"What a fine edition of Nature and Art is Stanfield," wrote Thomas Hood (quoted in CP, 2: 47) about this beloved member of the Victorian art establishment. Dickens agreed wholeheartedly. He considered the artist the finest of men as well as of friends. If the young Maclise was, for Dickens, the perfect bachelor comrade and Forster the enduring confidant, with remarkably fewer complications Clarkson Stanfield filled the role of genial older companion. The artist, nineteen years Dickens's senior, provided paternal affection, but retained a youthful capacity for spirited enjoyment as well. His few illustrations for Dickens's Christmas and travel books were as remarkable for the spirit with which they were contributed as for their aesthetic merit.

Like most of Dickens's close artist friends, Stanfield had secured his reputation before he met the author. His marine and landscape paintings were admired for their realism, though they lacked the inspiration and originality of canvases by his contemporary Turner, to whom he was constantly (and disadvantageously) compared. Before Dickens's parents were even married, Stanfield had been driven by his love for the sea to leave his apprenticeship to an Edinburgh heraldic painter and enter the merchant marine. The year Dickens was born, Stanfield was pressed into the Royal Navy where he began painting scenery for shipboard theatricals organized by Douglas Jerrold, who later became a friend of Dickens and a force in his theater group. By the time young Dickens wrote the first of his Sketches, the artist had left the navy to work as a scenery painter, first in Edinburgh and then at Drury Lane. On the basis of his paintings of the sea, he had been elected in 1832 a member of the Royal Academy, where young Ruskin used to watch him work on "varnishing" day, when exhibitors could retouch pictures accidentally damaged in moving. Probably the author of The Pickwick Papers met Stanfield, a fellow member of the Shakespeare Society, through Jerrold or William Macready; at any rate, Dickens was immediately captivated by the simple, burly, jovial artist with his "high lights" (as Maclise calls the knobs of brightness on the tops of his cheeks) (fig. 165), and Stanfield quickly became a lifelong member of the author's inner circle, a friend to be cherished in all seasons. The proliferation of nicknames over the years testified to the affection between Dickens, the son of a Navy Pay Office worker, dubbed "Philo Forecastle," "Henry Bluff," "Dick," and "Genial Oil" and the former seaman, variously referred to as "Stanfell," "Old Salt," "Old Tarpoilin," "the lad with the tarry legs," and "Messmet."
Stanfield, one of Dickens's few pious friends, consistently acted on selfless principles. Although he was very busy throughout the 1840's with his frescoes for the Buckingham Palace garden pavilion as well as with his Royal Academy canvases, the artist always answered Dickens's calls for help. Whether these summonses were frivolous or serious, Stanfield was heedless of their cost to his dignity, energy, or purse. When Dickens performed magic tricks at a Twelfth Night party in 1843 for his children and his friends, Stanfield's insistence on assisting him in "precisely" the "wrong way" delighted the audience; and at a celebration of the completion of A Christmas Carol in 1844, the artist willingly lent his hat in which Dickens and Forster, conjuring up a plum pudding from an empty saucepan, kindled a fire. Whenever he was solicited, Stanfield readily accompanied the author to the local Ragged School and the Greenwich Hospital Bazaar and the Sanatorium dinner or worked to help the General Theatrical Fund and the seven destitute children of Edward Elton, the actor, drowned in the Pegasus, and, at a risk to his health, the benefit theatricals.

Indeed, Stanfield's generosity proved problematic for Dickens during their collaboration on four of the five Christmas books, from The Chimes in 1844 to The Haunted Man in 1848. For The Chimes, the Carol's successor, it was decided to increase the number of illustrations from eight to twelve, and—to help Leech, add variety, and attract more readers—use four illustrators instead of one. As an established artist and Dickens intimate, Stanfield was a logical artist to solicit for illustrations, and, despite the numerous works he had in hand at the time, immediately accepted the commission. Working on The Chimes, the painter revealed unexpected literary sensitivity. Adopting the point of view of Alderman Cute and his complacent class, his two illustrations added to the irony of the narrative. His picture of 'The Old Church' (II, 129) (fig. 166), which dispenses so little charity or even spiritual comfort to inconsequential people like Trotty, is visually elegant. Similarly, 'Will Fern's Cottage)—more charming to look at than to dwell in, as its inhabitant bitterly informs Sir Joseph (III, 149)—is picturesque indeed in his illustration (III, 148). Dickens was pleased not only by the scenes themselves, but also by the artist's gratification at his pleasure. "Stanfield's readiness—delight—wonder at my being pleased—in what he has done is delicious," he wrote his wife upon his return to London to read The Chimes to him and other close friends (see fig. 156) and see it through the press.

