Part III: Dickens and His Other Illustrators

The Other Illustrators of Master Humphrey’s Clock

GEORGE CATTERMOLE

SAMUEL WILLIAMS
George Cattermole was the first of Dickens's illustrators whose initial ties to the author were personal rather than professional. Since illustrating popular fiction could only detract from his reputation as a serious painter, Cattermole, like Maclise, Stanfield, and Landseer, doubtless contributed to Dickens's books for reasons of friendship, not ambition. In contrast to Dickens's earlier illustrators, Cattermole was better known to the cognoscenti than to the general public. A prominent member of the exclusive Society of Painters in Water Colours, he was England's foremost painter of scenes commemorating bygone times. Dickens was deeply attracted to the man and profoundly moved by his art. He relished the romantic, if not the realistic, aspects of "monks, cavaliers, battles, banditti, knightly halls, and awful enchanted forests"—favorite Cattermole subjects as catalogued by Thackeray; and he, like Ruskin, responded to the "pure, earnest, and natural" antiquarian feeling that permeated Cattermole's best canvases. Cattermole contributed only a quarter of the illustrations for only two Dickens novels, those in *Master Humphrey's Clock*; yet the author said he preferred them to any of the illustrations to his earlier books. Dickens's appreciation of them probably was determined by their sentimental associations rather than their intrinsic merit. Nevertheless, Cattermole elicited the author's deference, gratitude, and affection as none of Dickens's more prolific illustrators was able to.

To Dickens, Cattermole, who was a dozen years older than he, embodied the essence of genteel artistic and social success (fig. 120). A shy but spirited bachelor, Cattermole had refused a knighthood, and resided in Albany chambers previously occupied by Byron and Bulwer-Lytton. He was welcome in the most sophisticated London circles. It was probably at Gore House, where the fashionable surrounded the Countess of Blessington and the Count D'Orsay, that the established painter met the author of *The Pickwick Papers*. Dickens apparently took to him at once, and hastened to further their acquaintance through their mutual friend, John Forster. Did Forster think, inquired the author with unusual anxiety, that the artist would be interested in dining out after a tour of London prisons? The normally brash young writer need not have been so hesitant. Cattermole accepted this and many other future invitations with evident pleasure. Nevertheless, Dickens always regarded the artist as a superior being.

The two men met frequently in subsequent months, though never as often as Dickens wished. His regret when previous obligations prevented their meeting was unabashed. "Why do you always ask me to dinner on days when I can't come?" he complained upon declining an invitation from the artist after his trip to inspect Yorkshire schools for *Nicholas Nickleby*; "I have been engaged for next Tuesday a fortnight back, and you pick out that unfortunate day as if there were no other days in the week and no other weeks in the year." The novelist had especially wanted to accept that particular invitation since he was eager to tell Cattermole about his visit to York Cathedral because of its associations with John Britton, Cattermole's former teacher and a noted antiquarian draftsman. Dickens had entered the nave and the Verger immediately led him to the "Five Sisters" colored window. "There!" said the old man, "Mr. Britton the great artist and architect says that's the first window in all Europe; and if Mr. Britton don't know a fine window when he sees it, who does, as the Dean says." Dickens knew the encounter would interest his friend. The "Five Sisters" window with its melancholy legend and its association in his mind with Cattermole impressed him so much that he immortalized it in the *Nickleby* narrative (65-66).

In 1839 Cattermole became engaged to Clarissa Elderton, a distant maternal relation of the author's. Dickens was
Fig. 120. Artist Unknown, Portrait of George Cattermole. Crayon. 15¼" × 12¾" (38.7 × 31.5 cm).
By permission of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery, London.
delighted at the prospect of such a distinguished addition to his family. He also felt that the marriage could only strengthen the growing intimacy between himself and Cattermole. Indeed, the shy, sensitive artist had written to his fiancée about Dickens and his wife: “they are amongst the few friends I mark out for our future acquaintance.” Although Miss Elderton had never even met her illustrious relative before her wedding on August 20, Dickens was in the forefront of the guests congratulating the couple. As the newlyweds drove away from St. Marylebone, he energetically pelted their carriage with rice and shouted his good wishes. The very next day, from nearby Petersham where he had taken a cottage, the novelist wrote to the couple, who were honeymooning in Richmond, assuring them of his lasting affection for them both.

