Part I: Dickens and His Early Illustrators

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK
ROBERT SEYMOUR
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Chapter 1

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

It is hardly surprising, even in an age when biographers dredge for subjects, that no one has written a modern biography of Dickens's first illustrator, George Cruikshank. No single person has possessed knowledge (and nerve) enough, perhaps, to write comprehensively about the artist who lived so long—eighty-six years—and produced so many works with such varied subjects and techniques. Yet any history of Dickensian illustration must begin with an account, however circumscribed, of the "Illustrious George," the first artist to work with young, unknown Boz. Any future biographer of Cruikshank must be concerned with his long relationship with Dickens and its curious but distinct bipartite character: on the one hand, their literary, social, and theatrical association from 1835 to 1850; and, on the other, their gradual dissociation in all three spheres from 1850 to their deaths in the 1870's. Although the artist illustrated all or part of only five books written, edited, or altered by the author—a mere fraction of the nearly nine hundred books Cruikshank illustrated or the twenty-four Dickens initially published with pictures—these illustrations have kept him in the public eye more than anything else he did. More important, despite the brevity of their collaboration, which spanned just six years from 1835 to 1841, their work together had a disproportionate effect on the careers of both men. It is clear in retrospect that their work together was a turning point—though in very different ways—for Cruikshank as well as for Dickens.

From start to finish, the working relationship between author and artist was characterized by a struggle for sovereignty. Such a clash was perhaps inevitable between two men so similar in interests, outlook, energies, and temperament, and it was not mitigated by their disparate ages and, initially, their disparate reputations. That Cruikshank, son and brother of artists, was the undisputed heir of Hogarth, Gillray, and Rowlandson was already a commonplace observation. His early satirical prints on political and social topics of the day, for which he conceived as well as designed characters, plot, and dialogue, were so popular in the London of Dickens's youth that the Crown paid him not to caricature the King; his book illustrations in the 1820's and 1830's for authors, living and dead, were classics before anyone ever heard of Boz. Even prior to their work together, Dickens insisted that no one appreciated Cruikshank's talents as highly as he did. Once their reputations were commensurate, however, he found the artist's challenge to his authority intolerable. Cruikshank, who found illustrating books unbearable under the limitations Dickens imposed, tried to regain his independent reputation, first through literary enterprises bearing his name, then through the temperance movement. When these efforts failed, his stature diminished even as that of Dickens increased. Gradually Cruikshank made the author a prime scapegoat for his tormented ego; even their past achievement and friendship became sources of renewed contention. Their entire relationship, in the occasionally disordered vision of Cruikshank's old age, became, to borrow a contemporary pun, "All-of-a-Twist."

All began auspiciously enough in October, 1835, when Harrison Ainsworth's publisher, John Macrone, suggested that Dickens collect his short pieces on London life, which had appeared separately in various magazines and newspapers under his pseudonym, Boz, and publish them in a volume to be illustrated by George Cruikshank. The former employee of Warren's Blacking (for whom the ubiquitous Cruikshank had made some woodcut advertisements) was exhilarated at the idea. The very presence of Cruikshank's name on a title page guaranteed a sizable sale. By the 1830's, his preeminence in book illustration was so evident that Daniel Maclise had included a picture of him seated on a beer
barrel sketching on the crown of his hat, in the “Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters” for *Fraser’s Magazine* (fig. 2). In agreeing to illustrate what became the *Sketches by Boz*, Cruikshank conferred on the novice author one of his first genuine honors. Aware of the artist’s condescension, Dickens suggested to the publisher that a more modest title might be:

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Sketches by Boz
and
Cuts by Cruikshank
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or

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Etchings by Boz
and
Wood Cuts by Cruikshank
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The proposed titles displayed the young man’s shrewdness as well as modesty. The fact that the published title referred to the author but not the artist, however, proved prophetic.

The first meeting between the two collaborators on November 17, 1835, was gratifying, especially for Dickens. Cruikshank not only wanted to study his published pieces but promised that, as far as he was concerned, the work could appear by Christmas. The veteran would have been kinder had he warned the neophyte about the difficulties involved in trying to coordinate their efforts with those of the publisher and printer to produce an illustrated volume in little more than a month. Deferred conferences and belated proofs were inevitable. Tension grew. Misunderstandings resulted. At the end of November, Dickens anxiously requested the list of illustrations Cruikshank intended. The artist, perhaps scribbling human and diabolic faces on a corner of the author’s letter in his annoyance, complained to Macrone: he said he resented being pressed for illustrations before receiving the complete text and regretted this “unpleasant turn” of affairs. The author, realizing that his *Sketches* could not appear by Christmas, no longer rested content with Cruikshank’s “good opinion” of and “kind interest” in his work. Irrate at the apparent offhandedness of the artist, who promised one plate one week and two the next, and assuming that each plate illustrated one subject, Dickens magisterially informed Macrone that Cruikshank required the “spur.” Then realizing that each plate actually contained four subjects, the embarrassed writer became conciliatory, assured Macrone that perhaps the later publication date would prove fortuitous, and concealed his irritation at the further delays due to the artist’s refusal to be moved by imperatives of time by praising his labors in behalf of *Boz*. It was February 18, 1836, before the *Sketches* finally appeared.

Fig. 2. Daniel Maclise, Portrait of George Cruikshank. *Fraser’s Magazine*, 8 (August, 1833), facing p. 190. Lithograph, 8⅛" × 5" (22.2 × 12.7 cm). From the Harvard College Library, Harvard University.

If Dickens had not forgotten his differences with the artist by the time of publication, he had not forgotten his indebtedness either. In the traditional accompanying preface, which he sent to Cruikshank for his approval, he displayed his mastery of self-aggrandizement as well as of flattery. Slighting Macrone’s role in arranging the collaboration, Dickens maintained that it was he himself who had been “naturally desirous to secure some well-known individual who had frequently contributed to the success, though his well-earned reputation rendered it impossible for him ever to have shared the hazard, of similar undertakings.
To whom, as possessing this requisite in an eminent degree, could he apply but to GEORGE CRUIKSHANK?" (xxiii). Yet the artist's name was excluded from the title page, if not the volume spines, in later editions of the first series of the Sketches, and this preface, perhaps because it was too deferential to the artist, was superseded in all editions after 1836 (xxiii; cf. xxiv–xxix); only one of the subsequent prefaces acknowledges the appeal of the illustrations (xxv) and none mentions the artist by name. By the time they appeared, Dickens no doubt was convinced that his illustrators must be subordinates, not equals. His trials with Cruikshank must have strengthened his determination to establish control over Robert Seymour, who was working with him on The Pickwick Papers, which began to appear two months after the first Sketches. Dickens's desire for control seemed justified by the fact that Pickwick's amazing success attended his collaboration with the pliable Phiz, not with the reluctant Seymour. Cruikshank, however, a member of the old school of fiercely independent artists, chafed in any subordinate role. When he next worked with Dickens, he fought to retain control, at least over his own aesthetic domain.

Even before Boz won greater fame as the author of Pickwick, in the summer of 1836, Macrone had proposed a second series of Sketches by Boz. Dickens was willing, and Cruikshank readily consented to illustrate the intended two volumes. He apparently agreed to select the subjects for illustration with the author, instead of independently as before, when the pieces were already published, and even retained the finished portion of the manuscript in order to follow the text more precisely. This time, however, Dickens was dilatory. Simultaneously preoccupied with Pickwick, Bentley's Miscellany, The Strange Gentleman, and The Village Coquettes, in addition to his old Chronicle job and his recent marriage, he rarely met with Cruikshank and ultimately failed to supply enough text for two volumes of the new Sketches by Christmas. In less than a year, the "Inimitable Boz" had become better known and busier than the "Illustrious George." Such a reversal of status and its psychological effects inevitably strained their relationship.

Cruikshank, more accustomed to making delays for authors, took offense waiting for Dickens. He warily notified Macrone that he had undertaken another project that must be finished before he returned to Boz's; he had expected to see more manuscript, not only to select subjects at leisure, but "in order that I might have the privilege of suggesting any little arrangements to suit the Pencil"; if he could not get "good" subjects to work on, added the artist gratuitously, he would not work at all.

Macrone forwarded Cruikshank's letter to Dickens, not perceiving that the artist's main complaint was hurt pride, replied with a fury barely veiled with sarcasm. "I have long believed Cruikshank to be mad; and his letter, therefore, suprises me not a jot. If you have any further communication with him, you will greatly oblige me by saying from me that I am very much amused at the notion of his altering my Manuscript, and that had it fallen into his hands, I should have preserved his emendations as 'curiosities of Literature,' . . . I positively object to his touching it." The author then questioned whether the work even needed any illustration, forgetting, in his wrath, that Macrone could hardly publish a two-volume work with plates in only one volume. If pictures were necessary, perhaps "his" Pickwick illustrator should provide them, Dickens suggested, with the implication that Phiz was already better known to the public than Cruikshank (and certainly more subservient to the author, as his use of the possessive suggests). Tempers eventually cooled. Work resumed. But lacking sufficient text, Macrone had no choice but to bring out the second series of Sketches in December, 1836 in a single illustrated volume—a change of plan that, given the circumstances, as Dickens impishly told Cruikshank, was an "excellent notion." His preface, in which the public is urged to accept the work on account of its illustrations, if on no other grounds, shows that Dickens had not altogether lost sight of the fact that Cruikshank's work was indispensable to the Sketches' success. Although the artist's name did not appear on the title page of the second series of the Sketches, it was reinstated by the time of the Collected Edition, in 1839, the version with which posterity is most familiar.

Taken together, the Sketches of 1836, which were later reorganized and published together, in monthly parts from 1837 to 1839, and in a bound volume in 1839, reveal nothing of the dissenion—though something of the haste—that marked the course of Dickens's work with Cruikshank. Indeed they express all the aesthetic harmony one looks for from two talented men, who, despite differences in age and media, had much in common. Neither brought to his chosen art any formal training, but each was endowed with unusual energy, flair for self-dramatization, and a forceful public consciousness. Both were intimately acquainted with the physical, social, and moral topography of middle and lower class London in the 1830's, the setting for all of the Sketches. Indeed, the painstakingly accurate verbal and graphic descriptions of costumes, furnishings, and vehicles in scenes like 'Seven Dials' (S, V, facing p. 70) and 'The Last Cabdriver' (S, XVII, facing p. 140) make the book a valuable quarry for historians of the period.
Most important, as Professor J. Hillis Miller has persuasively demonstrated, both men were thoroughly familiar not only with popular drama and literature, but, above all, with graphics, whose conventions mold the Sketches throughout.21

As their collective title suggests, Sketches by Boz are self-consciously pictorial. The pieces, written before Dickens ever dreamed that his work would be illustrated, owed almost as great a debt to popular graphic tradition as to Cruikshank's plates. Dickens may have been breaking fresh literary ground in taking for settings gin and pawn shops, courts and prisons, coach and boat excursions, together with the lower middle-class people who frequented them; but such unheroic subjects had long been featured in the prints of Hogarth, Gillray, and Rowlandson, not to mention those of Cruikshank himself. In order to structure and focus his own "little pictures" of London life (xxiii), Dickens appears to have studied not only the subjects of these pictorial satirists, but also their methods.