Dickens was upset, however, when the painter refused to accept any payment for his Chimes illustrations. Finally, he sent Stanfield a silver claret jug (at Bradbury and Evans's expense), inscribed "In Memory of The Chimes," together with a letter saying how much he wanted the artist's help on his next Christmas volume but only if he would consent to accept the publisher's check. If Stanny would not descend to work on these terms, Dickens said, then he would have to be deprived of his talents. "What a stony-hearted ruffian you must be in such a case," the author concluded his plea. After similarly confuting the artist's further protests, Dickens knew he could count on him—as he never could on their mutual friend Maelise—to illustrate his next holiday production.

Indeed, it would have appeared ungracious had Stanfield not been included among the illustrators for The Cricket on the Hearth. Once again, the painter was supposed to contribute
two illustrations. Just at the crucial moment, however, he fell ill. The author did not visit his sick friend lest he seem to be hounding him for the illustrations; yet no sooner did Dickens hear that the artist was recovering, than Stanfield himself notified him that his drawing for 'The Carrier's Cart' was finished (I, 190) (see fig. 164). Dickens was thankful and relieved. He also must have found the drawing with its two panels dramatically effective—its shadows so graphically anticipating the demoralizing effect the unseen passenger above will have on the Carrier's young wife below. Stanfield was anxious to get on with his second subject, which was to head the final section of the story, and Dickens promised to "insert a full-sized Blue Bottle in the ear of the Printer" for neglecting to send him the text. Ultimately, however, Doyle assumed the subject, perhaps to leave Stanfield freer to convalesce.

Forster was in charge of enlisting the artists for the fourth Christmas book, The Battle of Life, in 1846, which Dickens wrote in Switzerland and forwarded to Forster in London. Stanfield was, as always, willing to cooperate (even, this time, about the matter of being paid). If, in the course of doing their Battle illustrations, Maclise tried Forster's patience and Leech tried Dickens's tact, Stanfield inspired nothing but gratitude. His façade for 'The Nutmeg-Grater' inn where Warden reappears to solve the mystery of Marion's disappearance six years earlier, is suitably picturesque and visually reinforces the accompanying nostalgic verbal description (III, 353) (fig. 167). His companion landscapes, entitled 'War' (I, 287) and 'Peace' (I, 291), provide a salutary, if grim, perspective on the improbable love story. "It is a delight to look at these little landscapes of the dear old boy," Dickens confided to Forster. "How gentle and elegant, and yet how manly and vigorous they are! I have a perfect joy in them." Even when the book's poor critical reception helped put the rest of the illustrations in Dickens's bad graces, those by Stanfield escaped his censure. By the time The Haunted Man, deferred in 1847, was advertised for Christmas, 1848, Frank Stone and John Tenniel had replaced the disgruntled Maclise and Doyle, but Stanfield, like Leech, loyally continued as an illustrator. At a conference at the artist's house, Dickens gave the former seaman permission to execute 'The Lighthouse' as one of his two subjects. Despite the fact that it is not central to the narrative, the stormy seascape proved full of dramatic interest and motion—its curved sails, clouds, and waves contrasting with diagonals of foam, rock, and birds (I, 386) (fig. 168). Stanfield's versatility is evident in his second subject, 'The Exterior of the Old College,' whose spare lines, ordered white spaces, and stark atmosphere appropriately suggest the baleful influence of the protagonist Redlaw (II, 441). Moreover, when Leech found himself extremely pressed for time, Stanfield willingly took over and executed the concluding dinner scene in which, as the motto Lord Keep My Memory Green suggests, Redlaw finally accepts the mixed blessings of memory (III, 483). Still, despite the author's previous protests, the painter apparently could not be prevailed upon to accept payment; Dickens could only acknowledge Stanfield's selfless cooperation by presenting him with a pair of inscribed silver salvers. Throughout his work on the four Christmas books, Stanfield embodied the benevolent spirit Dickens hoped would "never be out of season in a Christian land" (CC, ix).
The religious basis of the painter's selfless spirit, however, probably inhibited him from illustrating Dickens's first European travel book, *Pictures from Italy*. In 1846 Bradbury and Evans planned to issue in expanded volume form, after their initial appearance in the *Daily News*, Dickens's "Travelling Letters," which, the *Athenaeum* observed, revealed "not so much Italy visited by Mr. Dickens as Mr. Dickens visited by Italy." The author asked Stanfield, who had traveled and painted throughout Italy and had illustrated other travel books, to provide the illustrations. The artist agreed to provide about a dozen landscape and architectural designs with small figures that his son George would transfer to wood blocks in time for the book's publication in May; perhaps mindful of Stanfield's continuing ill health since *The Cricket on the Hearth*, Dickens advised the publishers, who were to confirm the number and expense of the wood engravings, not to "overdo the Illustration."

