

BURTON'S
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AND
AMERICAN MONTHLY REVIEW.

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SOME ACCOUNT OF GEORGE CRUIKSHANK,
THE CELEBRATED HUMORIST,

WITH FIVE OF HIS DESIGNS SELECTED FROM HIS WORKS.

EVERY one of our readers has, at some period of his life, laughed over the productions of George Cruikshank's burin. His inimitable genius has made itself known in the vastness of this western world; the popular novelists owe half their reputation to his powerful illustrations; the print store windows are surrounded by crowds who gaze with joyous eye upon his portrayed whimsicalities; the connoisseur places his "Sketches" on the same shelf with Hogarth; and Bunbury, Gilray, Rowlandson, Heath, and H. B. confess his superiority in the art of caricature.

It is strange that we cannot furnish a solitary specimen of capability of humorous design in the long and lustrous list of American artists. We enjoy caricature, and revel in the rich fun of the English sketches which command a rapid sale in every part of the Union. We are essentially a laughter-loving nation; the jocund peals of mirth that greet the performances of every talented comedian evince our keen and ready perception of the ludicrous; puns are prevalent in private life; our daily papers teem with facetis, and American Broad Grins are staple articles with our transatlantic friends. We can adduce the world's approval of our painters, but yet we are unable to exhibit a comic sketch of American manufacture, of tolerable pretensions to eachinatory excitement. Johnston, of Boston, may be subpoenaed against us—but with all due respect to the learned counsel on the other side, we opine that the witness has not disturbed our evidence. Johnston has merit, but we have never been able to discern his humor. His "Sketches" are all alike—his fat old men and vulgar women are eternally the same, in figure, face, dress, and deportment—his niggers are from one stock of ebony—his loafers are reduplicates—and his boys are truants from the same school *uzque ad nauseam*. Then, again, let us look at the miserable lithographic caricatures which the persistent enterprise of a New York publisher inflicts upon the town. We admire his indomitable spirit, and ardently wish him better implements of mirth-compelling power—but are fain to confess that the fun of his folios is as hard as the stone whence they are printed. And yet these lithoglyphs are in demand; these indurated funniments—these pensive pleasantrics—these case-hardened comicalities—*self!*

We have before us a caricature by George Cruikshank dated 1818, representing "An Interesting Scene on board an East Indiaman, showing the effects of a Heavy Lurch." We have laughed at this glorious print some hundred times, and it yet possesses power to wrinkle our countenance. But it is not in caricature that our inimitable artist displays the sovereignty of his skill; his designs for the various illustrated works which have lately been so popular with all classes of readers, have stamped his genius with the sterling mark. Whilst his industry enables him to furnish countless plates for the numerous books on which his well-appreciated talent has bestowed an enviable popularity, his extensive genius empowers him to give a distinct individuality to every creation of his pencil—he never repeats himself. In the illustrations to *Oliver Twist*, we know at one glance the names of the persons depicted, manage their change of dress, or difference of expression recorded in their countenances. The orphan Oliver is as finely given in Cruikshank's pictures as in Dickens' pages; and

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although we believe that Box is the best living depicter of man and manners with the pen, we must claim for our friend George the same proud pre-eminence with the pencil. He is indisputably the Hogarth of the age, and his fame will not suffer in a keen comparison with the author of *The Rake's Progress* and *Marriage à la Mode*.

When Pierre Egan perpetrated his book, "*Life in London, or The Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jerry Hawthorn, and Bob Logic,*" George Cruikshank was engaged by the publishers, Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, to furnish a series of plates illustrative of the various scenes of "*Life*" in the great metropolis. The plates were the sole cause of the exceeding popularity of the work; for when Moncrieff, the celebrated play wright, undertook to make a drama from the subject, he was compelled to throw aside the rapid dialogue of Egan, and actually wrote his play from Cruikshank's spirited designs. The success of this piece is unprecedented in the history of the drama—it was played at one theatre every night for an entire twelvemonth; all the minor theatres produced an imitation *Life in London*; the patent theatres suffered their royal boards to be disgraced by the evolutions of Tom and Jerry; and the provincials existed for several years upon the reputation and profits extracted from their representation of the heroes of Almacks and the blackguards of the Fives Court.

Cruikshank was next employed upon a work called "*Life in Paris*;" and to appreciate the peculiarities of the *doisants*, George resided for some time in the French metropolis—but the public was becoming sated with the varieties of "*Life*" which the success of "*Tom and Jerry*" had forced upon the town, and "*Life in Paris*," although a work of superior merit, did not meet with proper encouragement.

