection with Dickens. During the early part of it, in 1837, they went to Belgium together, and the following year to Yorkshire to see the £20 schools afterward described in "Nicholas Nickleby." Forster also speaks of their visiting the prisons of London in company; and purely professional meetings and joint visits to places mentioned in the novels were of course undertaken, but into the social life of Dickens Browne could seldom be drawn. His reserved nature was becoming intensified as he grew older, while upon Dickens began to flow that stream of flattery and adulation which eventually urged him to break with publishers, with assistants, and with tried friends. "I was about the last of those he knew in early days with



CAPTAIN CUTTLE CONSOLES HIS FRIEND. ("DOMBEY AND SON.")

whom Dickens fell out," said Browne to the present writer; "and considering the grand people he had around him, and the compliments he perpetually received, it is a wonder we remained friends so long." During the progress of "Dombey and Son" Dickens found much fault with several of the designs submitted to him, which he said were "so dreadfully bad" that they made him "curl his legs up."

The following letter was written about this time, and is almost the only one preserved by chance from a bonfire made by Browne of his old letters and unfinished drawings previous to a removal some fifteen years ago:

I CHESTER PLACE,
Monday Night, Fifteenth March, 1847.

MY DEAR BROWNE: The sketch is admirable, — the women *quite perfect*, — I cannot tell you how much I like the younger one. There are one or two points, however, which I must ask you to

alter. They are capital in themselves, and I speak solely for the story.

First — I grieve to write it — that native — who is so prodigiously good as he is — must be in European costume. He may wear earrings and look outlandish and be dark brown. In this fashion must be of Moses, Mosesy. I don't mean Old Testament Moses, but him of the Minorities.

Secondly, if you *can* make the major older, and with a larger face — do.

That 's all. Never mind the pump room now, unless you have found the sketch, as we may have that another time. I shall propose to you a trip to Leamington together. We might go one day and return the next.

I wish you *had* been at poor Hall's funeral, and I am sure they would have been glad. They seem to have had a delicacy in asking any one not of the family, lest it should be disagreeable. I went myself, only after communicating with Chapman, and telling him that I wished to pay that last mark of respect, if it did not interfere with their arrangements. He lies in the Highgate cemetery, which is beautiful. He had a good

little wife, if ever man had; and their accounts of her tending of him at the last are deeply affecting. Is it not a curious coincidence, remembering our connection afterward, that I bought the magazine in which the first thing I ever wrote was published from poor Hall's hands? I have been thinking all day of that, and of that time when the Queen went into the City, and we drank claret [it was in their earlier days] in the counting-house. You remember?

Charley, thank God, better and better every hour. Don't mind sending me the second sketch. It is so late.

Ever Faithfully, My dear Browne,
C. D.

In 1849 and 1850 appeared "David Copperfield," in which the design for Micawber

of the ties between author and artist was not till nearly seven years after this, when domestic troubles seem to have well nigh disturbed Dickens's reason. The novelist appears to have thought the world was interested in his domestic affairs. He broke with the directors of "Punch" on their refusal to throw open their columns to a discussion of his grievances, and eventually published his version of the matter in the pages of "Household Words." Browne persistently refused to express any opinion or to interfere, and though Dickens said nothing further at the time, the book then in progress, the "Tale of Two Cities," was the last Browne was commissioned to illustrate. In a letter to Young, written presumably¹ immediately pre-



THE PHOCCA. (FROM AN UNPUBLISHED WATER-COLOR PAINTING.)

ENGRAVED BY HORACE BAKER.

seems to have pleased the author, who speaks of it as "uncommonly characteristic." With Skimpole, in "Bleak House," which followed on this in 1852, he was, on the contrary, dissatisfied. "Browne has done Skimpole," he writes, "and helped to make him singularly unlike the great original." If this be so, Browne certainly showed greater respect for the feelings of Leigh Hunt than did Dickens, whose action in holding up the character of a friend to more than ridicule—to contempt—has been and is generally condemned. The severance

ceding the publication of "The Uncommercial Traveller," Browne says:

By your enclosed, Marcus² is no doubt to do Dickens. I have been a "good boy," I believe—the plates in hand are all in good time, so that I do not know what's up any more than you. Dickens probably thinks a new hand would give his old puppets a fresh look, or perhaps he does not like my illustrating Trollope neck and

¹ Browne never dated his letters. Dickens not only dated his, but invariably wrote the day of the month in full.

² Marcus Stone.



GIVING JOHN A WARMING. (FROM AN UNPUBLISHED WATER-COLOR PAINTING.)