When *Pictures from Italy* appeared, however, the illustrations were by Samuel Palmer, not by Clarkson Stanfield, whose deepening religious beliefs ultimately prevented him from contributing to it. As David Paroissien has pointed out, when the artist agreed in late February to undertake Dickens's commission, only five of the eight "Travelling Letters" had appeared, three of them about France; when he became a subscriber to the *Daily News* in early March and noted the increasing hostility toward the Roman Catholic church in the subsequent letters devoted to Italy, he must have felt compelled to dissociate himself from the forthcoming volume. Stanfield doubtless understood that the author of *Barnaby Rudge*, which was more anti-anarchy than anti-papist, was not attacking religious faith, devout individuals, or even church ritual, but rather their clerical abuses, which spawned what Dickens called "Catholicity" symptoms of poverty, disease, ignorance, and associated miseries throughout Ireland and parts of Switzerland as well as France and Italy. Indeed, a month after the publication of *Pictures from Italy*, the author began work on a version of the New Testament for his children (published in 1884 as *The Life of Our Lord*). But Stanfield was persuaded by other considerations of friendship and conscience. He was also friendly with the future Cardinal Wiseman, who was presently trying to restore the church hierarchy in England (and to whom Dickens refers in his introductory apologia to the *Pictures*) (PFI, 256). And he himself would shortly convert to Catholicism. Whether this step was precipitated by Dickens's book cannot be known but it was taken just five months after its publication. The artist understandably must have thought it improper to illustrate a work that would offend so many of his fellow believers as well as his own scruples. Accordingly, he notified Dickens of his withdrawal from this project.

"Of your decision (of course) I have not a word to say," replied the author, whose surprised pain rendered him unusually terse. "You are the best judge whether your Creed recognizes and includes, with men of sense, such things as I have shocked you by my mention of. I am sorry to learn that it does—and think the worse of it than I did."

This stressful interchange, however, failed to have any lasting negative repercussions on their relationship. Dickens soon began to tease Stanfield about his Papal looks, saints, and missals, while joking about his own and Forster's future conversion to Catholicism. Stanfield was delighted to
continue illustrating the ecumenical Christmas books, and
the friendship between the two men, firmly based on shared
interests and regard, continued unimpaired.

Dickens’s other travel book, *American Notes*, was origi­
nally published without illustrations, but for the 1850 edition
the publishers wanted a marine frontispiece. This was
morally neutral ground for Stanfield, and he was the natural
choice to supply it. Not only was Stanfield one of the
foremost marine painters of the time, he was familiar with
all the stages of Dickens’s journey to the New World in 1842.
He had helped to plan the farewell and homecoming dinners
at Greenwich; he was familiar with the contents of Dickens’s
letters to Forster and Frederick Dickens from America; he
had heard the author elaborate on his trip during their
hilarious Cornwall excursion with Forster and Maclise (and
presented him with a commemorative sketch of their ascent
of Logan Rock) (fig. 169); and he had reminisced about
specific events with Lord Musgrave, a fellow passenger.