Indeed, Dickens could not do enough for the married couple. While the Cattermoles were awaiting the completion of their home on Clapham Rise, he put his pony carriage, servants, and especially his library at their disposal. He also dispatched a carpetbag full of light fiction, essays, and periodicals, which could be easily picked up and put down, and assured the couple that more substantial reading was handy at Elm Cottage should they prefer it. When they moved into their Clapham Rise home, Dickens gave Mrs. Cattermole an exquisitely bound volume of Nicholas Nickleby, accompanied by a charming letter of presentation, and invited her husband to the dinner celebrating the completion of Nicholas Nickleby in 1839.

In 1840 Dickens extended his relationship with Cattermole into professional spheres by asking him to help illustrate Master Humphrey’s Clock—his new periodical geared to appeal to popular tastes and purses by appearing weekly as well as monthly, embellished with wood rather than steel engravings. Since Dickens planned to include tales about London’s mythical and historical past, he needed an antiquarian artist. Cattermole was superbly qualified: he had studied with Britton; his drawings had appeared in Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain from 1821 to 1823; and he had recently supplied historical landscapes and buildings from the novels of Sir Walter Scott for Leitch Ritchie’s Scott and Scotland and costume pieces for the period works of Bulwer-Lytton. Dickens understandably felt that Cattermole’s illustrations could portray the quaintness of the old settings and characters he proposed for the Clock better than his own verbal insistence could. Furthermore, Cattermole’s name would undoubtedly enhance the prestige of the undertaking.

Dickens adopted a tone of jaunty self-deprecation in propounding this “mightily grave matter” to his friend. This unusual deference reveals how anxious he was to secure Cattermole’s services. Would the artist “object,” he tentatively asked, to making a little sketch of a quaint room with Elizabethan furniture and Master Humphrey’s clock to head the opening page? He would not have to bother copying and cutting the drawing on wood, he promised, for these tasks would be executed by others “in first-rate style.” Would he care to repeat the “joke” regularly, inquired the author, offhandedly posing his main question at last, and if so, on what terms? Dickens commented that he was also inviting Cattermole’s distinguished colleague, Daniel Maclise, to contribute, but made no mention of the less prestigious Browne. The publishers, he said, anticipated great sales, and he himself could tell Cattermole more about the project over dinner; in the meantime, he submitted a written proposal, which he called “as business-like and stupid as need be.”

Thus cajoled, Cattermole consented to join the “Clock works”—as Dickens nicknamed the enterprise. Although the room he drew for the headpiece contained recognizably Elizabethan furniture, its effect was not very “quaint” or “queer,” and Master Humphrey’s clock stood mid-wall, not in the corner as Dickens had instructed (SBB, 699). Nevertheless, the author, delighted to have Cattermole contribute anything at all, proclaimed it “most famous.” Lest the painter have lingering doubts about doing such work, Dickens rushed to dispel them. He had Cattermole’s name placed first among the artists listed on the title page, despite the fact that Browne was to do a far greater number of plates, and had the publishers forward the engraved block for the artist’s approval before it was cut. The author even offered to let Cattermole select his own subjects in the future, an option he almost never offered to his other illustrators, promising to send the proofs if Cattermole wished to choose from them. Finally, he later assured the artist, the publishers “will never trouble you (as they never trouble me) but when there is real and pressing occasion; their representations in this respect, unlike most men of business, are to be relied on.”

