

CRUIKSHANK IN AMERICA*

BY ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

I

THE recent presentation to Princeton of what has been known as the Meirs Collection (the gift of Richard Waln Meirs, of Philadelphia) has called attention to the extraordinary interest taken by American collectors in Cruikshankiana. By Cruikshankiana is meant first of all the productions of George Cruikshank, and incidentally the work of his father, Isaac Cruikshank, and of his brother, Robert Cruikshank. This interest is not a matter of the moment; for the past twenty years it has been growing steadily. It cannot be explained entirely by the collector's joy in the possession of the unusual, for Cruikshankiana exists on such a vast scale—George Cruikshank lived to such a ripe old age and worked with such steady rapidity—that very little of it can be regarded as rare. What then is the bond connecting Cruikshank with a country that he never visited and with a people that he never satirised? Is it the man himself, his peculiar personality, the men with whom he was associated in

*The collection contains eight hundred and ninety-four volumes and six hundred and ninety-five engravings, sketches and paintings, besides a considerable amount of autographed manuscript correspondence. Mr. Meirs began collecting Cruikshankiana while still a Princeton undergraduate and has been adding to the collection ever since. He has been replacing copies of the books with copies in the most perfect condition until the collection by far the best of its kind in America, is now considered to be as nearly perfect as money and a collector's thorough knowledge and constant interest can make it. The world in general never thinks of George Cruikshank as a painter. Yet to be a painter was his ambition. Here are the evidences in such oil paintings as "A Mother's Love," "Jesus Entering Jerusalem," "The Village Inn," "The Birth of Aphrodite," and "The Pirate Merchantman and the Man-of-War."

the capacity of illustrator, Byron, Dickens, Ainsworth and the rest, or was it that curious London of which he was so long the pictorial historian. Perhaps a combination of all.

In 1840 Thackeray contributed to the *Westminster Review* "An Essay on the Genius of George Cruikshank." Despite all that has been written by later critics and appreciators that paper remains the last summing up of Cruikshank's work. All roads lead to it in an estimate of the man's achievement. Yet Thackeray saw nothing strange in the London of the time, nothing grotesque in its foul, crooked alleys, and its whimsical characters as they were depicted by Cruikshank's pencil. The London of Tom and Jerry and Corinthian Kate had not greatly changed from the London which Hogarth depicted in his sketches of Beer Lane and Gin Alley. Elsewhere Thackeray wrote something to the effect that the average Englishman of the eighteenth century would be quite as much out of place at an English dinner table of the first years of Queen Victoria's reign as would an ancient Briton. He did not paint himself blue, he clothed himself into a resemblance of a normal being, but his deportment, his open allusions to the elemental facts of physical life, and his manner of expressing himself would have placed him as much beyond the pale as a Fiji Islander. Yet to the eyes of 1916 the London man-about-town of the Regency and of the reigns of George IV and William IV—the Sir Mulberry Hawk of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, or the Harry Foker of Thackeray's *Pendennis*—seems quite as impossible as any Yorkshire squire of the years when the House of Hanover was first called to the English throne.

Four names are linked together in the



THE TRIUMPH OF CUPID—THE FIRST PLATE FOR "THE TABLE BOOK" ETCHED BY CRUIKSHANK IN 1845. THE COLLECTION HAS ONE OF THE FINEST COPIES, IN ORIGINAL PARTS AS ISSUED FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 1845. (FROM AN ENGLISH SOURCE.)



