

Some Unpublished Sketches by George Cruikshank.



LO say much in introduction of George Cruikshank is unnecessary. There are many books, famous at this moment, that would have been forgotten fifty years ago were it not that they were illustrated with George Cruikshank's drawings. And how much the poorer would our knowledge of the manners and habits of our grandfathers be had he taken to the stage or the sea, as he was at first variously disposed! To say nothing, of course, of our loss of sheer fun and delight. Considered academically, there are shortcomings in Cruikshank's work — for, indeed, he had no academic training. But his native invention, humour, spirit, and executive power were things beyond the reach of all the schoolmen. Of his known and published work a vast quantity must be familiar to almost everybody. His drawings for "Peter Schlemihl," "Grimm's Stories," "Three Courses and a Dessert," the "Comic Almanack," and for Dickens's novels and those of

Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, with many others, will remain classic by the side of the best work of Rowlandson and even of Hogarth. But Cruikshank was a man of marvellous in-

dustry. His known designs are numbered in many thousands; and there exist drawings and sketches of his which have never been made public. It is with a few of these that our present business lies.

Cruikshank's pencil was never idle. He sketched and scribbled on odd pieces of paper, envelopes, letters — anywhere. He developed accidental blots and smudges into fantastic designs, and he sent his friends notes pictorially expressed in a few dashes of the pen or pencil. We are able to reproduce a small collection of these in this paper.

First we have a pencil sketch — a fancy representation of the Queen, drawn about the time of her wedding. It is, perhaps, the only portrait of Her Majesty by a distinguished artist which has till now escaped notice and reproduction during this present year of Jubilee stir. It cannot by any stretch of fancy be called a flattering portrait. Not only was it no practice of Cruikshank's to make flattering portraits of anybody, but plainly in this case the sketch is a

mere hasty suggestion, pretending to no accuracy of feature. It presents, nevertheless, an example of the artist's free and ready pencil work, though the verbal joke that foots the



The White Scepter
~~Albert Diers~~
 Geo. Cruikshank

sketch, "The White Sergeant, Halbertdiers," is a very saddening one.

A strong and spirited pen-and-ink sketch depicts Mr. John Sheringham, a naval lieutenant, and a great friend of Cruikshank's. The excellent lieutenant is caught in sportive mood. He was one of the several friends who took ideas to Cruikshank for working out; sometimes only as ideas, sometimes sketched out crudely on paper. Captain Marryat, the novelist, was one of these friends; and Knight, the publisher, was another.

In the very first English Volunteer movement George Cruikshank and his brother took part as boys. When an invasion of this country by Napoleon was anticipated,

in the beginning of the century, willing defenders sprang up in thousands, beacon fires were laid, and even regiments of boy volunteers were enrolled. To one of these boy regiments George Cruikshank (at that time about fourteen years old) and his brother Robert belonged — Robert held a command, while George served in the ranks. We print a photograph from a sketch in pen and ink, made by George in after-life, representing Robert at the head of his company and George marching at this end of the front rank.

The next sketch is one of peculiar interest, and, as a likeness, was, one would think, notably good. The artist's own inscrip-



my dear friend John Sheringham



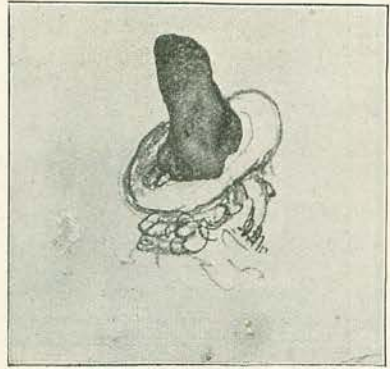
A Regiment of Boy Volunteers - at the time when - Napoleon threatened to invade England - the Commander was my Brother Robert - and I was in the ranks. - George Cruikshank



tion at the top tells the tale: "Sketch of an impostor who went about selling my works and telling people that he was the artist." Whether the man looks like an artist or not may be a matter of opinion; but that he was born an impostor his face proclaims at large. What possible face fuller of plausible craft? One can scarcely believe that any liar, with his character so plainly advertised in his features, could take in anybody; still, he seems to have done it, and there he stands, his wicked old head a picture of sham dignity and benevolence. It is a water-colour drawing, and, as a study of character, by no means Cruikshank's least achievement.