Never had Dickens been so diplomatic in dealing with an illustrator. Communicating with Cattermole, often through Chapman and Hall, he was never peremptory, irritable, or condescending as he had been more than once with Cruikshank, Seymour, and Browne. Throughout the collaboration, the author perhaps necessarily treated the hypersensitive painter as if he were doing Dickens an extraordinary favor but might back out suddenly if everything did not precisely suit him. Although Cattermole did not ask to choose his own subjects, Dickens sent him only subjects of a picturesque nature, certain that the artist...
would like (and execute) them "best." When the periodical—originally conceived as a miscellany—turned into installments of The Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge, Dickens included scenes expressly with a view to Cattermole's architectural interests and skills, keeping figures to a minimum. He gave Cattermole every opportunity for "correction, alteration, revision, and all the other actions and isions connected with the Fine Arts." When he did make suggestions, he tendered them with hopes that they would not "go greatly against the grain," or with apologies to the effect that he knew the artist would realize them a "hundred times better" than he could "suggest." When Dickens urged haste, he never implied that Cattermole could be dilatory, but only that he or the publishers or the printers were "mortally pressed" for time. Although the author freely addressed the artist as "My dear George" and even "Kittenmole," when he was giving instructions, he often sprinkled them with respectful references to "sir." Despite Cattermole's name and his gratifying treatment of picturesque subjects—the time motif on the wrapper (SBB, 697) (see F); Master Humphrey's "admirable" room (SBB, 699) and the stately bed of Master Graham that inspired such "glowing accounts" (SBB, 715); the Cavalier who robs Hugh of his love and life (SBB, 720); and the ornate church in which Will Mark's burden is buried (SBB, 771)—the Clock began to founder. Dickens planned to resurrect Pickwick and Sam Weller to join Master Humphrey and his cronies in linking short pieces, and Cattermole featured them along with the others in his complex frontispiece for the Clock's first bound volume (SBB, facing p. 689). But even Mr. Pickwick and Sam failed to attract readers. Here as in Pickwick, the club machinery proved cumbersome and unpopular. What the public wanted to read were longer narratives by Dickens. "Accordingly," wrote Thomas Hood, "whilst the two clubs are snugly housed—the one in the kitchen and the other in the parlour, and, as the frontispiece hints, all fast asleep—the author quietly gives them the slip and drives off to take up characters, who really have business down the road." For even before the completion of the first volume, Dickens had decided to expand his "little child" story into The Old Curiosity Shop, and to revive his long-deferred novel Barnaby Rudge in order to rescue his faltering enterprise.

The expanded "business" of these characters, especially little Nell, captivated the hearts of contemporary readers. The heroine not only rescued the Clock from certain failure, but provided a creative outlet for Dickens's still unassimilated emotions about the premature death of his seventeen-year-old sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, in 1837. The author's relief on both grounds expressed itself in excessive gratitude to Cattermole, to whom he assigned most of the illustrations involving little Nell.

A close study of Cattermole's work for The Old Curiosity Shop, however, makes it apparent that Dickens was moved more by the nostalgic associations evoked by the pictures than by the pictures themselves. Indeed, the artist was more interested in the heroine's picturesque surroundings than in the heroine. Assigned to do the headpiece for Nell's story, as Dickens then regarded it, for example, the artist took special pains in delineating the curiosity shop. Indeed, the interior may have been inspired by his own studio at Clapham Rise with its antique tapestries, armor, and furniture, including a prominent escritoire with carvings of "hideous, gaping, 'Old Curiosity Shop' faces." Cattermole took less time with Nell. The author, "more than doubtful of the child's face," which was too old-ladyish, returned it to him for further work. Perhaps this is why Dickens wanted Browne to execute the concluding illustration for the original short piece, and then, even after the latter was probably too busy to do it, gave it not to Cattermole but to Samuel Williams, an artist better known as an engraver.

At carefully spaced intervals, Dickens gave Cattermole his Shop illustrations to do (he gave Browne four times as many). Only at the end of the story, for the sequence of four engravings of Nell's transition from this world to the next, did he call on Cattermole to put forth sustained effort. Characteristically, Cattermole provided more effective settings than people. His first task was to portray Kit, Nell's birdcage in hand, arriving at the snow-covered parsonage (LXX, 568). According to Dickens's brief summary, a lighted window was to obscure the fact that the child lay dead inside; lacking the completed text, however, Cattermole forgot to draw the requisite curtain over the lower half of the window, though suspense is maintained because of the viewer's distance from it (fig. 121). The artist makes the parsonage the center of interest instead of Kit. Indeed, the young man, delineated from the back with parallel diagonal strokes, is visually insignificant compared to the elaborately vaulted dwelling in which Nell lies in sentimental state. But Dickens said nothing.

Cattermole's next illustration of the "dear dead child" would chill Macready, though Dickens intended it to "express repose and tranquillity and even something of a happy look, if death can." Yet the artist's preliminary sketches had not satisfied Dickens's detailed conception of the scene. Perhaps he felt the picturesque semi-canopied bed was more prominent than Nell; perhaps her face failed to communicate the desired transcendence. In any case, the
Yet the modern viewer is unlikely to be moved even by the published print of the dead heroine with her broad, crudely delineated face, and her elaborate surroundings with their hackneyed symbols of immortality (LXXI, 575) (fig. 122).