AND NOW THE TURNPIKE GATES AGAIN FLEW OPEN IN SHORT SPACE, THE TOLL-MEN THINKING AS BEFORE THAT GILPIN RODE A RACE THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN (1828). THIS ILLUSTRATION IS ONE OF A SET OF SIX SPIRITED WOOD-ENGRAVINGS. PRINCETON HAS A SET OF BRILLIANT INDIA PROOFS ON LARGE PAPER. (FROM AN ENGLISH COLLECTION.) ALSO A NUMBER OF ORIGINAL SKETCHES BY CRUIKSHANK OF HORSES BEARING THE CLINGING FIGURE OF JOHN GILPIN IN FLIGHT. (RICHARDSON COLLECTION.)

history of British caricature and comic art—those of Hogarth, Rowlandson, Gillray, and Cruikshank. Cruikshank was the last, and the inheritor from the other three. After him the tone and the method of English caricature changed. If the eighteenth century clung to his work, remember that he was born eight years before that century came to its close. The world in which he grew up had been but little softened since the days of the “Rake’s Progress” and “Marriage à la mode.” The language which Fielding had put into the mouth of Squire Western was still the language of the average provincial squire, whether he came from the Yorkshire West Riding, or from Cornwall. Still were rogues brought publicly to justice and felon corpses dangled from gibbets, stark against the sky. Perhaps in the London through which Cruikshank roamed in search of his types conditions were slightly ameliorated. Perhaps Gin Lane and Beer Alley were a little better than they were in Hogarth’s day. But

it was the same sermon, inspired by practically the same conditions that Cruikshank preached in “The Bottle,” and its sequel, “The Drunkard’s Children.” Then there was the influence of Gillray. It was the influence of a madman, and if that madness never clouded Cruikshank’s brain, at least a little of it crept into his pencil. But after all, was not all that society just a little unbalanced? In contemplating it does there not come the thought that it would have been improved by being put away for six months’ repose and quiet care in some *maison de santé*?

Eccentric seem the postures of the men and women of Cruikshank’s work; but eccentric was the age. England, grappling for life in the struggle with the Corsican, forgot temporarily the danger if a battle between two famous bruisers was pending on Moulsey Hurst. The names of the warriors of sea and land—the Nelsons and the Wellingtons—were little better known than the names of Jem Belcher, and Joe Berks,



"LIFE OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF." (1858). THE PRINT REPRESENTS "THE LAST SCENE IN THE LIFE OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF"—ETCHING. HENRY V, ACT 2ND, SCENE 3RD. THE PRINCETON COLLECTION HAS A COPY IN ORIGINAL PARTS—WITH 20 SIMILAR ETCHINGS AND A FULL PAGE WOODCUT; ALSO A COPY AS IT WAS AFTERWARD ISSUED IN ORIGINAL CRIMSON CLOTH IN WHICH AN ORIGINAL A. L. S. OF CRUIKSHANK IS INSERTED. IN ADDITION TO THESE THERE IS A MOST INTERESTING ORIGINAL PROOF FRONTISPIECE UPON WHICH CRUIKSHANK HIMSELF HAS WORKED BEARING HIS SIGNATURE AND WITH HIS ORIGINAL IDEA FOR THE LINE OF PUBLICATION. THIS CAME FROM THE COLLECTION OF MRS. CRUIKSHANK'S EXECUTOR. PRINCETON HAS ALSO TWO ORIGINAL WATER COLOUR DRAWINGS FOR PLATES TO FALSTAFF AND A PAGE OF ORIGINAL SKETCHES

and Hen Pearce, the Game Chicken, and Gentleman Jackson, and Mendoza of Houndsditch. An affectation, the more absurd the better, counted more for social advancement than wit, or learning, or breeding. The preposterous fribble Brummel was the supreme expression of the age. This nobleman was famous for his ability to imitate the crow of a cock; that one through an assumption of absent mindedness which made him utter the most dreadful personalities about people to their very faces, a third because of his habit of hopping from chair to chair in a drawing-room. The bearer of a great name was applauded when he married the mistress of Jack the Highwayman after Jack had paid the penalty for his adventurous life on the gallows. The American visitor to London may have the good fortune

of being introduced to Brookes and Whites, two clubs that flourished when London was Corinthian. The old books in which bets were recorded are still to be seen. Read them over. They illuminate the spirit of the age. Lord X wagers a thousand guineas with Lord Y that he will walk on his hands from Charing Cross in the space of three-quarters of an hour. Failing to do so Lord X will depilate himself. Colonel A bets the Honorable Mr. B that the Duchess of C will have red-headed twins within twelve months.