Of Cruikshank's habit of amusing himself by working up accidental marks on paper we give three examples. First, on a sheet of rough sketches, a blot of colour has accidentally fallen. Instantly perceiving the use to which the shape of the blot best lends

itself, the artist has added a brim, and, lo! a steeple-crowned hat of the Commonwealth; beneath this a head, a little hair, and a suggestion of shoulder, and there is a little drawing—the head, say, of a cavalier's serving-man.



A HAT MADE FROM A BLOT.

The next example is the result of an accident of an opposite kind. Instead of a falling blot of colour, the paper here has itself accidentally dropped on some wet colour, with a smear as the result. A touch or two of the brush already in the artist's hand, and there lies a spirited and well-poised suggestion of a man on horseback. It is little more than a suggestion, of course, but there it is, and whether the artist had in his mind a fragment from the Parthenon frieze, or David's picture of Napoleon on the Alps, does not matter; possibly he was thinking of neither, but perceived that the smudge carried in it some of the essentials of the figure of a man on horseback, and did just



NAPOLÉON MADE FROM A SMEAR.



A PORTRAIT IN A POST-MARK.

enough to it to make the suggestion plain to a less percipient observer.

The third of these little oddities consists of an old envelope, addressed to Cruikshank at his well-known house in Hampstead Road. One or two pencil calculations of extreme simplicity adorn the top of the paper, and below them is a slight half-length sketch of a man, with his arm resting on a shelf. Then the post-mark seems to have caught the draughtsman's eye; it had been one-sidedly impressed, and an irregular completion of the circle, with a mark or two to help out

some of the date-figures, was enough to bring out a head—perhaps done with a notion of caricaturing Thackeray.

Three more of the examples are specimens of Cruikshank's playful pictorial correspondence. A friend asks him to dinner on September 20th; but, being already engaged to dine somewhere else that evening, he is obliged to decline, and he does it characteristically. He takes a scrap of paper which has already seen service for trial sketches of figures, ship-blocks, a boot, and so forth, and on the space still available he sketches



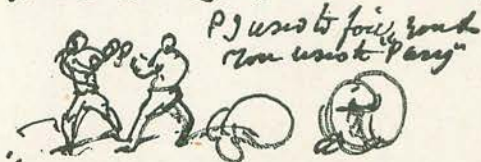
CRUIKSHANK'S REASON FOR DECLINING AN INVITATION.



Your note brings up the remembrance of



When U & I used to box



PJ used to foil you
now used to Parry

HIEROGLYPHIC LETTER TO MR. PARRY.

with pen and ink a pitiful representation of himself, hopelessly tied to the leg of a dinner-table already set, the ligament (which may be a very large table-napkin) being inscribed, "Engaged Sept. 20th," to make all clear.

The next is a hieroglyphic letter, addressed to a Mr. Parry. "Dear Parry," one is constrained to read the superscription, though the "dear" (deer) is elementary and the "parry" is thrice repeated. "Your note," the letter goes on, "brings up the remembrance of Old Times, when you and I used to box. I used to foil you and you used to 'Parry.'" And a sketch of a "set-to" and a pair of boxing-gloves fills the foot of the communication.

Then we have a letter to his friend Auldjo, the antiquary—a sort of bulletin, reporting absence of progress in the artist's illness of April, 1840. It is dated on the fourth of that month, and all the news, as was usual in Cruik-

shank's letters to intimate friends, was conveyed by a sketch of the artist in a very gouty and dejected condition, surrounded by gruel and physic in bottles, with the simple legend, "very, very poorly," followed by the signature. An index hand points at the sufferer, as though thrust through the ceiling, to give the expressive drawing the emphasis which in reality it does not lack by itself.

The next drawing of our little collection is one of the most interesting. In 1847 theatrical performances took place in Liverpool and Manchester for the benefit of Leigh Hunt, and Charles Dickens, Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, G. H. Lewes, Cruikshank, Egg, and other distinguished writers and artists played, Dickens also acting as manager. Some £400 was realized after expenses were paid,

Apr. 4th / 40

My dear Auldjo



Very, very poorly

Yours most truly
George Cruikshank

LETTER TO MR. AULDJO.

and in order to increase this sum Dickens designed to write a comic pamphlet "by Sarah Gamp," describing the journey to Manchester by rail supposed to be undertaken by the immortal Sairey in the same train as the company. It was to have been illustrated by the artists who took part in the affair, but some of them were so dilatory with their drawings that the project eventually fell through.