When Hone, the political bookseller, published his "*House that Jack Built*," several hundred thousand copies were sold in a few weeks. The public mind was considerably agitated by the trial of the Queen of the Realm at the bar of the House of Lords, an event unprecedented in the history of the country, and the nation was divided into two distinct cliques—the believers in the lady's profigacy, and the madheaded asserters of her innocence. Party spirit raged high, and the war of words became furious; but in England, a good joke is relished on all sides; a Tory will laugh heartily at a biting caricature upon his own faction; and a Whig will grin with delight at the crucifixion of himself and his colleagues. Hone knew this; and summoning Cruikshank to his aid, he concocted several political *jeu-d'esprits*, principally directed against George the Fourth and his abandoned court, but containing many severe slaps at all parties. The success of his publications has been stated; but we must assert that Cruikshank's pictures, for they were no less, were the chief cause of the popularity of the pamphlets. We have one of his designs before us now—a representation of George the Fourth, king of England, the Defender of the Faith, etc., etc. His majesty has been indulging in a debauch; he is represented in the last stage of maudlin intoxication; his left arm leans over the chair's back, and his right hand grasps a broken wine glass. Drunken stupidity is inconceivably well depicted upon the countenance of this "most finished gentleman in Europe," as the Tories loved to call him; the royal wig is awry, the vest unbuttoned, and the loosened "Garter" hangs from his majesty's knee. A group of empty wine bottles may be seen under the chair—the candles flare up with a blaze that tells the incapacity of the monarch to snuff them, or to ring the bell for the attendance of his valet. A richly decorated screen forms the back portion of this excellent caricature; the screen is figured with appropriate devices of Bacchus and Ariadne, Dancing Satyrs, etc. A lady's bonnet hangs upon the corner of the screen; and the floor is spotted with cards and dice, telling too plainly how his majesty's hours have been passed. This picture is perfect; it is a severe exposition of the vices of George the Fourth, and had more effect upon the minds of the multitude than a six hours' oration by Hunt, the Spa-Field's demagogor, and hero of the massacre at Manchester.

George Cruikshank shortly afterwards published a series of works upon his own account, "*Illustrations of Time*," whence we have selected two of our accompanying designs; and "*Scrap and Sketches*," were among the best of these publications.

One of the "*Scrap*" was exquisitely funny, and deserves a passing notice. A steam coach was seen progressing down a hill on one of the great roads in England. Some three or four stage boxes, easily recognised by their chafed sides and docked tails, were seen on the brow of a road-side hill gazing at the new invention with looks of fright and horror. One fellow, with his mane standing "on end," thus soliloquises—"Well, I'm damned! a stage going at that rate, and without horses! aye, aye, it's all up with us!" Another piad, with a knowing look, observes, "I thought this invention of steam would bring us into hot water—nothing now remains for our masters to do but to boil us down for dogmeat." But an old gray horse, blind and lame from excessive age, hangs his head over a gate, and quietly observes, "What! a coach go without horses! no, no, youngsters, you mus'n't tell me that—I've lived too long in the world to be so easily deceived."

His exemplifications of the subjects in a volume of rare worth, called "*Points of Honor*," are among the best of his productions—one of the designs, we remember, engaged the attention of an American painter of high repute; he pronounced it an imitable creation, and we accorded our assent. A poor devil of a hypochondriac is represented sitting upright in his bed, gazing with a melancholy eye into the void of his half-furnished garret, and peeping the space with the beings of his imagination. The fairy-like creatures swarm around his truckle bed; and we perceive, by the

shapes his fears have formed, the depth of his poverty and his despair. A natty bailiff has stepped on to the edge of the truckle bed, and exhibiting a tailor's bill of diseaf length, taps the unhappy wretch on the shoulder, while another "bum" or follower, waits at the bedside to repeat the dose if necessary. A parish beadle, burly as the veritable Bumble, stands at the foot of the bedstead, and holds forth a warrant for bastardy—two interesting ladies who are "as women wish to be who love their lords," with a host of little responsibilities, stand weeping by the beadle's side. A heavy load of bad debts and unpaid bills are being nailed to the poor wretch's shoulder by a blue devil of active look; a forged ten pound note hangs from the watch pocket on the bed back. It is impossible to describe the expressive stare of the unhappy hypochondriac—

So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,

as he sits with clasped hands in agony supreme. A malignant looking scoundrel of a flying imp offers him a pistol and a razor, as the means of escape from the contemplated ill; a jumping, grinning skeleton begs leave to propose a hangman's noose which he has just suspended from the rafters; and death, in the extreme corner of the room, holds up his hourglass to show that the sand of life is run, and waves his dart in threatening readiness. By a curious arrangement, peculiar to the *deceptiveus* of the mind's eye, a fat and punchy tax collector is seen knocking at the house door, with a long list of unpaid rates in his brawny hand.

Lockhart, then connected with Blackwood's Magazine, devoted several pages to a notice of Cruikshank's great merit in the conception of these designs.