"It would require the pencil of Hogarth to illustrate . . . " (T, I, 289) Boz began a description of one of his characters, thereby echoing an excuse utilized by almost every popular prose writer since Hogarth's time. Dickens, however, went far beyond the mere sentiment in his fiction, and did all he could to stretch his own medium. Admiring, for example, the economy with which Hogarth could hint at a complete sequence and extend one engraving in time if not space, he sought its verbal equivalent. In the many narrative sequences in the Sketches, Dickens achieved a "Hogarthian" ability to anticipate the final destiny of a character or object while representing only the intermediate stages; Cruikshank creatively followed suit. In keeping with Dickens's verbal portrayal of 'The Pawnbroker's Shop,' for example, as Miller and John Dixon Hunt have observed, the artist not only juxtaposes three women in different stages along the way to prostitution, but adds on a background wall a portrait of a fourth woman resembling the other three, who may have passed through the whole debased process in her own life (S, XXIII, facing p. 191) (see fig. 69).22 Indeed, Dickens's "progresses" throughout the Sketches, whether of criminals (C, XII, 272) or lovers (C, VII, 242-47) or objects (OP, VII, 41; S, VI, 75-81) are really degenerations, ending only in disintegration or death. The author, and the artist after him, depicted little change in this society that was not for the worse.

Dickens described the appearance of his characters as well as their environment in graphic detail. Yet the physical attributes of his characters, as Thackeray observed, would not have "impressed" themselves on the reader's memory were it not for Cruikshank's rendering of them.23 Indeed, despite his delineation of them in conceptual as well as visual detail, Dickens's point was precisely the insignificance of his characters. His Londoners are constantly overwhelmed by their environment; things are endowed with more importance, vitality, and permanence than people. Miller has described the various ways in which Cruikshank reinforces the point visually by surrounding his diminutive figures with outsized background objects—often one on each side—whose stability seems more a threat than a comfort.24

Arches (S, VII, facing p. 84; S, XIX, facing p. 160), pediments (OP, IV, facing p. 22), light fixtures (S, V, facing p. 70; S, XII, facing p. 118; C, VI, facing p. 240), fireplace hoods (S, IV, 66), orchestra shells and organs (S, XIV, facing p. 126), and gin barrels (S, XXII, facing p. 182) menace some and minimize all. Some are even sealed claustrophobically behind closed doors and windows and drawn shades and curtains (S, II, facing p. 60; S, IX, facing p. 256; T, I, facing p. 288; T, VIII, facing p. 414; T, X, facing p. 458). Others, not immediately doomed by the hospital, gallows, or morgue, turn to Astley's Vauxhall, theaters, dancing lessons, and holiday excursions in escapes as futile as they are fleeting. Cruikshank appropriately underscores the transience of such activities by often portraying his characters in actions that clearly cannot be sustained, such as the open-mouthed surprise of Horatio Sparkins (T, V, facing p. 370) or the unstable postures of those 'Making a Night of it' (C, XI, facing p. 266). By ironic contrast, the impassive figures in the portraits that adorn many of the interiors in the Sketches not only anticipate the possible fate of those characters they so often resemble, as Miller suggests,25 but bear witness that permanence in such a society comes only through death, or perhaps, art (C, IV, facing p. 228; S, XXIII, facing p. 190 (see fig. 69); T, III, facing p. 328; and T, XI, facing p. 474). If single moments in the Sketches are comic, their cumulative effect is paradoxical and tragic.

To survive in such a society requires skill at deception and exploitation of one's self and others. Cruikshank makes this point even more explicitly than Boz. Viewed in this light, the many portraits of author and artist throughout the Sketches (title page; S, XIX, facing p. 160; C, VI, facing p. 240; C, XI, facing p. 266) become more than manifestations of Cruikshank's legacy from earlier artists, who more usually relegated their self-portraits to the background of a scene, or even of his particular sense of equality with the author. They inadvertently call attention to the fact that the two men, like many of their characters, are exploiting others for their own amusement and profit under the guise of "art." Perhaps this is what Ruskin was getting at when he cryptically called 'Public Dinners' (S, XIX, facing p. 160)
(fig. 3)—a scene in which Dickens and Cruikshank smirk at one another while marshaling a procession of indigent orphans—"glorious" yet "withering: if one understands it. But who does? or ever did?"26

The artist had added 'Public Dinners' and other new designs to the collected Sketches by Boz when they were published in one large volume in 1839 after appearing in part-issues since 1837 (see F). In contrast to Browne's early Pickwick plates, which were improved upon being copied, and his own new drawings for the new edition, Cruikshank's enlarged copies of his old "Bozzes"—as Ainsworth dubbed his illustrations for the earlier Sketches27—were lackluster indeed; what they gained in size they lost in vitality. By this time, however, Dickens probably was too absorbed with Oliver Twist and Nicholas Nickleby to notice or even to care. Macrone, who might have commented on the artist's diminished vitality, was no longer alive.

Even before Macrone's death, Dickens disputed whether their agreement for Gabriel Varden, as Barnaby Rudge was originally entitled, was or was not canceled. After waiving rights to this novel in return for the copyright to Sketches by Boz, Macrone ignited another conflict by planning a monthly reissue of the Sketches in green covers, exactly like those of the best-selling Pickwick Papers, a stunt that infuriated Pickwick's author and publishers. This problem was resolved when Chapman and Hall purchased the Sketches copyright and published the monthly reissues themselves.

Despite the resulting acrimony between Dickens and Macrone, when the publisher died suddenly in the fall of 1837, leaving his family destitute, it was the author who planned a way to help. He proposed that a collection of contributions by writers and artists who knew Macrone be published for the family's benefit, and undertook the management of what became the three-volume Pic Nic Papers. Dickens himself wrote the introduction, edited two of the three volumes, and contributed the first piece. Cruikshank unhesitatingly volunteered his services. Nevertheless, it took three years before "poor Mrs. Macrone's book" was ready to be illustrated, and several months more for Cruikshank to produce two plates for it—one for Dickens's "The Lamplighter's Story" (RP, 753) and another for a contribution by Ainsworth. The Pic Nic Papers did not appear until August, 1841, almost four years after its conception. Still, Dickens was able to send £300 in proceeds to the needy Macrone family.28

The titular similarity of The Pic Nic Papers to Dickens's first major book raises the inevitable question: why did Cruikshank not become the illustrator of The Pickwick Papers after Seymour's suicide? Not only was Cruikshank Boz's first illustrator, but he was about to go to work on the next edition of the Sketches; certainly he would seem the obvious choice. There is no evidence, however, that the matter was even broached between the two men. Dickens, pleased as he had been to have Cruikshank illustrate his maiden work, might have been unenthusiastic. His initial tribulations on The Pickwick Papers with Seymour probably strengthened his resolve never again to allow himself to be shackled by an artist's inclination. To have asked the artist of the Sketches to illustrate Pickwick might have jeopardized both his hard-won control over that narrative and his precarious relationship with Cruikshank—an artist of greater stature and force than Seymour.

Cruikshank, for his part, had undertaken other commissions between the two series of the 1836 Sketches, which he probably could not abandon or defer on short notice. In any case, the artist, famous for his representations of London,
would hardly have been attracted to the rural setting and sporting concerns of the early numbers of _Pickwick_. Nor would he have been satisfied to work at Seymour's rate of remuneration, which was doubtless lower than he was accustomed to.\textsuperscript{29} Cruikshank's name might have boosted _Pickwick_'s profits in the long run, but the poor sales of its first two issues would have prevented Chapman and Hall from paying more at this time. Cruikshank does not seem to have felt slighted at not being asked to illustrate _Pickwick_ even after it became such a spectacular success. After Seymour's death, he apparently suggested John Leech and, perhaps, his former pupil, William Thackeray, to fill the post. Furthermore, Cruikshank was not angry when Dickens, having already selected Browne, gave both applicants short shrift, and he must have been gratified by Thackeray's attempt to thank him, perhaps, by publicly wishing that Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller had been described "by Mr. Cruikshank's pencil as by Mr. Dickens's pen."\textsuperscript{90}

As editor, from 1836 to 1839, of Richard Bentley's new monthly _Miscellany_, Dickens had no choice but to work with Cruikshank again, for Bentley himself chose Cruikshank as illustrator.\textsuperscript{91} Whenever neither man's ego was very involved, their work together proceeded smoothly. When dealing with short contributions by other writers, Dickens usually indicated which were to be illustrated, but left the selection of the actual subjects to the artist. On his own short pieces, Dickens supervised Cruikshank's work more closely but still amicably. Before he even wrote "The Public Life of Mr. Tulrumble, once Mayor of Mudfog" (\textit{SBB}, 536–48), he solicited the artist's thoughts about a suitable subject for a plate; in conference together, they finally settled on one Dickens considered "capital," which would show Ned Twigger in the Mudfog Hall (\textit{SBB}, facing p. 542) kitchen; and he even asked for Cruikshank's opinion of the finished piece.\textsuperscript{92} Under this kind of treatment, Cruikshank flourished. When Dickens later contributed a "Full Report of the Second Meeting of the Mudfog Association for the Advancement of Everything," a Pickwickian satire on the numerous learned societies of the time, the artist put forward his best efforts. He made several studies before he was satisfied with his portrayal of Mudfog's beadle in 'The Tyrant Sowster, and Real Offenders' (\textit{SBB}, facing p. 572), and his ingenious rendering of an 'Automaton Police Office' (\textit{SBB}, facing p. 578) left Dickens "in transports."\textsuperscript{93} In working on these "Mudfog Papers," not reprinted in book form until 1880, the two men worked in a harmony that was to become all too rare.

Tension began to build between the two men, however, as they began to work on _Oliver Twist_, featured in Bentley's _Miscellany_ from the second number. Dickens was now better known than Cruikshank. He no longer needed to use the artist's name to attract readers, or to put up with his delays and outbursts. Nor did he feel obliged to write deferential prefaces; indeed, neither Cruikshank nor the illustrations are mentioned in any of the three prefaces written for _Oliver_ over the years (vii–xix). Moreover, whereas in 1835 he could not afford to live in the artist's Pentonville neighborhood, now, less than two years later, he took a house on Doughty Street in central London that must have been way beyond Cruikshank's means.\textsuperscript{34} Yet the author may still have felt insecure. He owed an incalculable debt to his early illustrators. Cruikshank had attracted public notice to Boz; Seymour had started the circumstantial chain that resulted in _Pickwick_; and Browne's advent had coincided with, if not caused, _Pickwick_'s overnight success. _Oliver Twist_ was Dickens's first planned novel—unlike _Pickwick_, which had grown into one. Its urban, sociological subjects particularly interested Cruikshank, who excelled in representing them, but did not hesitate to advance obtrusive as well as helpful suggestions. In a sense the author indeed would be writing up to the artist, knowing he was so well versed in this area. Yet Dickens hardly wished to be known merely as "the CRUIKSHANK of writers," as the _Spectator_ had recently called him.\textsuperscript{36} Despite his desire for visual reinforcement (a desire he might have partly resented), the author began to act as if he had resolved to become his own illustrator in everything but actual execution of the plates. Cruikshank, accustomed throughout his career to greater independence from authors, could—and did—only seize the initiative in Dickens's absence.