II

In the history of Cruikshankiana there are three great names, those of Bruton, Douglas, and Truman. But these three collections have been dispersed and have found their way largely to the



"MEMOIRS OF JOSEPH GRIMALDI" LONDON, 1838. 2 VOLS. ILLUSTRATION "THE WAGER" TO VOLUME 1. THE COLLECTION HAS A BEAUTIFUL COPY WITH COMPLETE SERIES OF PLATES BY CRUIKSHANK IN ORIGINAL PINK CLOTH. A FIRST ISSUE; ALSO AN ORIGINAL WATER COLOUR DRAWING FOR GRIMALDI—UNPUBLISHED

United States. As a result probably in no place, with the exception of the British Museum, can George Cruikshank be so well seen as in the Meirs collection in the library of Princeton University. In view of the scope of that collection, and the necessary limitations of a magazine article, the writer will confine himself to a discussion of a few of the treasures. By Americans Cruikshank has been regarded first of all as an illustrator, so it is fitting to begin with his first venture in this field. In 1820 appeared the famous *Life in London*. It was by Pierce Egan, an Irishman, who, in addition to his descriptions of the ad-

ventures of Tom and Jerry and Logic, and Corinthian Tom and Corinthian Kate, wrote voluminously, and in a most deplorable style, about the English prize ring. Thackeray, writing in 1840, said of it: "Tom and Jerry were as popular twenty years since as Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller now are; and often have we wished while reading the biographies of the latter celebrated personages that they had been described as well by Mr. Cruikshank's pencil as by Mr. Dickens's pen." The thirty-six etchings illustrating *Life in London* were the joint work of Cruikshank and his brother. Fred-eric Stephens, in his memoir of George



THE FAMOUS ("OR INFAMOUS!") BILL SYKES ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY HIS DOG, ISSUED IN VOLUME III OF "OLIVER TWIST," WHICH ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN 1838, 12MO. 3 VOLS. A NEW EDITION IN MONTHLY PARTS CAME OUT IN 1846; AND THIS ILLUSTRATION WAS USED AGAIN. IN THE MEIRS COLLECTION AT PRINCETON THERE IS A FINE COPY OF THE FIRST EDITION IN ORIGINAL CLOTH. ALSO AN EXCEPTIONALLY FINE COPY OF THE 1846 ISSUE IN PARTS FROM THE FINE LIBRARY OF STEPHEN GEORGE HOLLAND (ENGLISH)

Cruikshank, dismisses them with slight mention, holding the opinion that the artist's peculiar genius in a melodramatic vein reached its acme two years later, when the famous illustrations to *Peter Schlemihl*, eight in number, were published with almost universal applause. In the same year appeared the illustrations to Grimm's *Popular Stories*.

Like *Peter Schlemihl* they attained the extremely rare distinction of being republished in Germany with the original text. Such an honour had been vouchsafed earlier to Hogarth. The Meirs collection contains *Life in London* in the original parts, and also, in original parts, the best *Grimm's Fairy Tales* in existence.



AN EARLY WORK OF GEORGE CRUIKSHANK FROM A SKETCH BY ISAAC—HIS FATHER,—ABOUT 1803. THERE IS A FINE COLOURED COPY IN THE PRINCETON COLLECTION. (FROM AN ENGLISH COLLECTION)