Our artist then devoted much of his time to the new trade of illustrating both old and new publications. A person named White had attracted some attention by the rich humor of his style as exhibited in the police reports of the Morning Chronicle newspaper. He gathered several of his best articles together, and published them in a volume entitled "Mornings at Bow Street;" and having very wisely secured Cruikshank's aid, the book sold so well, that a second volume was called for, and shortly produced.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the works which have received assistance from our hero's prolific graver. "Roscoe's Novelists," Hood's Poem of "The Ephiny Hunt," a volume of Italian Tales, a curious little affair called "Punch and Judy," well worthy a place in a book-lover's collection, "Peter Schlemil, or the Man without a Shadow," "German Stories," "Johnny Gilpin," "Hans of Iceland," "Tom Thumb," "Tales of Irish Life," The Lancashire tale of "Tim Bobbin," "Greenwich Hospital," by the Old Sailor; and also, a work of singular merit, called "Three Courses and a Dessert," by William Clarke, an author of exceeding worth, while editor of the Monthly Magazine, concocter of "The Cigar," a small periodical of much originality, and the author of "The Georgian Era." Cruikshank's Illustrations of the various points in the tales given in the "Three Courses and a Dessert" would alone be sufficient to render his name immortal.

Like many other delineators of the ludicrous, Cruikshank imagines that he excels in serious display. Comedians, generally, fancy themselves better performers of tragedy than the popular representatives of the dignified portion of the drama, and our friend George is satisfied that he shines best in gloomy subjects and melancholy plots. He has certainly given evidence of his ability in every department of design; in his plates illustrating *Oliver Twist* there are several of deep interest. Nothing can be more painfully affecting than the view of Fagin the Jew in the condemned cell, on the night previous to his execution. There is no extraneous matter introduced into the picture—the felon sits alone in withering retrospection of his almost ended life. The iron has entered his soul, and the lineaments of his face display the hellish depths of his despair. Dickens has told the tale in unapproachable beauty; we looked upon his delineation of the Jew's suffering as a perfect specimen of simple but effective composition; we laid down the book, and paused to dwell upon the picture which the masterly hand of the writer had placed before us—and yet, when we renewed our reading, and turning over a page, came to Cruikshank's illustration of the author's design, we were compelled to confess the superiority of the pictorial effect. Bos, the greatest pen and ink artist of the age, has never been effectively illustrated but by Cruikshank; while Cruikshank has given immortality to the insane effusions of dunces and fools.

Cruikshank is great in all matters, and bestows a degree of attention on all minor and minute effects till he produces a wondrous whole. Take one of his mobs and carefully look at the petite faces of the crowd, scarcely bigger than pins' heads—there is a different countenance to every head, and yet each face is in keeping with the character of the individual represented. The smallest of his designs will bear as much "moralizing" as any of Hogarth's pictures; neither of the artists ever drew an unnecessary line, or placed the minutest article in view without a specific motive illustrative of some portion of the subject. He has for the last half dozen years bestowed his talents upon a series of plates for the London Comic Almanac, a work of considerable humor; he has executed some things for this publication that deserve a specific notice—but were we to remember all his doings, and award proportionate praise to their excellence, we should occupy the whole of our month's number, and then leave the task undone.

We have not done Cruikshank the fullest justice in the nature of our selection from his designs; but we were unable to find superior vignettes of sufficient smallness to fill the allotted space. We know of hundreds of his designs that would have suited our purpose admirably, but unfortunately

could not obtain copies of them in time. Nevertheless, we heartily recommend the accompanying etchings to the notice of our readers, and request leave to say a word or two in illustration of their meanings and deserts.

The first subject, the head of the old gentleman in the corner, is selected from a tail piece in the "Three Courses." Caddy Coddle, an eccentric country squire, loses his spectacles, and borrowing a pair, tries their power by reading a ghost book after he gets into bed, at a strange house, in a room hung round with figured arras and spectre-like pictures in antique frames. He falls asleep and dreams of dreadful things; he wakes up—the moon illumines the chamber, and opening his eyes to assure himself that he is not among the strange beings of whom he had been dreaming, he beholds an imp, more grotesque and horrible than any that had visited his night's slumbers, perched upon his nose, threatening it with whip and galling it with spur. This nose-night-mare annoys him for some time with its infernal jockeyship, till the imp-ridden wretch summons his courage to the sticking place, and makes a clutch at the impudent little fiend. To his surprise and joy, he finds the devil is nothing more than the strange spectacles which he had left upon his nose when he dropped asleep—and by tossing to and fro in his dreams, he had twisted them till they had assumed a position and form calculated in the obscure moonlight to frighten a person of stronger mind than Caddy Coddle.