Clearly but tactfully, from the start of their work on _Oliver_, Dickens put the artist in a subordinate position. Their plan of action was their customary one: Cruikshank was to confer with the author about subjects for the plates and, as time permitted, to submit drawings for his approval; in return, the artist was to receive the text to study early each month though he apparently preferred now, in contrast to the days of the _Sketches_, to confer with the author in person. In this manner, for example, the famous 'Oliver asking for more' (II, facing p. 12) was executed, a subject that Dickens correctly, if condescendingly, perceived would "bring Cruikshank out."\textsuperscript{35} Even this procedure, however, soon broke down. Increasingly, the author delayed sending the text and scheduling their meetings. He may have been overcommitted elsewhere, or he may have wished to give the artist a clean copy of the manuscript, or it may be that he wished to spare himself Cruikshank's constant suggestions. Whatever the reason, he not only often sent the text late, when at all, but he began to indicate without consulting with
the artist the subject he wanted illustrated: in this manner Oliver's escape from the sweep apprenticeship (III, facing p. 20), his attack of Noah Claypole (VI, facing p. 42), and his first meeting with Fagin and his band (XVI, facing p. 112) were given to Cruikshank for representation. Yet the tone of their communications remains tactful and good-humored at this stage.

By this time, however, the whole enterprise threatened to collapse as relations between Dickens and his publisher worsened. In the fall of 1837, about one-third of the way through the monthly publication of Oliver, Cruikshank took on the unlikely role of mediator between Dickens and Richard Bentley. Prior to the Miscellany's debut, Cruikshank's wrapper design had inspired the Irish writer William Maginn to compose a "Song of the Cover," which concluded:

Boz and Cruikshank want to dance,—
None for frolic riper;
But Bentley makes the first advance,
Because he pays the piper.88

The jocular last line soon became ironic. Dickens began squabbling with the publisher about many points in their original contract, especially those which committed him to provide two novels in two years in addition to his required sixteen pages each month for the Miscellany. Before beginning Barnaby Rudge, the "first" novel, Dickens determined that Oliver, already running in the periodical as part of his monthly contribution, should also count as the second novel.

To avoid going to court over the author's attempt to make one literary work fulfill two separate obligations, Bentley accepted Cruikshank's offer to arbitrate the dispute. The artist proved a strange diplomat. Since Dickens rigidly maintained his position, Cruikshank advised the publisher to concede. He argued that the novelty-loving public would soon be "heartily tired" of Oliver Twist, and that, by accepting it as the second novel, Bentley would free himself to drop it from the Miscellany whose prospects it was likely to "injure."89 The publisher hastily disabused him of this peculiar notion, which was probably a ruse anyway. Both artist and publisher knew full well that Oliver was a drawing card that the new periodical could hardly afford to lose. Just as Bentley told Cruikshank he would yield to Dickens's terms, however, the author gave notice that he was quitting; almost simultaneously, the bewildered Bentley received Cruikshank's declaration that there was still time to produce Oliver for the next number.40 The role of arbitrator in the battles between Dickens and his publishers was soon taken over by John Forster, now the author's closest friend. However, when Dickens and Bentley finally ceased their hostilities with a mutually satisfying agreement a year later, it was Cruikshank whom the author invited to celebrate with him.41

Soon after the temporary truce was arranged with Bentley, the procedure for choosing and inspecting the illustrations for Oliver went completely awry. Dickens supplied only a short, detailed summary—possibly supplemented by a later conference—for Mrs. Corney's tea with Bumble (XXIII, facing p. 170), and had time for only brief meetings about 'Master Bates explains a professional technicality' (XVIII, facing p. 132) and for Oliver's meeting with the Bow Street runners (XXXI, facing p. 230). When Dickens finally (and indisputably) allowed the artist to determine a design without consultation, for a number that was not very suggestive visually, Cruikshank perversely waived the privilege and refused to do the illustration.42

Then circumstances conspired to make the latent struggle between Dickens and Cruikshank surface, which inevitably affected the remaining illustrations. Dickens planned to tour Wales and the Midlands with Browne and Forster just as the three-volume edition of Oliver was to be published in November, 1838, in advance of its completion in the Miscellany in April, 1839. Before the author left London, he consulted with Cruikshank on the final chapters and suggested the last six subjects.44 With Dickens gone, the artist executed the remaining plates with varying degrees of indifference to the author's wishes. It made sense aesthetically to draw the lantern held by Monks in the process of destroying the evidence of Oliver’s identity over rather than lowered into the well as described (XXXVIII, facing p. 288), but there seemed no compelling reason for Cruikshank to borrow the huddled pose of the condemned Fagin (LI, facing p. 410) from an earlier less dramatic moment in the text (XLVII, 359). Cruikshank represented 'The Meeting' between Nancy, Rose, and Mr. Brownlow as directed (XLVI, facing p. 352), but declined to portray the first interview between the two women alone as Dickens had specified. Instead he substituted scenes of Sikes trying to destroy his dog (XLVIII, facing p. 374) and to escape from the roof (L, facing p. 394), which the author had strongly advised against illustrating: "it is so very complicated, with such a multitude of figures, such violent actions and torch-light to boot, that a small plate could not take in the slightest idea of it."45 Now openly asserting the artist's prerogative, Cruikshank went ahead and produced the plate that Algernon Swinburne, among others, so justly admired.46

Four of the six plates, the most effective ones, stressed the criminal rather than the virtuous element in the na-
rative. Indeed, as has long been observed, the artist often had trouble depicting sympathetic or attractive characters, especially women and children, perhaps because such tame subjects did not feature in the Hogarthian tradition. Dickens's work manifested similar difficulty differently: he often overidealized the virtuous; Cruikshank made them too ill-favored. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the eventual conflict between author and artist focused on the sentimental scene of Oliver and the three Maylies by the fireside (with Harry Maylie resembling Cruikshank), admittedly a lackluster visual climax (xvi). But by the time the dispute emerged, the plates were already etched, the text printed, and the volumes ready for delivery to the bookseller.

Dickens was so uneasy about being absent on the eve of Oliver's publication that he returned unexpectedly to London to insure that there would be no mistakes. Seeing the artist's final plates for the first time, he was dismayed. His dislike of the illustrations was doubtless colored by the feeling that Cruikshank had taken advantage of his absence to assert his independence. According to Forster's peremptory note to Bentley that afternoon, Dickens initially wanted to exclude most of the concluding illustrations, but was persuaded that only Sikes with his dog and Oliver with the Maylies constituted "vile" and "disgusting" interpolations on the story's meaning. "The evil effects of the others, bad as they are," Forster rationalized, "will chiefly attach to Mr. Cruikshank himself."47

Either Forster magnified the author's objections, or Dickens's temper cooled remarkably overnight. In a temperate letter to Cruikshank the next day, he said nothing about Sikes and his dog (which Forster felt resembled a "tail-less baboon" and even Thackeray thought badly drawn).48 Dickens mentioned only the final sentimental scene (xvi), and that far more tactfully than Forster had. "With reference to the last one—Rose Maylie and Oliver. Without entering into the question of great haste or any other cause which may have led to its being what it is—I am quite sure there can be little difference of opinion between us with respect to the result—May I ask you whether you will object to designing this plate afresh and doing so at once in order that as few impressions as possible of the present one may go forth?"49

Harassed and hurt, Cruikshank objected. Loath to replace the design, he first tried to improve the original by means of stippled shadows. Finally, however, he capitulated and designed an entirely new plate showing Rose and Oliver visiting the tomb of Agnes (LIII, facing p. 418). Dickens thought the pair "too old"; and certainly Rose, with her long face and pinched waist, is among the least winning of all Cruikshank's many unattractive women, though her inappropriately light-colored dress was remedied when the plate wore out in later editions of the novel. Yet the artist, aside from apparently erasing the author's marginal criticisms, made no further changes in this "Church" plate;50 at least it was more in keeping with the book's somber ending than the earlier "Fireside" plate. As if signaling victory in his fight for ascendency over his illustrators, Dickens used his real name for the first time on Oliver's title page. Cruikshank's name never appeared with the author's again except on minor works. The struggle between them, however, was to be sadly protracted in the artist's mind.

Curiously, both Dickens and Forster exempted Cruikshank's portrayal of the doomed Fagin from their general condemnation of Oliver's concluding illustrations (LII, facing p. 410). In their silence, they anticipated Thackeray, who observed of Cruikshank's Jew "let us say nothing of it,—what can we say to describe it?"51 Other viewers have rarely been at such a loss for words. Yet the plate may reveal more about the artist than the text it purportedly illustrates. Dickens would not have faulted Cruikshank for utilizing, as he himself did in characterizing Fagin, superficial aspects of traditional Jewish stereotypes from life, literature, and art, such as the peddler in Hogarth's 'Election' series, which Hazlitt described as the "very Jew in Grain" (fig. 4), or the ones in his own works, such as the figures in 'Monmouth Street', for example (SBB, VI, facing p. 76), in addition to Fagin (fig. 5).52 But the author

Fig. 4 (left). After William Hogarth, A Jewish Peddler. Detail from 'The Election Series,' plate 2, 'Canvassing for Votes,' February, 1757, engraved by C. Grignion from painting in Sir John Soane's Museum. Engraving, sixth state. 17 1/4" x 22" (43.8 x 55.9 cm) [sheet size]. Courtesy of the Fogg Museum, Harvard University. Fig. 5 (right). George Cruikshank, Fagin. Detail from 'Oliver's reception by Fagin and the boys,' Bentley's Miscellany, 2, facing p. 430. Etching. 4 1/8" x 3 1/4" (11.8 x 9.5 cm). From the Harvard College Library, Harvard University.
must have been disconcerted to find that Cruikshank had depicted a Fagin not staring at the ground or beating against the walls and door throughout his last night alive (LII, 409-11), which the plate was to represent, but as he had appeared earlier in the book after hearing Noah Claypole's report on Nancy's meeting with Mr. Brownlow and Rose Maylie: "[Fagin] sat crouching . . . wrapped in an old worn coverlet. . . . His right hand was raised to his lips, and as, absorbed in thought, he bit his long black nails, he disclosed among his toothless gums a few such fangs as should have been a dog's or rat's" (XLVII, 359). Even if Dickens tacitly resented Cruikshank's evasion of his final descriptions of Fagin, he must have admired the economical manner by which the artist linked the two scenes and sustained Fagin's characterization.