It was not long before Cruikshank came to be generally recognised as the best illustrator to be found in books, particularly of humorous books. As a result the amount of work that he did in this one line of book illustration, in the quarter century from 1830 to 1855, is astonishing. In the year 1831, for example, the "Novelists' Library," or at least the greater part of it was published. It included Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrew* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. In that year about one hundred and seventy-five designs of Cruikshank were published for the first time. Then came the work on the books of Ainsworth and Scott. Mr. Russell Sturgis, in an estimate of Cruikshank's work, took the stand that it is disappointing to find so much of Cruikshank's best efforts spent upon books which, from their very nature, cannot have much permanent value. He had Harrison Ainsworth in mind. "Consider Ainsworth's dreary stories," he wrote. "Perfect desert wastes of literature; a New York critic, writing about Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island*, said the mysterious part about it was that anybody should buy it and

read it; and indeed, it is pretty long and wordy and slow; but it is of absorbing interest and condensed beauty in comparison with *Rookwood* or *Jack Shephard*. How a Newgate novel can be made so dull passes comprehension. The story of *Rookwood* creeps."

Then came the brief association with Dickens. First there were the illustrations for *Sketches by Boz* and then for *Oliver Twist*. There were twenty-five etchings for the latter book, and Mr. Stephens characterises them as incomparable. In producing them, he says: "The artist gave solidity to the creations of his author, and brought to life Fagin the Jew, that immortal scamp, the 'Artful Dodger'; that beadle of beadles, Mr. Bumble. In Bill Sykes he outdid himself, and produced a portrait so vigorous, true and original, that, as it seems to me, all the world agrees to accept it as decidedly Cruikshank's master work." There is a story connected with the particular plate known as the fireside scene, in which Rose Maylie and Oliver are seated before an open grate. Dickens did not see this plate until the work was on the eve of publication, and then objected to it so strongly that it had to be cancelled. The publication of the



FROM CRUIKSHANK'S GERMAN POPULAR STORIES, OF WHICH THE COLLECTION HAS A VERY FINE COPY IN ORIGINAL BOARDS, FIRST ISSUE, 2 VOLS. 1823-26. THIS HAS BEEN CALLED "THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF ALL CRUIKSHANK'S WORKS." THIS COPY WAS AN ORIGINAL SUBSCRIBERS' COPY AND HAS INSERTED A LETTER IN THE AUTOGRAPH OF CRUIKSHANK TO ROBINS, THE PUBLISHER OF VOL. II. THIS IS A DIFFICULT BOOK FOR THE COLLECTOR TO FIND IN FIRST ISSUE STATE AND IS PARTICULARLY DESIRABLE IN ORIGINAL BOARDS (AS IS THE PRESENT COPY). MR. MEIRS HAS ALSO PRESENTED PRINCETON WITH A FINE SECOND EDITION OF GRIMM'S IN ORIGINAL BOARDS. THIS IS THE H. W. BRUTON COPY WITH HIS SIGNATURE ON THE FLY-LEAF. BRUTON CONSIDERED IT TO BE THE SECOND ISSUE OF THE FIRST EDITION, BUT THE DIFFERENCES FROM THE TRUE FIRST ISSUE PROVE IT TO BE THE SECOND EDITION. THERE IS ALSO A COPY OF THE HOTTEN EDITION OF GERMAN POPULAR STORIES (CIRCA 1868). THIS CONTAINS FINE REPRODUCTIONS OF THE ETCHINGS AND AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN RUSKIN,—WHO BY HIS FAVOURABLE CRITICISM, DREW THE ATTENTION OF MULTITUDES TO THIS BOOK. ALSO THE COMPLETE SET OF TWENTY-TWO ETCHINGS BY CRUIKSHANK FOR GRIMM'S. PROOFS ON INDIA PAPER, SOME IN AN UNDIVIDED STATE. ALSO AN INTERESTING FRENCH BOOK—"VIEUX CONTES, POUR L'AMUSEMENT DES GRANDS ET DES PETITS ENFANTS (PARIS, 1830). HERE TWELVE OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR GRIMM'S ARE RE-ENGRAVED—(COPIES BY TARDIEU AND ISSUED AS HIS OWN PRODUCTIONS). ALSO ORIGINAL DRAWINGS BY CRUIKSHANK FOR GRIMM'S—YOUNG GIANT AND THE TAILOR CHERRY, OR THE FROG'S BRIDE

book could not, of course, be delayed; so copies with the objectionable plate were distributed until the new one could be prepared and printed.* Cruikshank worked hard over the rejected plate, but to no purpose. For the fireside scene was substituted a plate representing