Dickens had requested the evergreens but Cattermole may have added on his own initiative the portrait of the Virgin and Child over Nell's head, the prayer book in her hand, and the open window for her departing soul with the hourglass and bird on the sill. Though the contrast between her fresh youth and her aged surroundings is stressed here as it was in Williams's picture of her first rest in the narrative, Nell herself is far less appealing in Cattermole's hands than in Williams's (I, 14) (see fig. 128).

Cattermole's greater interest in structures than in human figures is even more obvious in his final pair of illustrations for the Shop. In 'The Old Man at Little Nell's grave' (LXXII, 583), he lavishes far more graphic attention on the church interior than on the grandfather whose grief Dickens had stressed in his instructions. Yet the sacred clutter of the church, here as earlier (LIII, 424), does indeed recall the secular clutter of the old curiosity shop (I, 1 and 14) and makes the absence of Nell nearly as tangible as her presence was. Sensitive to Cattermole's evident preference, Dickens, in requesting a tailpiece that would give "some notion of the etherealised spirit of the child," downplayed the importance of human forms—"only one figure if you like." Cattermole did supply three angels bearing Nell to heaven, while a fourth provides musical accompaniment, yet he delineated the diminutive landscape below their ascending cloud far more precisely than their vapid faces (LXXII, 583) (fig. 123). Nevertheless, Emily Dickinson would find this scene, together with the one of Nell and her grandfather comforting one another in the churchyard (LIV, 435), so fitting for her poem about "a poor tired heart" that she cut them out and sewed them with pink thread to her manuscript page.

In general, as has been seen, Dickens apportioned out the picturesque subjects to Cattermole, the grotesque to Hablot Browne. At least in one case, however, as Mrs. Leavis has also observed, Browne proved himself more responsive not only to Nell but even to the structures with which she is associated. Earlier in the story, the publishers mistakenly sent Browne the subject of Nell hiding from Quilp in a gateway—one of those Dickens had included "expressly" for Cattermole. To judge from the superb result, 'Quilp at the gateway' (XXVII, 218) (fig. 124), Browne, a former illustrator of Winkle's Cathedrals of England and Wales (1836–38), might have portrayed the old ruinous settings even better than Cattermole. Cattermole always approached the structures in both The Old Curiosity Shop and in Barnaby Rudge from an antiquarian viewpoint, minimizing figures when he included them at all (see figs. 121, 126–28) (though never with the symbolic effect that minimizing would have in some of Browne's "dark" plates for Bleak House), whereas Browne more fully exploited the potential of the setting to dramatize aspects of character and plot. Here, Quilp, with his upraised stick, resembles the two stone monsters who flank the archway in a similarly menacing manner. Nell

*Fig. 121. George Cattermole, 'The ruin in snow.' Master Humphrey's Clock, no. 43, p. 204. Wood engraving. 7 1/4" x 4 3/4" (8.7 x 11.5 cm). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.*

*Fig. 122. George Cattermole, 'Nell dead.' Master Humphrey's Clock, no. 44, p. 46. Wood engraving. 3 1/4" x 4 3/4" (8 x 11.5 cm). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.*
cowers in the shadows of one of a series of recesses all bereft of any statues. Browne makes Dickens's point clear: that Nell has no external protection against this moral monster. As Mrs. Leavis concludes: “whether by Dickens's direction or by his own sympathetic comprehension of the text supplied him here, Phiz has supplied a visual equivalent not merely of an episode in the story, but of its meaning in the novel as a whole.” Browne’s Nell is decidedly more appealing than Cattermole’s, not only here but also in his frontispiece for the published volume of the Clock containing the bulk of Nell’s story (facing p. viii). But contemporary readers did not compare the two Clock artists at each other’s expense, and Dickens seemed pleased with both.