ENGRAVED BY J. W. EVANS.

neck with him, though, by Jingo! he need fear no rivalry there! Confound all authors and publishers, say I; there is no pleasing or satisfying one or t' other. I wish I never had anything to do with the lot.

Years afterward, in a letter to one of his sons, reference is again made to Dickens's strangely silent manner of breaking the connection, and an excuse is apparently sought for his conduct.

SATURDAY.

MY DEAR WALTER: I have no tracings of "Two Cities." I did not do these in water colour for Cosens. I think there ought to be 18—nine numbers altogether, but I have n't stumbled on the others yet. I may do so. A rather curious thing happened with this book: Watts Phillips the dramatist hit upon the very same identical plot; they had evidently both of them been to the same source in Paris for their story. Watts' play came out with great success, with stunning climax, at about the time of Dickens's sixth number. The public saw that they were identically the same story, so Dickens shut up at the ninth number instead of going on to the eighteenth as usual. All this put Dickens out of temper, and he squabbled with me amongst others, and I never drew another line for him. Your affectionate

H. K. B.

THE continuity of our narrative has been purposely broken, that, in their order, all transactions with Dickens might be recorded. In 1839 Mr. Lever's "Confessions of Harry Lor-

requer" appeared in the then usual weekly numbers, with etchings by Phiz. At the same time began a firm and lasting friendship with its author, for there was much in his character which found its counterpart in that of Browne. The broad sense of humor, the fondness for frolic, the *abandon* so apparent in Lever's books, were what his illustrator keenly appreciated; for, though himself reserved even to shyness, he at all times enjoyed to be among the noisy fun of others.

Browne went with Lever on more than one occasion to Ireland, and it is owing to these visits that the sketches in "Jack Hinton," in "Charles O'Malley," and in "Tom Burke of Ours" are so admirably characteristic of the author's much-loved countrymen. During his second visit, in October, 1847, Browne made a series of large sketches of the peasantry, which at the time he intended to have subsequently etched and published; but the originals were eventually disposed of privately, and are now scattered. On March 28, 1840, Browne married Miss Susannah Reynolds, and removed from his bachelor quarters to Howland street. After passing here the first three years of married life, he removed to Fulham and subsequently went to Croydon. His taste for country life, and his detestation of the trammels of society, had long made him desire this change; and when once the streets had been exchanged

for the fields, he was able to give that careful observation to animal life of which his drawings contain so many traces. He joined the Surrey hounds, and was constant in his attendance at their meets, where he must have gained much of his knowledge of horses in action, since in the hunting-sketches that have appeared in print, and in those numerous ones left behind him in his studio, no model was ever employed; nothing but the retentive memory was there to guide the hand in its reproduction of movement and life. After living for eleven years at Croydon, he removed to an out-of-the-world spot in the neighborhood of Banstead, where he stayed for two years, when, tiring apparently of his solitude, he came back, in December, 1859, to London, and took a house in Horbury Crescent, Bayswater. During his absence from town he had illustrated, among many purely ephemeral publications, and in addition to the works of Lever and Dickens, several of the novels of Ainsworth and of the Mayhews.

Though he found himself unknown to the new generation of authors, still his old reputation was not quite gone. His old, ever-laborious habits remained, and he went on accumulating sketches and executing illustrations for "Davenport Dunn," "Barrington," "Luttrell of Arran," and the various other novels of Lever, Ainsworth, and the brothers Mayhew. Etchings had by this time considerably changed their character, by reason of various newly invented processes, and, in addition, wood-engraving was rapidly superseding them in public favor. To this latter method Browne was never partial, and in it was never so successful. His genius required his own powers for its expression, the work presented to the eye must have been done by his own hand alone to retain all its force; and his blocks, perfect in their drawing, lost very much of their life and beauty when the wood-engraver had completed his task.

In 1859 "Once a Week" was started, and Browne received the offer of a permanent engagement on it. He had in 1841 refused, consequent on a misconception of its aims, the offer of a position on the staff of "Punch" similar to that afterward occupied by Leech; and now that the new venture was to be floated by many of the founders of its humorous predecessor, the aid of Browne's pencil was again solicited, and this time not refused. He drew for this journal for many years, and during the years 1861 and 1862 contributed several large drawings of hunting-subjects to the "Country Gentleman." From Horbury Crescent Browne removed with his family to Blenheim Crescent in 1865, two years after which he received the first intimation of his failing powers. He was stricken with paralysis, which from that time never left him, rendering all use of the right

thumb impossible, and partly incapacitating his right arm and leg. On those who have seen no works of Browne anterior to this date, it must be impressed that this stroke rendered what they have seen unfit for the purpose of forming any just estimate of his powers. Although begged by many of his friends to sketch hereafter everything on a large scale for the purpose of reduction, he never acceded to their request, but continued as heretofore to draw on the block.