The few pages which Dickens wrote were never published till after his death, when John Forster included them in his biography of the great novelist. Whatever beginnings were made at illustration have never been published at all till this moment, when we are able to reproduce here Cruikshank's sketch, illustrating an incident in which he himself is supposed to address Mrs. Gamp in person at the railway station.

The little book was to be dedicated to Mrs. Harris, and it was largely in the form of a letter, though a discursive one, addressed to that mysterious lady. Mrs. Gamp describes her meeting with Cruikshank thus:—

"I do assure you, Mrs. Harris, when I stood in the railway office that morning with my bundle on my arm, and one patten in my hand, you might have knocked me down with a feather, far less porkmongers which was a lumping against me continual and sewere all round.

"I was drove about like a brute animal and almost worried into fits, when a gentleman with a large shirt collar and a hook nose, and a eye like one of Mr. Sweedlepipe's hawks, and long locks of hair, and wiskers that I wouldn't have no lady as I was engaged to meet suddenly a turning round a corner, for any sum of money you could offer me, says, laughing: 'Halloa, Mrs. Gamp, what are you up to?' I didn't know him from a man (except by

his clothes); but I says, faintly, 'If you're a Christian man, show me where to get a second-cladge ticket for Manjester, and have me put in a carriage, or I shall drop!' Which he kindly did, in a cheerful kind of a way, skipping about in the strangest manner as ever I see, making all kinds of actions, and looking and winking at me from under the brim of his hat (which was a good deal turned up), to that extent, that I should have thought he meant something, but for being so flurried as not to have no thoughts at all until I was put in a carriage along with a individgle—the politest as ever I see—in a shepherd's plaid suit, with a long gold watch-guard hanging round his neck, and his hand a-trembling through nervousness worse than an aspian leaf." This is the theatrical wig-maker's representative, and



CRUIKSHANK MEETS WITH MRS. GAMP.

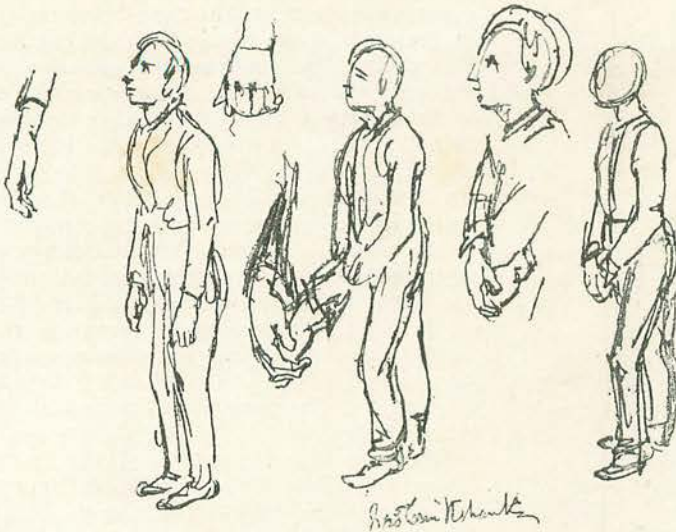
after some conversation between the two, the wig-maker says: "'Praps if you're not of the party you don't know who it was that assisted you into this carriage?"

"No, sir," I says, "I don't, indeed."

"'Why, ma'am,' he says, a-wisperin', 'that was George, ma'am.'

"'What George, sir? I don't know no George,' says I.

"'The great George, ma'am,' says he. 'The Crookshanks.'



STUDIES FOR "OLIVER TWIST ASKING FOR MORE."