Aside from the plate's aesthetic and dramatic impact, later viewers found the plate to be of considerable psychological interest. As G. K. Chesterton observed, "it does not look merely like a picture of Fagin; it looks like a picture by Fagin." Chesterton, of course, writing in the next century, possessed hindsight as well as insight. But there is an odd physical resemblance between the artist and his best-known criminal subject, to judge by some of Cruikshank's self-portraits. In many of his innumerable representations of himself, even the ones with which he often decorated the margins of his working sketches, the artist portrayed himself as an elegantly dressed gentleman with dark hair, flashing dark eyes, and an aristocratically long nose. In reality, this was somewhat self-flattering. Cruikshank apparently was a small man with a swarthy complexion, dark hair, prominent eyes, and an aquiline nose, similar in features, if not in exaggerated expression, to his 1842 self-portrait of the artist scaring society (fig. 6). In fact, as Cruikshank informed Henry Mayhew in the 1860's, in one of many anecdotes surrounding his conception of the doomed Fagin (fig. 7), the Jew was a mirror image of himself. Despairing of properly depicting the criminal, he allegedly sat up in bed one morning, with his hand covering his chin and his fingertips between his lips in hopelessness. Suddenly noting his reflection in the mirror opposite, he exclaimed, "That's it, that's just the expression I want!" Cruikshank was noted for his histrionic powers, and readily transformed himself into the very essence of the villain he had so memorably delineated. At the close of his life, when claiming to have originated parts of the Dickens works he had illustrated, it might have been concluded that the artist identified even more profoundly with his most famous subject.

Until the finale of Oliver Twist, the strain between the author and the artist had no aesthetic repercussions. Both men were in their element in the Hogarthian world of lower-class London, though less comfortable in the higher social milieu of the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow. Indeed, as the preface (vii) and subtitle "The Parish Boy's Progress" suggest, Oliver was explicitly Hogarthian in much of its content and purpose. The destinies of Oliver and Noah Claypole, for example, as Hunt points out, recall the rival paths taken by the industrious and idle apprentices, and Cruikshank's composition of Oliver kneeling before the
The judgment moment was unsettling. As an American, and a young and comfortable one at that, James could not yet perceive that such oddities were the least of the grotesque features in the real as well as the fictional London world. This perhaps is the point Thomas Love Peacock was making when he declared that Cruikshank's "unmatched grotesqueness" made him "a great philosopher."

Although the period from 1837 to 1839 was the busiest of their professional association, Dickens and Cruikshank sandwiched in three other projects in addition to Oliver Twist, the Miscellany, and the new edition of the Sketches by Boz. These endeavors, though not significant aesthetically, do illuminate other aspects of the talents and temperaments of the two men. The first, a sketch portrait of the author, executed by the artist in 1837, was disappointing, giving Cruikshank's unique knowledge of his subject and his talent for capturing expression (fig. 8). The judgment moment was unsettling. As an American, and a young and comfortable one at that, James could not yet perceive that such oddities were the least of the grotesque features in the real as well as the fictional London world. This perhaps is the point Thomas Love Peacock was making when he declared that Cruikshank's "unmatched grotesqueness" made him "a great philosopher."
Fig. 8. George Cruikshank, Sketch Portrait of Dickens, 1837. Pencil. 9 3/8" × 7 1/2" (24.5 × 19.7 cm). By permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum.
have resembled her father—was not too harsh: the tight-fitting frock coat and oversized neckcloth were apparently characteristic of the author's effete D'Orsay dress at the time, but Cruikshank hardly captured the face of "steel" noted by Jane Carlyle, nor "the piercing eye" Bowring recalled, nor the expression Leigh Hunt thought contained "the life and soul . . . of fifty human beings." Perhaps the artist shared Macaulay's opinion that "the best portraits are those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature."  

In February, 1838, the Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi appeared in two volumes, edited by Dickens and illustrated by Cruikshank. Bentley had purchased the famous clown's voluminous notes after his death in May, 1837, and prevailed on the reluctant Dickens to edit them. Thomas Wilks had prepared a crude manuscript, and Dickens laboriously abridged it—to bring out the highlights from the "dreary Twaddle"—and provided an introduction and conclusion. He dictated the results to his father, which provoked the false rumor heard by D. G. Rossetti and still perpetrated by the humor of the piece. Yet Dickens took little pride in this work, refused to provide the same editing services for the memoirs of Thomas Eller, who had played Harlequin to Grimaldi's clown, and later insisted that he undertook the Memoirs mainly to gratify Cruikshank.  

Although his own contribution to the Grimaldi Memoirs was pedestrian, Dickens acknowledged that "the good right hand of GEORGE CRUIKSHANK" had rarely been better exercised (CP, 1, 12). The artist's clowns, animated by his knowledge of theater in general and by his fondness for the harlequinade in particular, certainly made the "Twaddle" palatable to the public. The Athenaeum, admiring Cruikshank's "capital" sketches, decided that he must have seen the clown; indeed he had. The artist had etched him in caricatures from 1807 on, and in the 1820's had portrayed him during performances. He had also belonged to The Crib, a club over which the clown had presided; he frequently visited his grave, and was to paint his likeness from memory again in 1856. Cruikshank's sense of the grotesque, combined with his perception that people were unwitting clowns, may have been overstimulated by these early antic recollections. In some, but not all, of the early issues of the Memoirs, he, or possibly another artist, as Vogler suggests, surrounded the etching of Grimaldi's 'Last Song' with a border of distorted faces and disembodied mouths, not merely grotesque, but so bizarre, in fact, that it may have been the cause of its cancellation in later editions. This minor mystery, however, remains unsolved.  

More satisfying but surreptitious was Dickens's connection with Cruikshank's The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman, which appeared in 1839. Cruikshank, like Dickens, often entertained his friends with serio-comic songs. He particularly relished a Cockney variant of the popular old ballad of an English lord who travels to the East, is imprisoned, then released by the jailer's daughter whom he promises to marry in seven years. On one occasion, the artist sang "Lord Bateman" before the author who was delighted with his droll rendition. After the performance, Dickens urged Cruikshank to publish the ballad with the tune and illustrations.  

The flattered artist set to work. He welcomed Dickens's assistance in polishing the solemnly absurd ballad. The author altered a few words, replaced the last verse with a new one, and added a burlesque critical apparatus. He obtained the services of his musical sister Fanny and her husband, Henry Burnett, to record Cruikshank's tune and mark the expression and gestures. Burnett took the music down hastily, intending to recopy it later, but the artist insisted that the crude notes and the one-sided clef added to the humor of the piece.  

In his enthusiasm, Dickens apparently sang the ballad to Thackeray without mentioning his plans for its publication. Thackeray, equally captivated by the noble Lord, etched a series of plates for the ballad, which he planned to publish. Only afterwards did he learn that Cruikshank was working on the same subject. "I am not such a fool to suppose that my plates can hurt yours," he hastened to inform his former teacher, "but warning is fair between friends." Thackeray's plans for publication never materialized. Undaunted in any case, Cruikshank proceeded with his plans. He published the ballad in his own name, but tantalized readers by stating that neither the accompanying preface nor the notes were written by him, though he nowhere disclosed their author. Thus the Spectator, for example, found the introduction, which they supposed was Cruikshank's work, more amusing than his "ludicrous" etchings. Dickens considered the illustrations a triumph of comic draftsmanship. "You never did anything like those etchings—," he congratulated the artist, "never."  

Despite his admiration for Lord Bateman, however, Dickens never publicly acknowledged his contributions to it. Disconcerted when the Morning Post mentioned him as the
author of the ballad's introduction and notes, he begged Cruikshank to remain silent. "Pray be strict in not putting this about as I am particularly—most particularly—anxious to remain unknown in the matter for weighty reasons."  

It is possible that Dickens wished anonymity because of his agreement with Bentley not to write any other works before the long-deferred *Barnaby Rudge*, or because the ballad was beneath the dignity of an author who wanted serious as well as popular approval, though neither of these reasons had previously inhibited him from doing whatever he pleased. In any case, the artist kept the author's secret for almost thirty years. In 1867, F. W. Fairthorpe, an artist who executed some of the "extra" illustrations to Dickens's novels, discovered that the literary portion of *Lord Bateman* was by Dickens, not Cruikshank. "Yes," the artist finally admitted, "Charlie did it for me." Even this revelation, however, was not made public until 1935.

Dickens's anonymity was sustained partly because substantial evidence was advanced to connect Thackeray with the ballad. In 1839 Thackeray was writing for Cruikshank's *Comic Almanac*, which was issued by Charles Tilt, the publisher of *Lord Bateman*—a coincidence reinforced by Thackeray's fondness for the phonetic Cockney used in the ballad, whose meter, commentary, characterization and, even, the ultimate abandon, resembled other works by him. Long after the deaths of both Dickens and Thackeray, speculation continued. Thackeray's daughter, Anne, finally decided diplomatically that "the notes sounded like Mr. Dickens's voice and the ballad like my father's." In 1892, however, an overturned table accidentally disclosed the illustrated manuscript of Thackeray's "Lord Bateman," which, perhaps in deference to Cruikshank, had never been published. Exactly why Thackeray never published his version and why Dickens concealed his participation in Cruikshank's *Lord Bateman* remain enigmas.

There is less mystery, however, about the probable models for *Lord Bateman* in each set of drawings. At the outset of his adventures, Cruikshank's dark, lean hero resembles Cruikshank (fig. 9); Thackeray's the savage-jawed Thackeray (fig. 10), though his hero passes through more physiognomic vicissitudes. (Another contemporary "Lord," portrayed by a later Dickens illustrator, Richard Doyle, on a sketch of a title page for yet another edition, which never materialized, resembles neither his creator nor his graphic predecessors but he is paired with a far prettier Sophia (fig. 11).) If Cruikshank's condemned Fagin seems partly to reflect the artist's disparaging self-image, his Lord Bateman could be said to represent the convivial aspect of his nature. To the end of his life, Cruikshank never tired of acting the roles of both these characters, originally delineated within months of one another. At the Greenwich dinner to welcome Dickens home from America in 1842, at the Cheshire Cheese on lesser occasions, and during intermissions at the author's amateur theatricals, the artist rendered the ballad, his coat flung over his arm, his sleeves rolled up, as he disported himself in the manner of his humorous nobleman; even in his old age, at the height of his temperance mania, Cruikshank greeted his guests in the costume of this wine-loving hero.

With the 1841 *Pic Nic Papers* for the widowed Mrs. Macone, whose husband had introduced Cruikshank and Dickens, their professional relationship came full circle and ended. Other collaborations had been suggested but never carried out. In February, 1836, for example, Dickens had been eager to talk over the artist's idea for a satire on the theater of the time, but nothing came of his enthusiasm. In February, 1838, Ainsworth announced that he and Dickens were about to write some tales about "ancient and modern London in a Pickwick format" with illustrations by Cruikshank and Leech. The only thing that materialized from this idea was Cruikshank's cover design, subsequently used for the monthly parts of *Old St. Paul's* (though perhaps it inspired Dickens's original plan for *Master Humphrey's Clock*). Some readers thought that *More Hints on Etiquette*, a slim volume published in 1838 with Cruikshank's woodcuts, was written by Dickens because one of the manuscript pages is in his hand, several others are in Cruikshank's, and on the backs of two more are preliminary sketches for 'Oliver plucks up a spirit.' There is nothing else in the style, substance, or pseudonym ("Pedagogue") of this mock-courtesy book that suggests the writer's hand, but, as Vogler states, there are more reasons, though not conclusive, to attribute the text, as well as the illustrations, to Cruikshank.