All this notwithstanding, after The Old Curiosity Shop was finished, Dickens praised Cattermole’s illustrations excessively. He continued to look at them, he wrote the artist, with a “pleasure” he could not “easily describe in words” because “This is the very first time any designs for what I have written have touched and moved me, and caused me to feel that they expressed the idea I had in my mind.” Clearly Dickens had already forgotten even the few criticisms he had voiced of Cattermole’s work. His response was obviously dictated by subjective factors having less to do with aesthetics than with emotions. As he was composing the Shop’s final scenes, Dickens had confessed to Cattermole his heartbreak over Nell’s decease, so fraught with memories of Mary Hogarth’s. Yet the writing of the story was cathartic, and the illustrations provided him with a perfect graphic correlative for his continued idealization of his sister-in-law. By his portrayal of Nell, regardless of its artistic quality, Cattermole seemed to share and lighten the burden of Dickens’s grief. Doubtless this helps to explain why Dickens thanked Cattermole so profusely for his “most invaluable cooperation” and “friendly aid”—despite the fact that he was often dilatory, disabled, or careless. That emotional as well as aesthetic help had been given, however unconsciously, by one whom Dickens regarded so highly as a painter and a friend made the tone of his appreciation border on the obsequious.

Dickens even commissioned Cattermole to make watercolors of scenes from the book, mainly those involving Nell and church graves with their inherent associations of sacred reverence. Upon his return from America, Dickens received the watercolors, and treated them immediately as another shrine for his worship of Mary, in spite or perhaps because of their even more elaborate concentration on picturesque objects at the expense of the characters. Once again Dickens claimed that Cattermole’s work had rendered
"the whole feeling, and thought, and expression" of his narrative to the "gratification" of his "inmost heart."50

This period of professional collaboration on the Clock marked the height of Dickens's personal intimacy with Cattermole. As friends, relatives, collaborators, and fellow members of the Shakespeare Society and of the Portwiners, an informal group of congenial friends who often dined together, the two men spent much time in one another's company.51 They rode, walked, and dined in London and at Clapham Rise. In the warmth of the author's attention, the artist's natural reserve and coolness thawed. Dickens particularly enjoyed his visits to Cattermole's home. Its neighborhood, still old-fashioned and rural, was reached from London by omnibus, whose driver spent his waiting hours at the Charing Cross tavern from which the Clapham cabs arrived and departed; Cattermole dubbed him "Sloppy" and delighted Dickens with imitations of his Cockney speech. "It is amazing nonsense to repeat," Forster recalled, but to hear the painter imitating "Sloppy" on the subject of supposed pre-temperance experiences that he attributed to his imaginary friend Jack, "in the gruff, hoarse accents of what seemed to be the remains of a deep bass voice wrapped up in wet straw" was unforgettable.52 Cattermole's imitation inspired Dickens's invention of Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Harris in his post-Clock novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and the driver's nickname became that of Betty Higden's "minder" in *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864.

Cattermole's home on Clapham Rise perfectly suited the artist, whose dignified demeanor enabled Thackeray to imagine him presiding over Windsor Castle.53 Dickens and the other Portwiners long remembered the splendid dinners served by white-gloved servants in the painter's spacious dining room.54 After-dinner drinks were served in the drawing room, luxuriously furnished with thick drapes, Byron's carved furniture from his former Albany chambers, and wallpaper with gold bars designed by the host. Cattermole would then lead his guests down a shadowy staircase and long corridor to his studio, a room full of antiquities, where, on workdays, the artist prepared his Clock illustrations and other paintings. Here, on one of these social occasions, Richard Lane executed the studies for a profile portrait of Dickens, perhaps while the author was discoursing from one of Byron's chairs to Maclise or the Landseer brothers or Thackeray or Bulwer-Lytton on various matters of art and literature.55 Cattermole later purchased Lane's finished profile portrait of Dickens (fig. 125). Mrs. Cattermole came to cherish it, less for its artistic merit than for its association with these happy days in their home, in such contrast to the extended periods of illness and debt that subsequently plagued their family.