For the frontispiece, Stanfield decided to portray the S.S.
Britannia, the packet ship that had taken Dickens to
America eight years before. The rickety vessel was the
heroine of the opening chapter of *American Notes*, which
Ralph Waldo Emerson described as “a very lively rattle of
that nuisance, a sea voyage, and a pretty fair example of the
historical truth of the whole book.”

As if to defy the
memory of its stormy transatlantic passage, and its ignomi­
 nous foundering on a Halifax mudbank, the artist showed
the ship serenely entering Boston harbor (AN, xvi) (fig. 170).

Stanfield’s execution of the frontispiece was not without
technical trials. First he made a watercolor of the ship and
wanted it reproduced in black and white by lithography—a
reproductive process involving stone that he thought better
than wood for this kind of subject; but, in contrast to their
French counterparts, English publishers—and many Eng­
ish illustrators, such as Hablot Browne—still regarded
lithography as a cheap copying process, not as an artistic
medium in its own right. Chapman and Hall, clearly
unaccustomed to such requests, forced the artist to yield to
their preference for familiar reproductive methods using
wood. Nevertheless, according to Dickens, who relayed the
artist’s subsequent complaint to the publishers, “Mr.
Stanfield wonders you didn’t send him a paving stone to
draw upon as soon as a block in this unprepared state.”

Whatever Stanfield’s opinion of the finished frontispiece, his
watercolor for it delighted Dickens; (indeed, his pleasure
must have obscured for both friends the fact that the former
seaman unaccountably placed an American flag on the
British ship’s mizzenmast). When the author forwarded it
to the publishers to have it copied as best they could, he

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Fig. 169. Clarkson Stanfield, ‘The Logan Rock, Cornwall,’
1842. Water and body color on buff paper. 10”
× 6¾” (25.4 × 17.5 cm). From the Forster Collection
(Department of Prints and Drawings), by permission of the
Victoria and Albert Museum.

Fig. 170. Clarkson Stanfield, ‘S.S. Britannia.’ *American
Notes* (London, 1850), frontispiece. Wood engraving after
watercolor drawing. 3¼” × 5¼” (8.3 × 13.4 cm). From the
Forster Collection (Library), by permission of the Victoria and
Albert Museum.
asked that it be kept "clean" and returned to him as a souvenir of his journey and as a specimen of the work of his friend, who, as so often, refused any compensation whatsoever.  

Stanfield apparently found serving his friends its own reward. None of Dickens's intimates worked harder on his amateur theatricals, and few relished all aspects of drama as much. He and Dickens were of one mind when it came to the stage. Indeed, their love of theater was such that it probably would have sufficed by itself to transcend all their other differences in age, religion, profession, and temperament. Both had always been invertebrate theatergoers from their earliest meetings, especially when their famous friend Macready was acting. While on the Continent in the mid-1840's, Dickens particularly missed seeing plays with Stanfield. "When I think of how you are walking up and down London in that portly surtout and can't receive proposals from Dick to go to the theatre, I fall into a state between laughing and crying," wrote the self-exile from Albaro. Although their mutual distress over the uninspired state of English drama of their day did not diminish their pleasure in theater parties, it did add an intellectual impetus to the primarily charitable justification for Dickens's benefit theatricals. 

In contrast to the author, the painter preferred to perform behind the scenes. Invited to play Downright in the opening production—Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour—Stanfield, like Maclise, became nervous and resigned the part which, after being rejected by Cruikshank and Cattermole, was played by writer Dudley Costello. He softened the effect of his defection, however, with his masterful supervision of the sets and their construction, as well as many of the other practical aspects of production, from moving to accounting. In these capacities, Stanfield felt completely comfortable. Although he had given up professional scene painting after his 1832 election to the Royal Academy, he still contributed backdrops—always highly praised—for Macready's performances on occasion. His frantic activity on behalf of Dickens's plays also diverted Stanfield from recurring depression, mainly due to pain from injuries from a fall during his Royal Navy days. Dickens could not help worrying, however, that the strenuous demands of the theatricals and illness might prevent the aging painter from assuming these responsibilities in future performances of his troupe, for indeed he considered Stanfield indispensable. 

