It is, of course, primarily because of his illustrations for *Punch* and for Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (1865 and 1871) that John Tenniel is famous. Yet had it not been for his work on one of Dickens's Christmas books, perhaps Tenniel might have remained a promising but obscure painter, at least much longer than he did. Dickens knew nothing of the young artist until 1848 when his publishers, Bradbury and Evans, perhaps on the strength of Tenniel's illustrations that year for Thomas James's *Aesop's Fables*, engaged him to replace Doyle as one of the illustrators of *The Haunted Man*. "He seems a very agreeable fellow, and modest," Dickens informed Leech after meeting him (fig. 140); "we must arrange for a dinner here, very shortly, when you and he may meet." In this casual manner the two friends became acquainted with Tenniel, who, after Doyle's resignation from *Punch* in 1850, would assist Leech as second cartoonist and would succeed him as first cartoonist after his death in 1864.

Tenniel concurred only half-heartedly in the auspicious train of events that followed his commission for Dickens. He regarded his graphic work merely as a vulgar means of support for his more serious efforts to paint. The partly self-taught artist, like Cruikshank, Browne, and Leech, drew from memory rather than models; nevertheless, he exhibited his first painting at the Royal Academy at the age of sixteen, and nine years later, in 1845, was among those selected by Prince Albert's Royal Commission to supply frescoes for the new House of Parliament. *Had Tenniel been rightly trained,* Ruskin was to say of him, "there might have been the making of a Holbein or nearly a Holbein in him." After he reluctantly joined *Punch*, Tenniel continued to paint in oils and watercolors until the steadier magazine work inevitably preempted his time, energy, and higher aspirations. Far from bearing Dickens any ill will for his inadvertent influence on the course of his career, Tenniel did as much as anyone to keep the author's name before the public during and after his lifetime by his frequent use of Dickens's characters in his cartoons.

Tenniel contributed six wood engravings to *The Haunted Man*, Dickens's last and most profusely illustrated Christmas book. He took over the assignments that Maclise and Doyle had executed for the three earlier holiday books in providing the frontispiece and title page as well as the first illustration in each of the three main chapters of the story. Thus the young artist bore the entire responsibility for visually setting and maintaining the atmosphere and tone of the disquieting tale about the inextricable pleasures and pains of memory. There was no written communication between Dickens and Tenniel, only the one dinner engagement during which the author threw out "certain hints as to treatment" but "nothing more." Whether he acted on the novelist's hints or his own initiative, taken together, Tenniel's illustrations form a self-sustaining dramatic sequence.

In his use of light and shadow as well as in the mix of angelic and sinister figures in the circular black-and-white border of the yellow-tinted frontispiece (380) and within the centered circle of the title page (381), Tenniel implanted Dickens's theme that good is separate yet inextricable from evil. Throughout his illustrations for *The Haunted Man* he made light and shadow work symbolically as well as aesthetically. In the opening chapter, "The Gift Bestowed," the monstrous shadows cast on the wall behind the happy, fire-illuminated Tetterbys add an ominous prefatory note that is only partly relieved by the humorous Doyle-like figures in the upper portion of the scene (I, 382). In the double illustrations introducing "The Gift Diffused," the children shrink from the dark figure of Redlaw, who himself is frighteningly dwarfed by his own shadow, a long symbol...
Fig. 140. G.I.R., Sketch Portrait of John Tenniel, 1844. Pencil. 6" × 5" (15.3 × 12.7 cm). By permission of the Trustees of the National Portrait Gallery, London.
of the troubled past he wishes not to recall (II, 412-13). The illustration heralding "The Gift Reversed" promises relief: the shadow of night recedes before the angels of dawn over the horizon beyond the lighthouse (III, 455). Scenes like this one, with its portentous yet graceful figures, may have prompted Ruskin's remark that "Tenniel has much of the largeness and symbolic mystery of imagination which belongs to the great leaders of classical art." Illustrating Dickens and *Punch*, however, gave the artist little scope for his grander tendencies, and cramped both by scale and by subject, they often appeared to observers like William Rossetti as mere coldness and formality. Tenniel himself termed his designs for *The Haunted Man* "poor little contributions," and, as it turned out, they were the beginning and end of his artistic collaboration with Dickens, for *The Haunted Man* proved to be the author's last Christmas book.

Through *Punch*, however, Tenniel's association with Dickens continued both directly and indirectly. Recommended by *Punch* editors Lemon and Jerrold for Dickens's amateur theatricals, Tenniel participated in the benefit performances of *The Rent Day* and *The Poor Gentleman* in 1850. Though cast in a subordinate role in *Not So Bad as We Seem* in its debut before Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1851, he was promoted to the leading role when the company toured the provinces. "You have no idea how good" Tenniel was, Dickens informed the absent Forster after the final performance of Bulwer's play. Tenniel's distinctive bass voice was last used in the troupe's behalf in 1852 in *Used Up*. Meanwhile, the dignified, courteous artist—the personifica-

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**Fig. 141. John Leech, 'Scrooge's third Visitor.' *A Christmas Carol* (London, 1843), facing p. 78. Tinted etching, $4\frac{1}{8}$ x $3\frac{3}{4}$ (11.9 x 8.3 cm). From the Harry Elkins Widener Collection, by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.**

**Fig. 142. John Tenniel, 'The Spirit of Christmas Present.' *Punch*, 105 (December 30, 1893), 307. Wood engraving, $9\frac{3}{4}$ x $7\frac{1}{8}$ (24.8 x 18.1 cm) [cartoon]. From the Harvard College Library, Harvard University.**
tion of an English gentleman despite his French origins and his blindness in one eye—had ingratiated himself not only with Dickens, but with his family as well, with whom he often dined at Devonshire Terrace after taking young Charley rowing on the Thames.  

After the death of Leech in 1864, Tenniel took charge of the political cartoons for *Punch*. If he diminished the element of caricature and even humor with his bold draftsmanship and large allegorical figures, he introduced nonpartisan elements of morality and respectability, as Ruskin noted, into an arena that had been openly licentious since the time of Rowlandson and Gillray.  

Tenniel extended Leech’s use of Dickens’s characters. In his hands, London officials became perfect Bumbles; Disraeli made a memorable Fagin; and various topical figures were cast as Sikes, Mrs. Nickleby, Smike, Mrs. Gamp, and even Mark Tapley. Gladstone especially served as a prime satirical target for Tenniel just as Peel and Russell had for Leech. For over three decades, Gladstone, an attentive, if not always admiring, reader of Dickens, had to submit to being caricatured as little Nell’s weak grandfather, Micawber certain of “something turning up,” a political Mrs. Gummidge lamenting her misfortunes with Russia and Egypt, Betsey Prig, Sairey Gamp, and, most memorably, Scrooge-Sadstone observing the chaotic spirit of Christmas Present (fig. 142) in grim contrast to Leech’s subject fifty years earlier (III, 38) (fig. 141).  

Far from resenting this questionable attention, Gladstone, always cordial to the artist, was easily persuaded in 1893 to recommend him for a knighthood. Tenniel—the first humorous artist working in black-and-white ever honored in this way—was inclined to refuse it. He finally accepted it, but at the celebration utterly forgot his speech. The award doubtless recalled his early unrealized aspirations to be a painter and his lasting ambivalence about being “only” a cartoonist, for it revived the painful question, asked most pointedly by Ruskin, of what Tenniel would have accomplished had “the best” been demanded of his talent.