Meanwhile, *Master Humphrey's Clock* ran on, and *Barnaby Rudge* succeeded *The Old Curiosity Shop*, making its public appearance on February 13, 1841. The historical fiction, set, like Scott's best novels, fifty years earlier than it was written, offered a wealth of congenial subjects for the antiquarian painter. Dickens assigned Browne the individual characters and crowd scenes, and Cattermole all the picturesque structures. The old edifices Dickens imagined for *The Old Curiosity Shop*, all redolent of decay and death, are memorable only collectively. By contrast, his structures in *Barnaby*—the Maypole Inn (fig. 126), the Locksmith's house, the Boot, the Warren (fig. 127), and Westminster Hall (see fig. 62)—function dramatically and distinctively throughout. The buildings acquire a status almost like that of characters.56 Cattermole warmed to the task so perfectly suited to his tastes. His complex curlicues, if not historically accurate, are extremely nostalgic.
Dickens continued to treat Cattermole with kid gloves, regardless of the merit of his work, perhaps partly out of sympathy for the artist’s increasing harassment due to illness, impending fatherhood, debt, and other commissions. When the artist drew the ornate, multigabled Maypole Inn for the opening scene (I, 1) (fig. 126), the author claimed that he was unable to bear the thought of its being cut on the block, and wished he could “frame and glaze it in statu quo forever and ever.” In Cattermole’s hands, he maintained, the scene of Chester warming himself before the Maypole’s finest fireplace (X, 84) (see fig. 54) would be “a very pretty one.” Dickens was especially helpful to Cattermole, now copying his own drawings onto the wood, in tangible ways as well. He exerted himself to procure a long block so that the Locksmith’s house might “come upright as it were,” and when this subject, meant for chapter 7, was not executed until chapter 16 (XVI, 134), Dickens remained uncharacteristically patient, trusting that Cattermole’s delineation of the “shy blinking” house with the conical roof would be worth the delay (IV, 33-34).

Dickens even concealed his disappointment when Cattermole’s interest in picturesque objects did not extend to picturesque pets. He very much hoped that the painter would portray Barnaby’s raven, but proposed the idea tentatively, lest it seem like an order. Did Cattermole fancy ravens in general? Would he fancy Barnaby’s in particular? Might he like to portray the pet’s maiden appearance? Certainly he was well qualified to suggest the oddness of the bird. Not hearing from the painter, Dickens gently pressed him for his decision. Time was short. Browne needed instructions if Cattermole was not to do the bird. Even at Cattermole’s delay and subsequent refusal, however, Dickens never indicated the slightest displeasure.

Cattermole had enough to preoccupy him on Barnaby Rudge without the raven. Manuscript slips, précis, and notes flew from Devonshire Terrace to Clapham Rise on each other’s heels. Even from Edinburgh, where he was being lionized in June, 1841, Dickens dispatched chapters and subjects for illustrations, for the author was approaching the riot scenes—in which, he felt, lay all the best pictorial opportunities. Cattermole did not warm to such scenes, yet Dickens proclaimed that his portrayal of the mob wrecking the Maypole bar, while John Willet looked on with stupefaction, was “noble.” The author did worry, however, about Cattermole’s ability to delineate the rioters’ destruction of the Warren. He wanted him to delineate simultaneously one of the turrets laid open, Haredale clutching Barnaby’s father—still in cloak and slouched hat as Browne had drawn him earlier (I, 6; II, 19)—and Solomon Daisy gaping from the ground below. “When you have done the subject,” Dickens asked, in an unusual request, “I wish you’d write me one line and tell me how, that I may be sure
we agree." Within a week, Cattermole sent a sketch together with a poetic explanation. He had chosen as a vantage point the roof of one of the Warren wings toward which the elder Rudge and Haredale are rushing from a small tower door. Below, on the grass, Daisy stands in amazement (though not in the darkness described in the text) and beyond are "clouds of smoke a-passing over and amongst many tall trees" and "frightened rooks, flying and cawing like mad" (LVI, 465) (see fig. 137). 65 Taking unusual pains, Cattermole adequately met the challenge.

Such violent action, however, did not suit Cattermole's talents, nor his fragile temperament—especially not in his present tender mood due to the birth of his first child—66—and he executed his remaining Barnaby subjects with less success. The scene of Hugh and his cohorts fleeing from the ruined Warren in a post chaise with their lovely captives—whose presence, as Dickens suggested, is indicated only by a scarf fluttering from its window—seems to have overwhelmed him with its demands for detailed activity (LIX, 486). Cattermole barely differentiated the white forms of the clouds, the whirs of dust, the clothing of the abductors, the captive's scarf and the torches, all of which suggest noon rather than night and confusion rather than artistry. 68