In one sense, Dickens need not have worried. Stanfield was reliable to the point of self-sacrifice. When, to benefit the Guild of Literature and Art, a group to aid needy artists which both men had helped to found, the company took Bulwer-Lytton's Not So Bad as We Seem on tour in 1851, Stanfield ingeniously executed Dickens's design for a portable stage. The sets, which could be set up or dismantled quickly in any large room without touching walls or ceiling, enabled the company to use concert halls and private salons instead of hiring expensive theaters. For performances of Wilkie Collins's The Lighthouse in 1855 in the tiny theater at Tavistock House, Stanfield roused himself from a despondent convalescence to paint not only the essential miniature interior flats but, as Dickens wished, a masterful act drop showing the Eddystone lighthouse, which he then presented to the author. Although illness the following year did prevent the painter from executing the sets for the first act of Collins's next melodrama, The Frozen Deep, he nevertheless insisted not only on supervising those for the remaining two acts, but worked on them himself. Despite his ailments, a leak that streaked one of his completed scenes, and his degenerating relations with the playwright, he went on working, standing on a plank fixed between two ladders. "Day after day, and night after night," marveled Dickens over a decade later, "there were the same unquenchable freshness, enthusiasm, and impressibility in him, though broken in health, even then" (CP, 2: 46). 

Although George Bernard Shaw later deemed Stanfield a mere "scene painter who appealed to that English love of landscape which is so often confused with a love of art," Dickens shared Thackeray's regret that Stanfield's beautiful sets were constructed of such frail materials. After the amateur company disbanded in 1857, Dickens ingeniously cut down and hung the painter's drop scenes for both Collins's plays in the former schoolroom theater at Tavistock House. When he moved to Kent in 1859, he had them carefully stored in Chapman and Hall's warehouse until they could be framed in imported French glass and rehung near the entrance hall of Gad's Hill. "To believe them to have been the amusement of a few mornings was difficult indeed," observed Forster, for "seen from the due distance, there was nothing wanting to the most masterly and elaborate art." 

This project was not Dickens's only manifestation of regard for Stanfield. While the painter labored on the Collins sets in 1855–56, Dickens was working on Little Dorrit. He decided to dedicate this novel to Stanfield (LD, vii), who could hardly refuse this expression of gratitude, and sent him the proofs so he would know the ending before any other reader. Recalling the artist's unsparing and freely donated efforts on the Christmas books and on the frontispiece for American Notes, as well as on the theatri-
cals, Dickens understandably found it hard to convey to Stanfield the extent of “the pleasure it has been to me to put your name on the opening page, or to leave behind us both (as I hope its being there, may), a little record important that we loved one another.”

Dickens’s public declaration of his gratitude to Stanfield proved timely. By the time Stanfield received his splendidly bound copy of *Little Dorrit* in 1857, he was no longer able to lend a hand to any of Dickens’s ventures. Despite his robust appearance, the painter gradually became a chronic invalid, bedridden for longer and longer periods of time. Increasingly, Dickens’s domestic upheavals and public readings after 1859 kept him away from London and Stanfield.

Their relationship was more seriously disturbed, however, by Dickens’s estrangement from their mutual friend, Mark Lemon, the editor of *Punch*. As a man of taste, as well as Mrs. Dickens’s first representative in the negotiations with Forster about the separation from her husband, Lemon refused to reprint in his comic magazine the author’s account of his marital problems, which had appeared in *Household Words* and other newspapers. Despite his long affectionate relationship with Lemon, the author considered his refusal, perhaps insisted on by their mutual publishers, Bradbury and Evans, the treacherous act of a false friend. Stanfield was dismayed at the rift, though Dickens, in bedside visits and letters, tried to assure him that nothing could alienate him from the artist.

After Stanfield died on May 18, 1867 Dickens hastened to honor one of his last requests, by publicly reconciling with Lemon at the graveside. He also assisted the artist’s bereaved family and delayed printing the June number of his new magazine, *All the Year Round*, in order to insert a tribute to “The Late Mr. Stanfield”—“the most genial, the most affectionate, most loving, and the most lovable of men” (*CP*, 2: 47).