Once more, in 1872, did he shift his quarters, and this time to a house then bordering on the fields in Ladbroke Grove Road. This, from its exposed position, and in remembrance possibly of one of his greatest triumphs, he named "Bleak House"; and here he labored on against growing infirmities and pecuniary troubles. His hopefulness, however, never failed him for a moment.

In 1880 he left London for good, and went to live in Hove, a suburb of Brighton. Here he seems to have recovered much of his gaiety and his strength, while his unflinching energy induced him to work daily for many hours, filling portfolios with sketches which he trusted would prove valuable to those he was soon to leave. He even thought of returning to etching, which he had long laid aside. The plates were ordered, but were never used, since when they arrived the hand that should have worked on them was fast stiffening in death. His illness was short and most patiently borne, and on July 8, 1882, within a few days of his sixty-seventh birthday, he passed quietly away. He is laid in the Extra Mural Cemetery, Brighton.

It is not only as a caricaturist that Browne's name will go down to posterity. The bent of his mind was by no means toward the making of comic and facetious sketches, but it was at all times his delight to convey some deep moral lesson, generally on the vanity of human wishes, which he overlaid, in that half-shamed English fashion, with the fanciful and grotesque. There is no doubt, however, that the continual caricature demanded of him had a very detrimental influence on his work, an influence which he attempted to counteract in his studio. Of this moralizing tendency which he displayed, the evidences are many in his published works.

In turning from this tendency to moralize, so characteristic of Browne, to his power of delineating character, we must have a thorough grasp of the position, the office, of an illustrator. The influence of an actor on the work of a dramatist is exactly similar to that of an illustrator—an illuminator, a lighter-up to the text of his author. If we compare Quilp, Micawber, Pecksniff, or others of Browne's characters from this point of view with those

either of Cruikshank, Leech, or the later illustrators of Dickens, we shall find that they are distinctly superior to all, the only illustrator who comes near to him in realizing a distinct individuality being Barnard, and even he lacks the spontaneity, the care, the naturalness of the elder man; while Thackeray, although possessing the realistic power, was so ignorant of drawing as to add the element of grotesque incorrectness to his sketches. Phiz's characters seem to be the spontaneous offspring of his imagination. "Mr. Micawber was like this," said Dickens, giving a hasty sketch of his character and habits, and forthwith a few scratches with the point, and Browne produced Micawber in all his grotesqueness, settled once and forever; no labor, no improvement in drawing, no care in drapery or accessories could ever improve the vividness with which the man is embodied and his salient characteristics emphasized.

To consider his purely artistic qualifications, we are struck with the knowledge of composition to which he had attained. He possessed a most remarkable skill in filling any given space to advantage, either in a decorative, symmetrical fashion or in the arrangement of a multitude of figures. His "Irish Sketches" are among the finest specimens of Browne's

grouping power, as is also an outline drawing made at the time of the American war, and known as "Death's Revel." Browne's greatest successes, however, it will be admitted by many, were in his delineation of the horse. His knowledge of the action of this animal enabled him to sketch it with ease in any attitude, and, as we have said, without reference to models. This ease rendered him prodigal in his representations, and "Hunting Bits" from his pencil, besides the series published under that title, can be numbered by hundreds. One, called "Rather Too Bad," is worth special notice, from its comicality. It represents a mute from a funeral who has taken one of the hearse-horses and appears, a grim spectacle, amid the healthy red-coated squires and dogs at a "check." It should be remembered here that his power of representing action, either vigorous or merely potential, never left him. In addition to his love of animals, his affection for children must not be forgotten; and many a chubby urchin and shy-faced baby look down from the walls of the little house at Hove on those who still mourn the hand that limned them, the brain from which they sprung.

He is not dead! There in the picture-book
He lives with men and women that he drew.

Arthur Allchin.

A BRIDAL MEASURE.

FOR S. F.

*Gifts they sent her manifold,
Diamonds, and pearls, and gold.
One there was among the throng
Had not Midas' touch at need:
He against a sylvan reed
Set his lips, and breathed a song.*

BID bright Flora, as she comes,
Snatch a spray of orange blooms
For a maiden's hair.

Let the Hours their aprons fill
With mignonette and daffodil,
And all that 's fair.

For her bosom fetch the rose
That is rarest—
Not that either these or those
Could by any happening be
Ornaments to such as she;
They 'll but show, when she is dressed,
She is fairer than the fairest,
And out-betters what is best!

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.