Accordingly, Dickens assigned ten of the next eleven subjects to Browne. When he next called on Cattermole to do the finale, he accompanied his request with a barrage of instructions, although he tried to soften their impact with his usual delicate manner toward Cattermole: "I have been waiting until I got to subjects of this nature, thinking you would like them best." 69 "Firstly," he asked, would Cattermole draw Lord George Gordon in his solitary prison in the Tower? The artist complied, but made the cell more interesting than its expressionless inhabitant (LXXIII, 610). "Secondly," Dickens queried, would Cattermole portray the duel between Sir John Chester, hostile but polite to the last, and Haredale, more sorrowful than triumphant at his enemy's death? Here the artist actually contradicted the text by making Haredale seem more concerned with his bloodyied sword than with his enemy who expires with a graceless smirk (LXXXI, 677) (see fig. 65). Cattermole was too ill to execute the "Thirdly," a frontispiece to the novel, 70 but recovered in time to produce the "Fourthly," a tailpiece representing the stopping of Master Humphrey's Clock (SBB, 817). In this scene, the artist's weariness is evident. The crutch and slippers are not where Dickens wanted them; the manuscript of The Old Curiosity Shop, to be indicated along with that of Barnaby, is not distinguishable; and the subject of the picture over the fireplace, portrayed sketchily by Browne in the third number, has become so indeterminate that viewers debate whether it is a sensuous nude or the Good Samaritan (SBB, 817). 71 The artist dutifully followed Dickens's specifications for a "Fifthly," a scene showing Hugh going to jail with the old Fleet Market in the background. 72 All told, however, it seems just as well that Dickens decided not to "frighten" the artist further with a "sixthly, seventhly, and eighthly." 73

Cattermole continued illustrating books occasionally, but, except for a frontispiece for the 1848 Cheap Edition of The Old Curiosity Shop, never again illustrated a work by Dickens, though the author repeatedly insisted to the painter that he marveled at his talents. In the 1840's, to illustrate popular fiction, even for an author as famous as Dickens, could detract from an artist's energies as well as his reputation as a serious painter. Critics like Ruskin, perhaps alluding to Cattermole's engravings for Master Humphrey's Clock, commented more in sorrow than in anger that "no original talent, however brilliant, can sustain its energy when the demands upon it are constant, and all legitimate support and food withdrawn." 74

It is clear, anyway, that Cattermole could not have sustained the pace necessitated by Dickens's energetic temperament, work habits, and the pressures of serial publication. As the Clock progressed, the artist had become increasingly fragile under the strain of this work together with more pressing obligations. He was anxious about his growing family. He began to fall into debt, and despite "pangs and writhings of regret innumerable" borrowed money from friends, including Dickens. 75 He was often plagued with an ailment that, for lack of a more precise name, as he wrote the author, "I must call a disorder of the nerves." 76 This malady, which often confined him to his room, contributed to his nervous, vague, and elusive demeanor. Even the robust Dickens found the effort dictated by weekly installments extraordinarily demanding (which may explain why his later periodicals, Household Words and All the Year Round, were not illustrated), and readily returned his next novel, Martin Chuzzlewit, to a monthly format to be illustrated solely by Browne. The contemporary content of Chuzzlewit would not have suited the antiquarian artist anyway.

No longer associated professionally, Dickens and Cattermole began to see less of one another socially. In contrast to the way others besieged the author, the artist held himself aloof, although Dickens continued to seek his company and solicit his talents in other spheres in the years following Master Humphrey's Clock.