*Far more serious was the actual blunder that John Leech made in illustrating Dickens's *The Battle of Life*. The early part of the plot of that tale leads the reader to suppose that Marion Jeddler had eloped with Michael Warden, when, as a matter of fact, she had merely escaped to her aunt. Leech, who was engaged as illustrator, was very busy, and read only so much of the story as seemed necessary for his purpose.

Rose Maylie and Oliver at Agnes's tomb. In 1838 appeared *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, edited by Dickens. To this work Cruikshank contributed twelve etchings. It was the last work in which the names of the novelist and of the artist were linked.

As a result he was deceived, as Dickens intended his readers should be, and designed a double illustration, in which the festivities to welcome the bridegroom at the top of the page contrast with the flight of the bride in company with Michael Warden beneath. This episode is generally referred to as "Leech's grave mistake." Dickens wrote to Forster: "When I first saw it it was with a horror and agony not to be expressed."



THEATRICAL ATLAS. MAY 7, 1814. H. HUMPHREY. A FINE COLOURED COPY HAVING A FULL MARGIN IN SUPERB STATE. FROM THE BRUTON COLLECTION. AT THE BOTTOM OF PLATE, BRUTON HAS WRITTEN IN PENCIL: "VERY RARE, THIS WAS G. CK.'S OWN COPY. W. H. B." MR. BRUTON PURCHASED IT FROM MRS. CRUIKSHANK. ON BACK OF PLATE IS WRITTEN IN PENCIL "BOUGHT OF MRS. CRUIKSHANK, JANUARY 28, 1884." THIS IS ONE OF THE RAREST OF CRUIKSHANK CARICATURES. THE BRUTON COLLECTION WAS DISPERSED AT AUCTION IN 1897

In his work on the Waverley novels Cruikshank was not at his best. He was a Londoner, and it needed a Scotchman to give the embodied form of Major Dalgetty or of Dandie Dinmont. But if he was not so successful with Highland types, Scott's *Demonology and Witchcraft* gave him the earliest opportunity he enjoyed of dealing with a sequence of subjects in which the grotesque and passionate aspects of superstition were made manifest in designs, the quaintest, most spirited, and picturesquely wild. But by far best of all are the etchings for children's books—the German nursery tales, and the "Fairy Library," which came out in

1854 and 1857. "Of all the artists that ever drew," wrote Thackeray, "from Michael Angelo upward and downward, Cruikshank was the man to illustrate these tales, and give them just the proper admixture of the grotesque, the wonderful, and the graceful. May all Mother Bunch's collection be similarly indebted to him, may 'Jack the Giant Killer,' may 'Tom Thumb,' may 'Pus in Boots' be one day revived by his pencil. Is not Whittington, sitting yet on Highgate Hill, and poor Cinderella (in that sweetest of all fairy stories) still pining in her lonely chimney nook? A man who has true affection for these delightful companions of his youth is bound to



"THE FIRST GENTLEMAN" FROM HONE'S TRACTS. PRINCETON HAS A LARGE COLLECTION OF HONE'S TRACTS, ALL OF A POLITICAL NATURE. THESE WERE ALSO ACQUIRED FROM AN ENGLISH COLLECTION

be grateful to them if he can, and we pray Mr. Cruikshank to remember them."