Nothing came of plans in late 1839 to have Cruikshank illustrate *Barnaby Rudge*. Dickens was still obligated to write this work for Bentley, who was now trying to enforce its delivery by advertising its forthcoming publication. After vacillating about whether the work should be illustrated at all, in early October the author finally promised Cruikshank to have "MS by the middle of the month for your exclusive eye," and to grant him "as many consultations and preliminary explanations" as he liked. But by the middle of the month Dickens had decided to withhold even this long-contracted work from Bentley, which, thanks to Forster's negotiations, he was able to do. Chapman and Hall were the publishers of *Barnaby* when it appeared at last in 1841 as part of *Master Humphrey's Clock*. It was not illustrated by George Cruikshank, who was still working for Bentley's
Fig. 9 (left). George Cruikshank, Lord Bateman. *The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman* (London, 1839), facing verse 1, n.p. Etching. 3⅞" × 3⅛" (10 × 8.3 cm). From the author's library. Fig. 10 (below). William Thackeray, Lord Bateman. MS, “The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman,” above verses 1 and 2. Pen and brown ink. 8⅜" × 7¾" (22.4 × 18.7 cm) [original MS page]. By permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library. Fig. 11 (above). Richard Doyle, Lord Bateman. Detail from title page for “The Loving Ballad of Lord Bateman.” Pencil. 9⅛" × 10¼" (24.2 × 27 cm) [sheet size]. By permission of Gordon N. Ray.
Miscellany and planning his own speculative venture, the Omnibus, but by George Cattermole who had been hired to work with Phiz on Master Humphrey's Clock. A subsequent exchange of letters in which Dickens extended his best wishes (and help) to the Omnibus and Cruikshank his congratulations on Barnaby contains no hint of bad feeling, however.\textsuperscript{102}

In February, 1841, perhaps to compensate him for the loss of Barnaby, Dickens approached Cruikshank with the proposal that they create an annual, possibly concerned with lower-class children; but by that time the artist was deeply involved in the Omnibus. The conclusion of his reply to the author, however, is especially touching in view of their future relationship. "It is of no use my expressing my regret that we are not working together (as we ought to have done from the first)—and should this said speculation of mine unfortunately fail—I shall be ready to join you in any way, & work on if agreeable, to the last."\textsuperscript{103}

Cruikshank's Omnibus and its successors all failed but Dickens never invited him to illustrate his books again. Yet readers and critics alike still have to be reminded that Cruikshank finally illustrated only two of Dickens's major works. After concealing his disappointment with characteristic bravado for almost three decades, the illustrator publicly consoled himself with the thought that "the other artists employed upon his works imitated my STYLE as closely as possible, and hence the public supposed that—as Charles Dickens wrote under the name of 'Boz'—that I designed and etched under the name of 'Phiz'."\textsuperscript{104}

Cruikshank, as we have seen, did resemble Dickens both in talents and in limitations. Had he continued to illustrate the author's books, as Austin Dobson speculated, their affinities might have become more pronounced.\textsuperscript{105} There are many Dickens characters, from Quilp and Pecksniff to Podsnap and the Billikin, that he would have portrayed perfectly. Swinburne, although he conceded that Cruikshank could not have surpassed most of Phiz's figures, wished he could have seen his rendition of the wood in which Jonas Chuzzlewit struck down Montague Tigg, or the interior of Mr. Peggotty's boathouse, or the suggestive landscape in Great Expectations.\textsuperscript{106} Cruikshank would not have matched Phiz's fidelity in representing Dickens's overidealized women and children—the little Nells, the Agnes Wickfields, and the Lizzie Hexams. Nor could he, in all probability, have kept pace with the demands of the younger author's changing style. At any rate, no matter how incomparable Cruikshank's contribution, Dickens was wise to continue working with Browne, with whom his professional relationship was more flexible and less threatening than any he could have had with the independent and egocentric veteran.

Indeed, there has been a great deal of controversy over the relative merit and importance of Cruikshank's numerically slim contribution to the body of Dickens's illustrations. An extreme detractor, W. A. Fraser, felt that book illustration had indeed advanced since the time "when any drawing signed by George Cruikshank, however atrocious, was considered good enough to illustrate the writings of the greatest master . . . England ever produced."\textsuperscript{107} On the other hand, Sacheverell Sitwell's claim that "the whole of Dickens has become visible to us through the eyes of Cruikshank" seems equally exaggerated.\textsuperscript{108} The truth, as usual, lies between the extremes, though there is no doubt whatsoever that Cruikshank's illustrations materially assisted Dickens's career. Furthermore, whatever the verdict of posterity, Cruikshank was amply repaid. His etchings for the author's Sketches by Boz and Oliver Twist were among the best of his massive but often ephemeral oeuvre. They kept the artist's name before the public longer than anything else he did, and were instrumental eventually in bringing about the present overdue reassessment of his work as a whole.

Throughout the 1840's, despite the severance of their professional relationship, Dickens continued his association with Cruikshank on the more secure basis of personal friendship. In this sphere there was little friction between the two men, who, in spite of their difference in age, shared many interests (including mesmerism) as well as an uncommon supply of vitality. Even when their professional conflicts were at their height, their numerous dinner and theater engagements continued unabated. The author frequented the Pentonville home of the artist and his first wife, Mary Walker, gracious but sickly, and Cruikshank was always welcome among Dickens's family and friends.\textsuperscript{109}

Dickens cherished and perpetuated many memories of the lively artist in his pretemperance days. There was the afternoon Cruikshank was turned away from the Pantheon aviary because he was splashed to the shoulders with mud; the morning when, reeking of tobacco and beer, he stumbled into Dickens's house at Devonshire Terrace, too ashamed to return to his own home; the Greenwich reunion after the author's American trip, which inspired him to stand on his head in an open carriage during the entire six-mile drive back to London; and the wild dinner that convinced Longfellow that Cruikshank excelled in hilarity as well as in art.\textsuperscript{110} The artist enlivened Dickens's obligatory social occasions as well. One night when Chapman and Hall were coming to dinner, for example, the author invited Ainsworth with the reassurance that the Cruikshanks were also coming so that "the anti-Bores [would] be triumphant and keep the Bores in due subjection."\textsuperscript{111}

Yet when James Grant described Cruikshank as a pub-hopping heathen of eccentric character and rude man-
In his 1841 *Portraits of Public Characters*, Dickens was more incensed than the artist himself. After reading Cruikshank’s humorous rebuttal in his *Omnibus*, Dickens commented, “I wouldn’t ha’ let him off so easy.” Indeed, the author had witnessed Cruikshank in less hilarious, less publicized moments. At the time of the wild dinners for Longfellow, for instance, the artist was soberly nursing the ailing William Hone, one of his earliest publishers and oldest friends (though, until now, estranged), who had once been arraigned for blasphemy. Cruikshank compelled the reluctant Dickens not only to meet the dying man and to attend his burial as one of the principal nonfamily mourners, but also to use his influence to secure relief for Hone’s widow from the Literary Fund.

Dickens had no other friend who responded as quickly as Cruikshank to his many pleas to help others. The artist unhesitatingly donated his time as well as his name to a committee formed to help the seven children of the drowned actor Elton; when the author solicited him on behalf of an elderly subeditor of the *Morning Herald* who had lost his job, he found that Cruikshank had already contributed from his own meager purse; indeed, Dickens once refused to lend the artist money to relieve a desperate Edinburgh editor, lest the chronically indebted Cruikshank become a bankrupt himself. Such private charity surely contributed to Dickens’s premise “that Cruikshank is one of the best creatures in the World in his own odd way.”

Dickens’s assessment spotlights the admirable aspect of the artist’s nature. But its bemused tone, like those of all his recollections of Cruikshank’s acts of charity, indicates a condescension toward the artist that deepened as the disparity between their fortunes increased—a manner hardly flattering to Dickens.

Cruikshank must have been distressed at not being offered a more prominent role in the benefit amateur theatricals Dickens staged throughout the late 1840’s and early 1850’s. His earliest ambition, like that of Dickens, had been to act. One of his family’s boarders had been the well-known actor, Mungo Park; before Edmund Kean became famous, Cruikshank and his brother had acted *Blue Beard* with him in a neighbor’s kitchen; and as a young man, Cruikshank had obtained a commission, which he never executed, to paint a scene for the Drury Lane Theatre. The artist never acted professionally but he, like Dickens, always loved going to the theater, just as both loved to perform, whether on or off the stage. Yet when the restless author started his amateur troupe in 1845 and proved he could be as successful “on” the boards as “between” them, he did not immediately call on Cruikshank.

Only when Stanfield resigned his part as Downright in Jonson’s *Every Man in His Humour* in the opening production of the company, did Dickens think of inviting the artist to participate, and then only after giving his “brains a shake.” Employing his most artful manner, the author informed Cruikshank that the play had been arranged in a casual fashion, and that much as he had wanted to include the artist in his troupe, he had lacked good roles to offer him until Stanfield volunteered to give his up if Cruikshank would take it. Cruikshank, either legitimately unavailable or else undeceived by Dickens’s brand of tact, did not play Downright, though he and his wife did receive one of the prized invitations to the company’s successful debut on September 20.

For all his fame as a mimic and comic singer, Cruikshank’s main talent as an actor proved to be that of disguise. Yet Dickens soon discovered that the artist’s name on the program was more important than the quality of his performance on the stage, and readily invited him to participate in the 1847–48 benefits for Hunt, Poole, and Knowles. “In spite of all the trouble he gives me,” Dickens confided to Forster, “I am sorry for him, he is so evidently hurt by his own sense of not doing well.” The author took pains to find suitable roles and to convince the frustrated artist to take them. He chose a small “bit” in *Every Man in His Humour*, the brief role of Old Knibbs in *Turning the Tables*, and minor parts in *The Alchemist*, *Animal Magnetism*, and *Love, Law and Physic*; he even changed *The Poor Gentleman* to work in his friend. As a reward, perhaps, for his fine performance as Pistol in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Dickens finally offered Cruikshank his choice of parts in *Used Up*. After long deliberation, the artist chose the shorter blacksmith’s role over that of the middle-aged dandy. When his wife became ill he gave it up; when she suddenly recovered he wanted it back again.

“No questa femina maladetta!” Dickens moaned to Lewes while rejuggling the cast, “O Impressario sfortunato!—ma, sempre dolce, tranquillissimo, cristianissimo, esempio di pazienza!”

Cruikshank may have been theatrically maladroit, but he was one of the few members of the company who never lost sight of its charitable purpose. In 1847, for example, two performances for Leigh Hunt had netted only £400, £100 short of the sum Dickens wanted. The author decided to make up the difference by writing, from the point of view of Mrs. Gamp—the sensationally popular character from *Martin Chuzzlewit*—an imaginary eyewitness account of the company’s railway expedition north, to be illustrated by its artist-actors. Dickens’s burlesque “Piljian’s Projiss” prominently features Cruikshank as the long-haired, bewhiskered
gentleman with the hook nose and hawk eye who greets Mrs. Gamp at the station, finds her ticket, and helps her into the carriage.

‘P'raps,’ [says a fellow passenger], ‘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.’

If you'll believe me, Mrs. Harris, I turns my head, and see the wery man a making picturs of me on his thumb nail, at the winder!

The complete account was never published because the other artists involved, as Forster had feared, failed to provide the illustrations that Dickens considered essential to its success. Only Cruikshank fulfilled his obligation by portraying the scene in which he is supposed to be addressing the famous midwife with his hat politely raised in a picture that, as it turned out, was never reproduced in his lifetime (fig. 12).