In 1845, after living in Italy (where the Doria, an old palazzo, reminded him of Cattermole's quaintest pictures),
Dickens returned to London and began his amateur theatrical company. Initially, he did not invite the reserved artist to join it, but when the part of Downright in the opening production of Every Man in His Humour was vacated by Clarkson Stanfield and refused by George Cruikshank, Dickens thought of his old friend and relative. His invitation was a calculated appeal to Cattermole's sense of decorum. The small group was to perform Ben Jonson's play, he said, with "correct" costumes and a "good orchestra" before a "strictly private" audience admitted by invitation only; furthermore, the cast included many mutual friends, including Forster, Frank Stone, and Stanfield. With a final affectionate flourish, Dickens urged the "Kittenmolian Trojan" to participate. The painter may have regretted his refusal to be more than a spectator when the debut proved such a success. For when the role of Wellbred became available for the two remaining performances, one of which Prince Albert planned to attend, Dickens more easily overcame Cattermole's probable excuses of expense, illness, and acting inability. After his first rehearsal, however, it was clear that the self-conscious artist needed more than reassurance. Dickens accordingly ordered his brother Frederick to practice with the artist privately. Thus prepared, Cattermole played Wellbred not only in the remaining 1845 productions of Every Man but retained the part when the play was restaged in 1847 to benefit John Forster, Frank Stone, and Stanfield. With a final affectionate flourish, Dickens urged the "Kittenmolian Trojan" to participate. The painter may have regretted his refusal to be more than a spectator when the debut proved such a success. For when the role of Wellbred became available for the two remaining performances, one of which Prince Albert planned to attend, Dickens more easily overcame Cattermole's probable excuses of expense, illness, and acting inability. After his first rehearsal, however, it was clear that the self-conscious artist needed more than reassurance. Dickens accordingly ordered his brother Frederick to practice with the artist privately. Thus prepared, Cattermole played Wellbred not only in the remaining 1845 productions of Every Man but retained the part when the play was restaged in 1847 to benefit John Poole and Leigh Hunt.

As the artist became increasingly frail and reclusive, Dickens no longer kept in constant touch with him. Dickens's reaction to a birth announcement from the Cattermoles in 1852 reveals how infrequently the two men met, yet how eager Dickens was to renew their intimacy. He dispatched his wife and sister-in-law to Clapham Rise with a congratulatory letter stressing his pleasure in hearing from the artist. "Now don't you think," the author pleaded, "DON'T you think you could manage to dine here, at the family board, either next Sunday, or next Sunday after that, at 5 exactly? Couldn't we, if only for a novelty, meet as we used to in bygone ages? Do let us try. How can it be that Clapham Rise gets so far off?"

The Cattermoles may have dined at Tavistock House on this occasion but not often, if ever, thereafter. If cousin Dickens found it a "genealogical poser" to name his precise kinship to Cattermole's children, the artist was seriously embarrassed both by his illnesses and by the problems of financing his growing family and his expensive tastes. As his nervous disorders became more pronounced, his good humor and imagination diminished, as did the quantity and quality of his paintings. He withdrew not only from society but even from the Water Colour Society in 1850; a shared award with Edwin Landseer of the French grande médaille d'honneur in 1855 and election both to the Dutch Royal Academy and to the Belgian Society of Water-Colour Painters the following year enlarged Cattermole's reputation but not his resources. When Dickens arrived at the Villa des Moulinaux in the summer of 1856 to work on Little Dorrit, he found the unhappy Cattermoles stranded in another of the villas let by his unhappy landlord, who complained that the artist always promised but never paid his bills.

For the rest of the artist's life, Dickens kept track of him primarily through mutual friends. In the early 1860's, when the artist lost his youngest daughter shortly after his eldest son, he slid into a permanent depression. When Dickens returned from America in 1868, he learned that Cattermole was seriously ill. Mrs. Cattermole confirmed the bad news, but assured her cousin that he was improving. Yet Dickens never saw Cattermole again, for he died on July 24, 1868.

Mrs. Cattermole was well aware, however, that her illustrious relation might do a good deal more than offer sympathy to alleviate her distress. Even before Cattermole's death, she had enlisted Dickens's aid in soliciting a pension from the Royal Academy; now she found him an indispensable help in drafting her petition for a pension from Parliament. Meanwhile, she held a sale of her husband's remaining canvases, and Dickens received a catalogue of the sale, but as specimens of the artist's work were already hanging on his walls, he did not greatly regret his inability to attend. When nothing came of the Parliament petition, the author conducted a private appeal on behalf of the Cattermoles, but it fared little better, though William P. Frith, a colleague of the late artist, unfairly felt the amount raised could have been doubled had the author not been so preoccupied with other affairs. Dickens, who was never too busy to help his friends, had found, however, that Cattermole's reserve and his wife's tendency to exaggerate her misery had offended many people, who now reacted coldly to the family's plight. Finally, in mid-April, 1869, he held a meeting of the few interested benefactors, who decided to hand the collected funds over to the widow and to abandon further solicitations. Dickens maintained he could do nothing more for his cousin, who, though persistent, was not ungrateful. She had found the author, she said, to be a man of "magnanimous and practical sympathy"—a judgment shared by many of Dickens's original illustrators and their families.