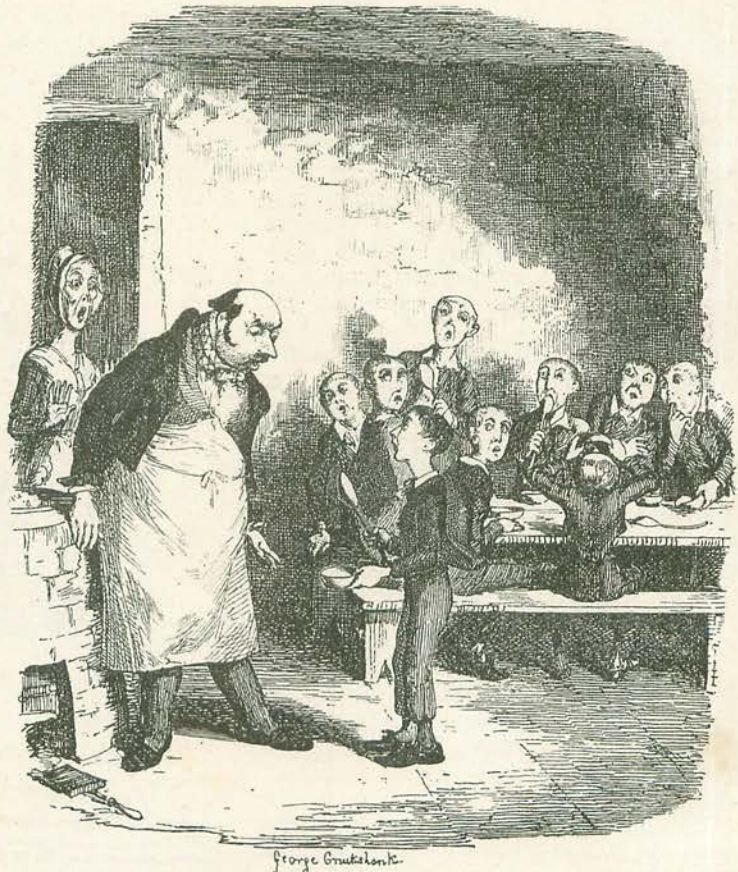
attempted than a design of attitude. The disposition of the hands was obviously the point most in the artist's mind, for he has made two separate sketches of the hands clasped, and two more each of a single hand. A comparison of these sketches with the finished drawing will illustrate the wide space which may separate an artist's first rough ideas from his finished performance.

The second of the "Oliver Twist" sketches is one that was never used with any degree of development. It represents Bill Sikes in the condemned

"If you'll believe me, Mrs. Harris, I turns my head and see the wery man cell, and it was evidently made early in the progress of the book, when the author, a making picturs of me on his thumb-nail, at the winder!"

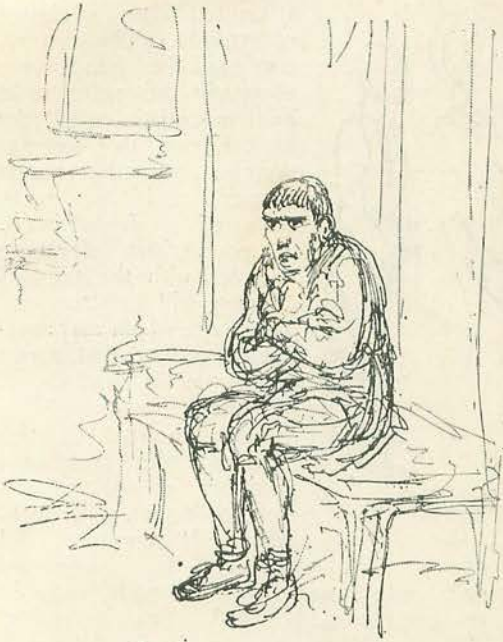
So much for Mrs. Gamp's account of the meeting here sketched by the other party to the transaction. Mrs. Gamp's remarks upon other distinguished persons in the party are amusing, and the whole of the fragment is to be read, as we have said, in Forster's "Life of Dickens."

There are two other sketches in connection with the illustration of Dickens's work in our little collection, both relating to "Oliver Twist." One is a little paper of rough attempts at the figure of Oliver as he was to appear in the illustration representing him "asking for more." As is plain to see, these are little more than dummy figures, lacking all the "go" and vigour of the finished drawing. Indeed, no more is



George Cruikshank

THE PUBLISHED DRAWING OF "OLIVER TWIST ASKING FOR MORE."