After 1850, Cruikshank's name was conspicuously absent from Dickens's theatrical programs, guest lists, and correspondence—a fact both men attributed to Cruikshank's intense involvement in the temperance movement at that time. Certain incidents relating to his past and present relationship with Dickens may have contributed to Cruikshank's new mania, for it was preceded by four events that irrevocably strained the bonds between the two men: the publication of a new edition of Oliver Twist in 1846; the great success of Cruikshank's The Bottle in 1847 and its sequel The Drunkard's Children in 1848; the subsequent interview of Cruikshank by a journalist named R. Shelton MacKenzie in 1847; and Dickens's criticism of Cruikshank's temperance philosophy in 1848.

In 1845 Bradbury and Evans, Dickens's new publishers, began planning a new edition of Oliver Twist to appear in monthly installments the following year. Since the story had originally appeared in Bentley's Miscellany without a wrapper of its own, it was necessary now to commission one. The publishers may have questioned whether Cruikshank would find this task wearisome or whether another artist might give this edition some novelty; but they agreed to let Dickens approach Cruikshank about doing the cover. The veteran was eager. “It is clear,” the author informed Bradbury and Evans, “it would never have done to have handed it on to anybody else.”

The artist took out his old portfolio of Oliver sketches and set to work. With what bitterness he must have contemplated their reversal of stature since his work with Dickens. “Long before Boz was heard of,” the Quarterly Review had written on Oliver's conclusion in 1839, “George Cruikshank had captured a snug niche in the Temple of Fame.” By 1845, however, Dickens's reputation was still rising, despite professional vicissitudes and the pressures of his growing family; Cruikshank's, on the other hand, was declining, and he was beset, besides, with worries about his fatally ill wife and about his many illegitimate children. His name no longer guaranteed “sales on his independent ventures. George Cruikshank's Omnibus (1841–42) and George Cruikshank's Table Book (1846) had failed commercially as would George Cruikshank's Magazine (1854) and George Cruikshank's Fairy Library (1859–65). His relationships with authors and publishers invariably terminated in quarrels. Yet he obstinately refused to work for Punch, which would have provided steady employment; he had no wish to employ his impersonal style of humor in attacking individuals in the Punch manner, and he also was doubtless unwilling to submit to the will of editors or to share credit with other writers or artists. Meanwhile, new comic artists, like Browne, Leech, and Tenniel, all of whom were more genial than satiric, were gaining popularity. Experiment as he would with his format, technique, and line, Cruikshank never recaptured public acclaim nor financial independence.

"Neither will grudge to the other," Blackwood's would write of Dickens and Cruikshank, "the share in the fame which has justly attended their joint labors." But the

Fig. 12. George Cruikshank, Sketch of the Artist with Mrs. Gamp, 1847. Strand Magazine, 14 (August, 1897), 188. Pencil. 3½" 4¼" (9.9 × 10.5 cm). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
proud Cruikshank, suffering in his diminished position, had already begun to think he had less than his fair share of credit for the success of his labors with Dickens, especially *Oliver Twist*. In fact, partly because of his fondness for the role of public benefactor, Cruikshank habitually exaggerated the effect of his own productions. According to him, his ‘Bank Note’ had stopped the hanging of forgers; his print of ‘Bartholomew Fair’ had suppressed such gatherings; his *Omnibus* had inspired the founding of *Punch*; and the advance of the temperance movement after 1850 was due mainly to his efforts.\(^1\) The gradual erosion of the artist’s independence, which, in retrospect, began with his subordination in his dealings with Dickens, seems to have made him more prone than ever to overestimate his importance to the books he illustrated.

Certainly a number of critics echoed, even stimulated, perhaps, Cruikshank’s own estimate of his contributions to the books he illustrated. In 1840, for example, Thackeray commented on Ainsworth’s novel, *Jack Sheppard*: “It seems to us that Mr. Cruikshank really created the tale and that Mr. Ainsworth, as it were, only put words to it. Let any reader of the novel think it over awhile . . . and tell us what he remembers of the tale? George Cruikshank’s pictures—always George Cruikshank’s pictures.”\(^2\) Earlier, with regard to *Oliver Twist*, the Quarterly Review had wondered how much of the narrative impact was “due not to the pen but to the pencil,” and Fraser’s, noting the discrepancies between the graceful Oliver and his graceless education, had insisted that “the letterpress was written ‘to match, as per order’” the artist’s wishes.\(^3\) Even Henry James was to recall that certain memorable illustrations made the book seem “more Cruikshank’s than Dickens’s.”\(^4\) By the mid-1840’s, if not sooner, the artist himself had come to share these views. With mixed emotions, then, Cruikshank composed the wrapper design for the 1846 reissue of *Oliver*. In accordance with Dickens’s instructions, he surrounded the title with eleven vignettes of leading incidents—some based on old sketches and some entirely new.\(^5\) His past resentments over *Oliver Twist* and Dickens, however crudely repressed in the past, must have risen closer to the surface where they would soon manifest themselves.

The following year, Cruikshank became happily preoccupied with a very real success of his own—a series of eight large engravings entitled ‘The Bottle,’ depicting the downfall of a respectable household due to drink. One of the earliest purchasers in the late summer of 1847 was Dickens himself, and the series enjoyed an enormous popularity. It sold 100,000 sets in a few days, was dramatized in eight theaters, inspired Matthew Arnold to write a sonnet “To George Cruikshank,” and prompted Dickens’s principal illustrator, Browne, to include, as an emblematic detail as well as a bow to his older predecessor, an advertisement for it in one of his illustrations to *Dombey and Son* (XLVI, facing p. 636).\(^6\)

Cruikshank’s approach to intemperance had been prefigured in 1835 in ‘The Gin Shop’ in *Sketches by Boz* (S, XXII, facing p. 182). In the text, Dickens had set forth what remained his lasting attitude on the subject: alcoholism is the result of misery, he argued, not misery the result of alcohol. Accordingly, Dickens considered ‘The Bottle’ powerfully drawn, but philosophically erroneous. As he confided to Forster, “The drinking should have begun in sorrow, or poverty, or ignorance—the three things in which, in its awful aspect, it does begin. The design would then have been a double-handed sword—but too ‘radical’ for good old George, I suppose.”\(^7\) As far as the public was concerned, however, the author kept his objections to himself, and his former illustrator enjoyed an increasingly rare moment of triumph.

The thwarted artist clutched at this timely straw of success; urged on by the leaders of the National Temperance Society, the onetime ready drinker became a fanatic teetotaler to add the force of personal example to his graphic as well as platform preaching. Certainly his *volte face*, not to mention his very idea of ‘The Bottle’ itself, was understandable on other grounds than desire for for success. As a young man, Cruikshank had watched his own father drink himself into a premature grave. And he long recalled the besotted James Gillray, one of his graphic mentors, ranting before he died: “You are not Cruikshank but Addison, my name is not Gillray but Rubens.”\(^8\) During the past decade, his brother Robert had been drinking heavily and seemed to be following the same ruinous path. These specters seemed to remind Cruikshank not only of the evils of drink, however, but also of the happy period when his own career had seemed so promising. Indeed, a note of nostalgia creeps into his subsequent engravings of pubs, beer shops, and gin palaces, despite their predominant message of horror. Teetotalism, then, provided the artist’s life and art with a peculiar kind of continuity as well as meaning and purpose.

Another consequence of the fame of ‘The Bottle’ was an interview of Cruikshank by R. Shelton MacKenzie, an English journalist friend, who later became an editor of a Philadelphia newspaper. While waiting for the artist, MacKenzie apparently examined a folder of papers for *Oliver Twist*, containing, among other items, a bundle of unpublished sketches and drawings. Cruikshank later explained to the curious journalist that long before Dickens’s novel was begun, he had conceived of doing a series of graphic narratives, not requiring any text, on the life of a
London thief. After seeing his sketches and listening to his suggestions, claimed the artist, Dickens had altered the plot of his recently begun story so that his hero, instead of remaining in the country, would become involved with city criminals. Cruikshank “consented,” so he said, to allow Dickens to “write up to” as many of the designs as suited his purpose. In this way, he claimed credit for Sikes, Nancy, and Fagin. “My drawings suggested them,” Cruikshank insisted to MacKenzie, “rather than [his] individuality suggesting my drawings.” In this questionable manner, the artist, emboldened by his recent success, sought to mitigate the pain of having subordinated himself in the past to Dickens's schedules, tastes, and text.

MacKenzie may have felt that Cruikshank was asserting his pride rather than the truth about Oliver's development, for he tactfully withheld this conversation from his complimentary piece about the artist and 'The Bottle,' which appeared in late 1847, and did not mention it publicly for almost twenty years. Dickens was preoccupied at the time with, among other projects, his preface refuting the Seymours' similar claims about the origins of Pickwick—claims that may, in fact, have stimulated Cruikshank's. If he was aware at all of Cruikshank's claims, perhaps he did not want to contradict him publicly, since, unlike Seymour, Cruikshank was still alive, still his friend, and still a member of his amateur theatrical troupe. In any case, the artist did not press the matter until after Dickens's death.

In 1848, Cruikshank issued a sequel to 'The Bottle,' entitled 'The Drunkard's Children.' This time Dickens felt compelled to register a gentle protest in the Examiner. No one had a better right than Cruikshank to set himself up as a teacher of the people, the author declared, but his lesson should begin with the causes, not the effects, of alcoholism. Hogarth had never attempted a drunkard's progress, Dickens speculated, because he perceived that “the causes of drunkenness among the poor were so numerous and widespread, and lurked so sorrowfully deep and far down in all human misery, neglect, and despair, that even his pencil could not bring them fairly and justly into the light” (CP, 1: 157–58). Despite the fact that Dickens lavishly praised the artistic quality of the plates, and carefully confined his criticism to Cruikshank's philosophy, the comparison was particularly well designed to deflate the artist. Long encouraged to do so, Cruikshank must have come to view himself as a latter-day Hogarth. Working in Hogarth's favorite graphic form, and sharing his desire for reform, Cruikshank craved the same creative freedom and moral authority, but could not readily achieve it in illustrations to other people's work. In an effort to achieve financial freedom as a prerequisite to creative freedom, the artist, like Hogarth, even sacrificed some of his technical finesse: apparently both 'The Bottle' and 'The Drunkard's Children' were crudely drawn so that they might be more cheaply reproduced and widely sold. The unfavorable comparison with Hogarth was particularly devastating to Cruikshank and particularly convincing to readers because it came from Dickens who was known to be a friend of the artist's. Although the blow did not change Cruikshank's temperance philosophy, it was perhaps instrumental in his decision never again to utilize Hogarthian-style progresses to express it.

Nevertheless, Cruikshank did not hesitate in his early temperance speeches to capitalize on his familiarity with Dickens. The story he related on one platform was typical:

I went to take luncheon with my friend Dickens (who, I am sorry to say, is not a teetotaler); he asked me to take some wine but I told him I had taken to water, for, in my opinion, a man had better take a glass of prussic acid than fall into the other habit of taking brandy-and-water and I am happy to say that Dickens quite agreed with me, that a man had better wipe himself out at once, than extinguish himself by degrees by the soul-degrading and body-destroying enemy.