III

So much for Cruikshank the illustrator. Now for Cruikshank the man, the reformer, the castigator of the vices and the weaknesses of his time. The secret of his marvelous production can be summed up in one word, impecuniosity. As prodigal as Balzac, and in many respects as visionary, he was always borrowing, always in debt. As early as 1803, when he was eleven years old, he was etching a sketch by his father, called "Facing the Enemy." When he died, in 1878, he was still actually in harness. Thus his working life covered a span of five and seventy years. Though always in more or less straightened circumstances he never suffered from actual

poverty, until he had far passed middle life. Then work went to younger hands than his; the taste of the day had changed—his particular market was gone. Perhaps he himself was in a measure to blame. His over-sensitive temper and impatient nature led him into predicaments which could have been easily avoided. He quarrelled with Dickens, Ainsworth, and others with whom he should have worked harmoniously. He fell out with publishers, some of whom he suspected of attempts to overreach him or undervalue his art. Even as an advocate of temperance he was intemperate. In "The Bottle" and "The Drunkard's Children" he carried on the work of Hogarth. These pictorial preachments were the result of a change in his own habits. For almost fifty years he had been a good liver; in 1842 he gave up every kind of alcoholic stimulant, threw away his pipe and

smoked no more. No one quarrelled with him for this reason. It was his own affair. But his passion for temperance became a fanaticism which alienated friends and lost him employment. Yet he found compensation in a wonderfully vigorous old age. He was seen to dance a hornpipe when more than eighty years old; and until quite late in life he walked like a man still young.

He was unquestionably right in his denunciation of the evils of drink. The England of his later life was far better than the England of his youth, but the sermons were still needed. Yet the spectacle of a man who has enjoyed to the full his own years of conviviality turned scold is never quite a pleasant one. Better it is to think of him in the hot hearted days of his young manhood, taking up the cudgels in behalf of the poor little ill-treated wife of George the Fourth. It matters not what the full truth may have been. Very likely there had been more than indiscretion on the part of Queen Caroline. It was enough

to know the earlier stories about poor Perdita and her successors; to know that George had gone through the marriage ceremony when in his cups, that from the very first he had been more than neglectful and unkind. "When he levelled his wit against the Regent," wrote Thackeray, "and did his very prettiest for the Princess, he most certainly believed, along with the great body of people, that the Princess was the most spotless, pure-mannered darling of a princess that ever married a heartless debauchee of a Prince Royal. Did not millions believe with him, and noble and learned lords take their oaths to her Royal Highness's innocence? Cruikshank could not stand by and see a woman ill used, and so struck in for her rescue, he and the people belabouring with all their might the party who were making the attack, and determining, from pure sympathy and indignation, that the woman must be innocent because her husband treated her so foully."

SIX BOOKS OF THE MONTH

I-II

FORD MADOX HUEFFER'S "HENRY JAMES." J. MIDDLETON MURRY'S "FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY"*

To the uniform edition of "critical studies," which include Synge, Ibsen, Hardy, Pater, Whitman, Gissing, Bridges and Swinburne, there are now added Ford Madox Hueffer's *Henry James* and J. Middleton Murry's *Fyodor Dostoevsky*.

Quite aside from the marked and respective merits of these two volumes they are interesting revelations of different methods of critical approach—as different, in fact, as the two novelists

*Henry James. By Ford Madox Hueffer. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Fyodor Dostoevsky. By J. Middleton Murry. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

themselves. Mr. Hueffer has not ventured to be too profound. He has preferred to win tribute by a casual chatty series of comments and contrasts over the whole field of literature. Inspired by a real admiration for the "un-Americanised American," whom he places among "the greatest of living writers," he is inclined to deprecate his own criticism by criticising it. His attitude is continually apologetic. He cannot help but feel that Mr. James was his own best critic, and hence Mr. Hueffer's pages are full of quotations. He calls his book an impression and he must therefore speak continually of his own reactions in reading the author of *What Maisie Knew*. He admits the writing of the book proved a most thankless task because he has had to write about "his subject's subjects," and his message. He

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Published monthly by DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY, INC., Fourth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, New York City.
25 CENTS A COPY. \$2.50 A YEAR

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NOVEMBER

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25 cents a copy NEW YORK \$2.50 a year