Bill Sikes in the Condemned Cell.

although he had decided that Sikes was to murder Nancy, had not resolved to kill the murderer by accident before any arrest could be effected. In the end it was Fagin whom Cruikshank had to draw in this situation. A particular interest of another kind also attaches to this drawing. In a way it affords still one more scrap of evidence (if more were needed) against the preposterous story, first published in America, that "Oliver Twist" was chiefly invented by Cruikshank, and that Dickens largely "wrote up" to a set of drawings already executed by the artist.

Forster, in his "Life of Dickens," effectually disposed of the story, by testimony never gainsaid; but if the biographer had seen this sketch he would no doubt have adduced it also. For the person responsible for the rumour in America spoke in particular of the completed drawing of Fagin in the condemned cell as being in existence, and seen by Dickens, before the book was written. The present sketch is in pencil, strengthened here and there with touches of pen and ink.

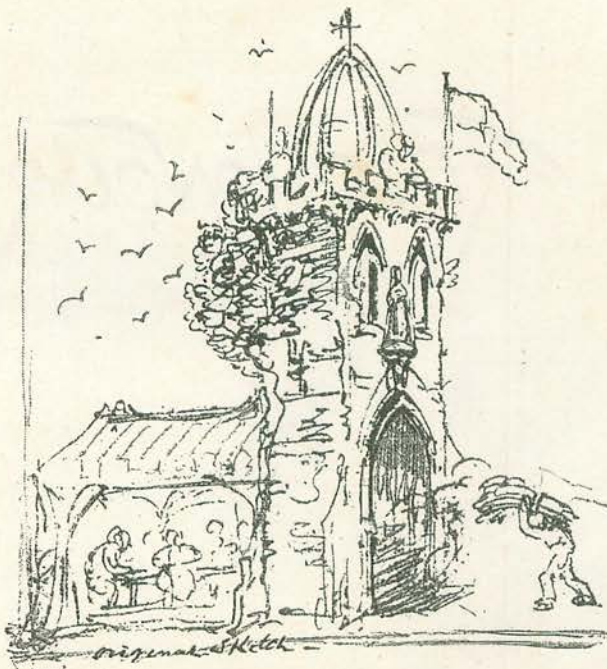
Three more sketches, and we reach the end of our little collection. They are of the casual detached sort, but of considerable

merit. One represents Death, in the character of President of the Alpine Club, waiting for his victims, the members. He holds a barbed spear by way of alpenstock, and he smokes a pipe as he sits attentively on a peak of rock. The drawing is in pen and ink, with a few touches of the brush suggesting the lower part of the cloak. The skull is especially well suggested by a few scratches of the pen, the skeleton features carrying their fitting expression. Cruikshank's title, as he wrote it below, was: "The President of the Alpine Club waiting for the members. Come along, my lads. I'll show you the way"; and it is plain that at first he began by writing "Chairman," and altered it to "President."

Then we have a pencil sketch, very cleverly touched in, being a fanciful representation of the reception of church tithes. The tower of the church is so drawn as to suggest a vast, ogreish head, a bishop's, with mitre and cauliflower wig. Its windows make goggle eyes; its door is a vast and receptive mouth. The rest of the building is represented as an open pavilion, with a hint of ecclesiastics sitting at table within. A



*The President of the
Alpine Club, waiting
for the members. —
Come along my lads I'll show you the way.*



A BISHOP RECEIVING TITHES.

tithe-payer with a contribution of corn on his back walks into the open mouth.

The last of our set is a very firmly touched and spirited sketch with the title, "Death on

emphasized by under-scoring, makes it plain that the dressing of the conventional figure of Death as Napoleon was mainly suggested by the nickname.

the Pale Horse, or *Boney's Return*," with a note below, "The Pestilence." It has been suggested that this was drawn on the occasion of Napoleon's return from Elba, but this is scarcely likely. It would rather seem to have been prompted by a threatened epidemic of infectious disease; else, why the note, "The Pestilence"? There would have been little reason, or none, in drawing Napoleon as a skeleton riding through the air; but much in representing the coming pestilence as the conquering and destructive Napoleon of diseases; also the not very inspiring pun on Napoleon's English nickname of "Boney."



Death on the Pale Horse
Boney's Return.
 The Pestilence