Personally, however, Dickens remained unconvinced by his friend's conversion. Indeed, on many a lively occasion, the author attained to the condition he describes at one point in The Uncommercial Traveller: "I might have served Mr. Cruikshank as a subject for a new illustration of the miseries of the Bottle. The National Temperance Society might have made a powerful Tract of me" (RP, 570).

If teetotalism infused Cruikshank's life and art with salutary purpose, however, it also functioned as a social straitjacket. At one of Dickens's parties, to cite one well-known anecdote, Henrietta Ward was about to sip her sherry when the artist suddenly snatched her glass away; he was barely restrained from smashing it on the floor by the hand of his infuriated host, who found Cruikshank's behavior particularly unforgivable in light of the bouts of inebriation he had so recently given up. The strain of such incidents on Dickens's friendship was only exacerbated by the artist's remarriage in 1850, after his first wife's death, to Eliza Widdison—a vigorous woman who may have inspired and certainly supported the new views of her husband, who now became a founding officer of the London Temperance League. When Cruikshank interpreted the infrequency of his encounters with Dickens as a sign of coolness, the author hastily attested to his "old unvarying feeling" of affection for the artist, expressed regret at the "host of small circumstances" that had prevented their meeting, and hoped soon "with one shake of the hand to dispeal any lingering
remainder" of the artist's doubts. Gradually, however, Dickens drifted toward less demanding companions, leaving Cruikshank to lecture strangers on the evils of drink. His early warning to the artist that involvement in Temperance societies would "keep many of [his] friends away from [his] side, when they would most desire to stand there" proved prophetic.

The frayed ties of friendship between the two men snapped entirely in the 1850's. When Chapman and Hall decided to bring out the Cheap Edition of *Oliver Twist* in 1849-50, Dickens insisted that Cruikshank be given the commission for a new frontispiece (V, following p. 291), but the artist was hardly mollified. The trivial assignment could only have made their professional as well as their personal distance more obvious and painful. In this decade, their respective positions did not change. Dickens remained a household word while Cruikshank continued to struggle to regain lost ground as an independent, popular, and morally useful artist. Cruikshank needed a great deal of support, and the fact that Dickens, among others, could not give it wholeheartedly discouraged him excessively. The two men now communicated mainly by airing their differences on the temperance question in periodicals. Dickens continued to praise Cruikshank's art and denigrate his philosophy, and Cruikshank continued to overreact and to take these criticisms personally. In August, 1851, for example, Dickens wrote a stinging article for *Household Words* entitled "Whole Hogs," in which he assaulted all fanatic positions on the issues of peace and vegetarianism as well as teetotalism (CP, 1: 379-85). Cruikshank did not reply immediately to this impersonal threefold critique, but he was unduly hurt the following year when *Household Words*, edited by Dickens, rejected a temperance pamphlet he had written.

In 1853 another altercation arose between the two men when Cruikshank was revitalizing some traditional children's stories, (as he had done so successfully in 1827 with Grimm's tales and as Thackeray, among others, had long wished him to do again) to be issued as *George Cruikshank's Fairy Library*. When the first of the series, *Hop O' My Thumb*, appeared, Dickens's intimate, John Forster, enthusiastically praised the illustrations and did not mind the moralistic editing that, among other things, made drinking, smoking, and gambling the cause of the characters' misfortunes, and provided a happy ending that consisted of a ban on such activities. Dickens, however, was outraged that anyone should alter for any purpose the beloved stories that had enhanced his own childhood and that, he felt certain, were needed more than ever before as sources of enjoyment, imagination, and creativity.

Dickens registered his formal protest, "Frauds on the Fairies," in *Household Words*. Playfully yet seriously, he grieved that the "Whole Hog" of temperance who had intruded into fairyland had been driven there by "a man of genius, our own beloved friend, Mr. George Cruikshank" (CP, 1: 464). Dickens's powerful critique—an argument anticipated in the "Mudfog" papers of 1837 (SBB, 661), and amplified throughout *Hard Times* of 1854—was partly an impassioned plea for less realism and more fancy for children growing up in a Utilitarian age. Other Cruikshank admirers were disturbed for other reasons. Ruskin even criticized the illustrations, finding them "over-labored and confused in line"; his disappointment, rooted, like Dickens's, in childhood, stemmed from his memories of copying Cruikshank's etchings for Grimm's *Tales*, which he later maintained were the finest, except for Rembrandt's, ever done. Ruskin's criticism, however, was not published until four years later, in 1857. It was Dickens's complaint that wounded the artist.

Yet early in 1854 Cruikshank published *Jack and the Beanstalk* edited in the same moralistic vein. At the same time, having gained an independent forum in the form of *George Cruikshank's Magazine*, he retaliated with his pen as well as his pencil. The second and final issue of his magazine concluded with "A Letter from Hop-o'-my-Thumb to Charles Dickens, Esq.," which was also printed separately as a penny pamphlet. Speaking in the guise of his fairy character, the artist accused the author of having gone out of his way to fault the editing of the fairy library. He argued that the story had not been tampered with any more seriously than the facts in Dickens's *Child's History of England*, which had appeared in the same year, 1853. He argued that fairy tales were constantly altered in various countries and editions, and that far from being morally attractive and instructive, they were usually immoral lessons in deceit and bloodshed. The letter claimed that Cruikshank had merely tried to convert the tales into fit "household words" by inculcating young readers with "A HORROR OF DRUNKENNESS, A DETESTATION OF GAMBLING, AND A LOVE FOR ALL THAT IS VIR-TUOUS AND GOOD." The bitterness of his conclusion weakened the force of his argument, however; railing against Dickens's use of the term "Whole Hogs" to describe his temperance colleagues, he insisted that the slight allusions made to their principles in the fairy texts were the only cause of offense. More humorously, Cruikshank requested that Dickens restrain his own hogs or send them to some other "market," and reinforced his point with a tailpiece in which he drove them back to *Household Words* (fig. 19).
Bravely, Cruikshank issued his Cinderella later in 1854, though Dickens had parodied it, as if in advance, in “Frauds on the Fairies” (CP, 1: 465-70). Not only did the artist refuse to compromise his editing principles, but appended a note “To the Public” in which readers who might fall into the same heresies as “my friend Charles Dickens” were advised to read his “Letter” to that gentleman. But, for whatever reason, interest in Cruikshank’s fairy tales seems to have diminished; for his next contribution, Puss in Boots, though probably completed in 1853 or 1854, was not published until 1864. The artist probably held Dickens responsible for the hiatus; certainly he was still smarting from the author’s reprimand. To Puss, he appended not only “An Address to Little Boys and Girls” but a message “To Parents, Guardians, and All Persons Intrusted with the Care of Children,” both of which repeated substantially the arguments given in his reply to Dickens a decade earlier. When the four published tales were reissued together in 1865, the artist had the reference to “my friend Charles Dickens” in the postscript to Cinderella altered to read “Mr. Charles Dickens” and retained the addresses after Puss, in this way immortalizing this particular quarrel between the former friends. Cruikshank added no more to his Fairy Library. Driven even from this imaginary sphere, he blamed his exile on Dickens.

Meanwhile, Cruikshank derived no benefits from having outlived his contemporaries. The atmosphere that encouraged what he called those “damned proraphaelite[s],” with their emphasis on brilliant color and naturalistic detail, was antithetical to his talents. Publishers ceased to employ him; the common reader forgot him or thought him dead already. Even when Chapman and Hall joined Bradbury and Evans in issuing the 1858 Library Edition of Dickens’s works to date, it was Browne, not the original illustrator, who provided the title page vignettes for both the Sketches by Boz (xxx) and Oliver Twist (xvi).

Cruikshank, meanwhile, took other steps to recapture his lost stature and independence in the 1850’s and 1860’s. At the age of sixty-one, in order to help remedy his lack of formal training, he had become a student at the Royal Academy, which had denied him, and all black and white artists, membership. Persuaded by Clarkson Stanfield, another friend and illustrator of Dickens, to paint in oils, Cruikshank laboriously executed an epic pro-temperance canvas. But The Worship of Bacchus (1863), despite Queen Victoria’s blessing and Thackeray’s publicity, proved a financial and hence emotional disaster. In contrast to Dickens, whose writings and public readings were in greater demand than he could supply, Cruikshank had so little work that Ruskin temporarily deferred his own projects to assist him. The futility of Ruskin’s subscriptions and petitions on his behalf may not have tormented the artist’s vanity as much as the commission from F. W. Cosens to make watercolor copies of all of his illustrations for Oliver Twist, together with a title page embodying thirteen of them. There was scant consolation in the fact that Browne, now crippled, bankrupt, and no longer Dickens’s illustrator, was similarly commissioned by the same patron at the same time to reproduce his Dickens illustrations. Moreover, the Oliver Twist matter once again was inevitably and painfully brought to mind.

Neglected, impoverished, and powerless, Cruikshank could no longer contemplate with equanimity the lionized, wealthy, and influential Dickens. Though the author now regarded him simply as an eccentric, he began to consider Dickens as an adversary. He began to blame the author for thwarting his own interests and advancement, making Dickens a public target for his own resentment. As late as 1867, as Cruikshank’s long dormant frustration mounted, the author still referred to him as “my esteemed friend”—probably an unintended irony, considering its context in Dickens’s final refutation of Seymour’s Pickwick claims (CP, 1: 109). Whereas the artist dwelt on the reversal of their careers, the author preferred to recall the fruitful results of their collaboration. “I want you to make as good a drawing as Cruikshank’s ‘Fagin in the Condemned Cell,’” Dickens reportedly told his last illustrator, Luke Fildes, during a discussion about the climactic scene for The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Even the author’s death in 1870 failed to mollify the sentiments of his first illustrator. “Isn’t this a frightful calamity?” F. W. Pailthorpe greeted Cruikshank the day after Dickens’s decease. “What! about Dickens?” the temperance artist exclaimed in a note of
surprise that quickly became one of triumph, "one of our greatest enemies gone."

Even before 1870 Cruikshank had started to reshape the broad outlines of his past relationship with Dickens. Subsequently, he began to distort its trivial aspects as well. He suddenly found the famous 1839 portrait of him by Daniel Maclise (see fig. 2) objectionable, partly, perhaps, because the artist became Dickens's intimate, as well as his occasional illustrator. Cruikshank not only called it a poor likeness, but now was embarrassed by the accessories of drink and tobacco in the picture, and resented having been portrayed making a sketch from a model, which, he now maintained, he never did, preferring to rely on his memory. Cruikshank seems to have completely repressed his recollection of, among other impromptu sketches, the noted one he did of Dickens in 1837 (see fig. 8), which he afterwards utilized for a figure in one of his illustrations for Ainsworth's Magazine.

The artist even cast aspersions on his beloved Lord Bateman. He maintained that the only reason he had acknowledged Dickens's contributions to the ballad for George Reid's Cruikshank catalogue of 1871 was to make the work more profitable; he also admitted, "I so hated the fellow that I had a great mind to re-write it." In the editions of 1870 and 1871, he executed this intention somewhat to the detriment of the ballad. He removed some dialect from verse XX, suggested to the reader that Dickens's concluding verse XXI be omitted, and added three new ones to create a feeble ending in which even the Proud Porter lives happily ever after. To make room for his additions, and, perhaps, to further gratify his literary ambitions as well as his old hostility, Cruikshank wished to compress the musical notes of Dickens's brother-in-law, Henry Burnett, but eventually only consigned them from the front to the back of the edition and may also have had Dickens's textual notes rendered in slightly fainter print. Elsewhere, he ambiguously asserted that Thackeray had "insisted" on writing the preface to his 1839 adaptation, thereby leaving unclear whether Thackeray actually wrote it, or merely expressed a wish to write it, and further clouding Dickens's role in producing the ballad.

Meanwhile, Cruikshank had resurrected his grand claims about his role in all the author's early books. Had the artist received more approbation in the past three decades—or Dickens less—perhaps he would not have been so assertive. He now implied that he had influenced The Pickwick Papers. Five months after Dickens's death, he informed W. J. McClellan, perhaps with some justification, that the bulk of the second series of the Sketches by Boz had been written from his "suggestion"; with greater reason, he asserted that one of Dickens's papers for Bentley's Miscellany was "written up to" a design of his; and, in a series of earnest overstatements, he revived his claims about Oliver Twist which, he said, was "entirely my own idea & suggestion and all the characters are mine." Actually, in 1865, even before Dickens's death, R. Shelton MacKenzie had revived Cruikshank's claims to Oliver by publishing the relevant portions of his 1847 interview with the artist in an issue of the American periodical, The Round Table. The author had said nothing. He might not have wanted to discredit his old friend publicly any more than he already had, or perhaps he hesitated for fear of refueling the Seymour allegations which flared up again in 1866, or of facing debate on the issue on his second American visit in 1867. It is more likely, however, that Dickens never noticed MacKenzie's article or knew about its contents. After Dickens's death, J. C. Hotten quoted Cruikshank's allegations in his 1870 potboiler biography of the author and MacKenzie elaborated upon them in his biography of the same year; in 1871, Forster tried to repudiate these claims by juxtaposing them beside Dickens's letter insisting that the artist redo the "Fireside" plate in the first volume of Forster's biography and a Times review of it, which also dismissed any idea that the artist's plates suggested incidents in Oliver as a "ridiculous" story propagated in America, MacKenzie published a rebuttal of Forster in the Philadelphia Press while, independently, Cruikshank expanded his arguments as well as his audience in a letter to the Times. Shrewdly dismissing the validity of all the circumstantial particulars of MacKenzie's memory of their 1847 interview, Cruikshank argued persuasively for the validity of its substance, citing those of his suggestions which Dickens did not adopt as well as those which he did, either in whole or in part. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt most of Cruikshank's claims in this letter: he said he had failed to convince Dickens to name the hero Frank Foundling or Steadman, but had succeeded in having the hero, after enduring the workhouse and its practices (then under investigation by friends of the artist), go to the city rather than stay in the country, and in representing him as "pretty" rather than "queer", he had described to
Dickens the appearances and habitations of the criminal characters whose physical prototypes had appeared in his earlier work;\textsuperscript{174} he had not only performed the character of Fagin before Dickens and Ainsworth but had insisted that either the Jew or the Christian Sikes end up in a condemned cell such as the one at Newgate he had sketched before.\textsuperscript{175} Indeed, in receptive moments, the young author may well have welcomed suggestions from the knowledgeable veteran or obliged him by utilizing some of them, especially those compatible with his own conceptions; but that is a different matter, as even the artist's most partisan advocate concedes, from executing the artist's concepts as if compelled to do so.\textsuperscript{176} Cruikshank's claim, however, that he "never saw any ms. of Mr. Dickens until the work was nearly finished" was, at best, misleading and undermined the rest of his argument. Indeed, according to Ainsworth—two of whose own novels would be subjected with better reason than Dickens's to Cruikshank's claims of paternity—Dickens eventually grew so irritated with the artist's unsolicited suggestions that he did try to send him only printed proofs for illustration.\textsuperscript{177}

Had Cruikshank rested his case against Dickens with his Times letter, it might have been considered more seriously by his contemporaries. Some readers criticized Cruikshank openly, and others like Forster acutely noted in private that he was "to be congratulated on the prudence of his rigid silence as long as Mr. Dickens lived."\textsuperscript{178} Stung by the tacit disbelief of the general public, and by what he considered their continuing underestimation of him, Cruikshank tried other means of strengthening his position. He requested one of his few sympathizers, the Reverend John Deane, to voice his support not only privately but publicly to the Times.\textsuperscript{179} He refreshed MacKenzie's memory about a list of proposed illustrations for a "Life of a London Thief" that he had done while Dickens was still a child, obviously hoping that the American editor would utilize it in further debate; but even if MacKenzie had access to this list, probably the one Richard Vogler claims to have recovered, he must have felt that although it, like Cruikshank's graphic prototypes, indicated long familiarity with the kinds of concerns and characters that preoccupy Dickens in Oliver Twist, it was hardly a compelling argument for the artist's having originated that novel.\textsuperscript{180} But neither Deane nor MacKenzie did anything further. It was probably at this desperate time that the artist combed through his sketches and drawings done in pencil and brown ink for Oliver and for the Sketches by Boz, labeling in fresh black ink those "first" ideas that he claimed had suggested various characters and scenes.\textsuperscript{181}

Yet when Cruikshank perpetuated the controversy in an 1872 pamphlet, The Artist and the Author, he did not utilize any of this evidence. With better reason, he shifted the focus of his claims from the works of Dickens to those by Ainsworth that he had illustrated. To many, however, it must have appeared as if he conceded victory to Forster and now desperately sought recognition by advancing similar claims on the works of the lesser author.\textsuperscript{182} He did, however, reassert that, while Oliver Twist was being written, he had privately explained that its "original ideas and characters" emanated from him; and he maintained that the only reason he had finally advanced his case in public was to defend MacKenzie when Forster charged him with lying, and that Dickens and Forster had not denied the account that, after all, had appeared before the author's death, only because they could not.\textsuperscript{183} In his second volume of his Life of Dickens, as in his first, but this time in facsimile, Forster refuted Cruikshank's version by reprinting the author's letter to him criticizing the "Fireside" plate—in a tone of sadness rather than outrage due to his consideration for "an original genius well able to subsist of itself without taking what belongs to others."\textsuperscript{184}

As American critics were quicker to point out than British ones, Forster evaded the issue not by refuting the specific claims of the artist.\textsuperscript{185} Yet, even had all his claims been validated and the artist's role revaluated, the magnitude of Dickens's achievement would not have been seriously diminished. The one certainty in this controversy, as with that involving Seymour, is that the extreme positions often taken by both sides obscured for more than a century the undeniable importance of the illustrator as a contributor to, if not as the moving originator of, Dickens's works.

Cruikshank also threatened to publish an explanation of the reason he did not illustrate all of Dickens's writings—one that would reflect unfavorably on the author.\textsuperscript{186} When the promised explanation failed to materialize, however, there were no snickers. No one wished to maim further the wounded pride of the formerly "Illustrious George." If his humorous antics had once made him seem a living caricature to Dickens and his circle,\textsuperscript{187} his literary pickpocketing now made him resemble a sorry burlesque of his renowned villain, Fagin. Sensing some affinity, perhaps, Cruikshank now tried to dissociate himself from the character by discrediting the story he had told Mayhew as to the conception of his illustration of the doomed Jew. Questioned by Austin Dobson at a party in 1877, he called the legend untrue.\textsuperscript{188} He had never been puzzled about the climactic composition, he said, merely about whether Fagin's knuckles should be raised or depressed, a minor problem which he resolved by studying his own hand in the mirror. What struck both Dobson and the host, however, was the way the artist was dramatizing before their very eyes his resem-
blance to Fagin, although what he wanted to convey was that his work had resulted not from an accident, but from perseverance. His grander contributions denied, he now asserted abilities that had never been questioned. Hence, when he persisted in making claims and charges, Cruikshank encountered no opposition. His rantings, which perhaps gave meaning to his distressed final years, were excused as senile foibles.

After delivering a temperance address in Manchester in 1874, according to legend, the eighty-two-year-old artist plainly revealed the extent to which his imagination could reshape his entire relationship with Dickens. Responding to a vote of thanks accorded him by the mayor, who had referred to his work for Boz, Cruikshank implied that the only book he had illustrated was the Sketches. “You forgot Oliver Twist,” prompted the official. “No,” replied the artist, “that came out of my own brain. I wanted Dickens to write me a work but he did not do it in the way that I wished.” Indeed, he continued, “Dickens behaved in an extraordinary way to me, and I believe it had a little effect on his mind.” Actually, the idea that Dickens did not “do” Oliver the way Cruikshank “wished” probably reflects the real extent of the artist’s participation in the novel—that of an active but frustrated colleague. His concluding reply to the mayor, however, suggests that by this time his memory could do more than distort the realities associated with Dickens that he found intolerable; it could positively reverse them. The fact that Cruikshank kept in touch with Dickens’s estranged wife does not indicate that he felt in any way reconciled with Dickens, but rather that the two shared the conviction that they had been ill-used by the deceased.

Cruikshank’s obsession with the old grievance was no doubt aggravated as well as distorted at this time if, as is strongly suspected by a recent historian of Victorian temperance activities, he was suffering the added humiliation of knowing he was unable to maintain in private the strict adherence to teetotalism that was now the basis for his self-respect as well as his public respectability. Though the artist had designed pledge cards for the movement, he himself had never signed one; and if, as documents of the period evidently imply, he lapsed back into excessive private drinking, it was a lapse the temperance officials would certainly not wish to make public. But even they would not have taken offense at the many affectionately repeated legends about the artist’s pre-temperance behavior, as has a recent defender of Cruikshank, who thereby does him a profound disservice. For to deny the extent of the artist’s exposure to drink the first two-thirds of his life is to deny him both sympathy and credit for the necessarily fanatic struggle he made to conquer the temptation during most of his remaining years. As the aged Cruikshank must have known, it was his rabid adherence to teetotalism, not any real or imagined differences over the origin and execution of any of his work for Dickens, that had cost him the author’s friendship and, eventually, his artistic reputation as well. It would hardly be surprising if, in his last difficult years, he found his temperance position no longer personally tenable.

The artist died in 1878, too early to derive any satisfaction from watching Dickens’s reputation gradually—if temporarily—sink into a scholarly eclipse while his own remained alive in the most select artistic circles. Ruskin continued to deplore the “ghastly and lamentable” manner in which Cruikshank had “cast away” his genius on the temperance movement; “how much more might and should have been,” agreed Swinburne. But Cruikshank’s pre-temperance work earned him the praise of Burne-Jones, the Rossettis, Whistler, and Sickert, among others, who called him the greatest English artist of the nineteenth century, an opinion even more widely shared now, perhaps, than then. It is ironic, however, that the long-overdue reassessment of Cruikshank in our time has been brought about largely by the efforts of earnest Dickensians who, having reestablished the author as a giant of English literature, are now helping to reestablish his first illustrator as a giant of English art.