The next subject is from the same publication. Bat Boroo, a harmless little creature, is represented in as pleasant "a fix" as any little gentleman need desire to be. An infuriated bull, from whom he has just escaped after a severe run, is on one side—a brace of promising bull dogs, trained to fly at all intruders, on the other—a *chevaux-de-frise* beneath—deep water in front—and a row of "undeniable iron spikes behind, flanked by a bristling wall and a park full of steel traps and spring guns. Leaving this gentleman in the full enjoyment of his comfortable post, we come to the centre etching, which is one of Cruikshank's "Illustrations of Time," and is entitled "Time Badly Spent." The liggers of London city have turned out to view the ascension of a balloon, and the results of this waste of time are forcibly illustrated by the satirist. The breaking-down of the scaffold on the right will give serious reasons for remembrance to many of the idlers who had trusted to its strength—the position of "the great unmoved" upon the pole is ludicrous in the extreme. The milk maid, a character peculiar to the streets of London, pays the penalty of time mis-spent in losing the contents of her milk pail, which a couple of rascally urchins are stealing with impunity. Near the centre, others of metropolitan habit, a fireman, waterman, (hackney boatman on the Thames and registered fireman,) and a dustman or remover of coal ashes, are mis-spending their time in settling-on two diversives to box, in imitation of "the Fancy" which at the date of publication, was the fashionable rage. Two other hopeful sprigs, real St. Giles's kiddies, are tying a tin kettle to a poor dog's tail, who passively awaits the painful results of time badly spent. In this plate, Cruikshank seems determined to exhibit the wickedness of London boys; in the extreme left corner, a lad is seen peering the pocket of an unconscious spectator, while an experienced "fence," or receiver of stolen goods, is looking out for squalls in the shape of police officers: in the other corner, a precocious lad is "gaffing" or tossing pence for pies. The motley crowd of a huge city is well represented in this plate; on the right of the centre the head of a horse soldier is seen above the medium of the mob—a good instance of Cruikshank's observation, for every member of those fancy regiments of England, the Life Guards, are composed of men above six feet in height. The tops of the houses are covered with idle spectators, and the chimneys groan with leaders who rejoice in any cause of holiday.

In the left corner of the bottom row is an exemplification of "Time Lost." Diogenes, with a lantern, is continuing his search for an honest man among the *delinquents* of a London jail. What a variety of villainy is presented in the faces of the four jail birds who advance to know "not the gentleman wants!" The murderer, the house-breaker, the plunderer on the highway, and the low sneakman wants! The murderer, the house-breaker, the plunderer on the highway, and the low sneakman wants! The murderer, the house-breaker, the plunderer on the highway, and the low sneakman wants! The murderer, the house-breaker, the plunderer on the highway, and the low sneakman wants! The murderer, the house-breaker, the plunderer on the highway, and the low sneakman wants!

The remainder subject presents correct likenesses of Mr. Home, the compiler of the Every Day Book, and of the veritable George Cruikshank himself. He is, of course, the youngest of the two, sitting on the right hand side. George is rather a good-looking man, and the portrait is undoubtedly like him, for it was drawn by himself, but when we saw him last, he sported a magnificent pair of moustaches, with a terrific imperial, and pretty whiskers to match.

George Cruikshank's father was a native of Edinburg, and was originally apprenticed to a sign-painter, plumber, and glazier; from this unfitting employment he ran away, and accompanied a friend to London. His friend promised largely while in Scotland, but in England he insulted

Cruikshank by proposing that he should become his lacquey. Without a shilling, without even a pencil, the young man threw himself upon the world; he entered an engraver's shop, and requested employment. A plate was given him to copy, when to the engraver's surprise the young applicant was fain to borrow not only the tools but the copper, and the use of a work-bench. The tradesman was good-natured, and the young engraver proved his talents, and obtained the fullest employment.

In London, the elder Cruikshank soon obtained a wife; J. R., or as he always writes his name now, Robert Cruikshank, was the eldest child, and our hero, George, the second. Robert studied at the Academy, and became known as a miniature painter of some merit. George studied but little, but wishing to enter the Academy, made a picture from the antique, and presented it to the notice of the celebrated Fuseli, who gave the youngster permission to join the Academicians, but told him that he would have to fight hard for a seat. George was disgusted, and never made another attempt. He returned home, and devoted his attention to the portrayal of life itself, in sketches, caricatures, etc. His father, pleased with the execution of one of his subjects, offered it to a publisher, who gave it to the world, and established George Cruikshank as an acknowledged humorist and dealer in satirical pictorials. At the father's death, the elder son, Robert, joined our friend George in the fabrication of political caricatures, and the brothers drove an eminent trade for several years. At present, they are not on the best terms—nay, we regret to say that they have been in violent opposition to each other for many years. The talents of the elder brother are in every way inferior.

George Cruikshank is a married man, but we know not whether he has any family. He is a sociable, agreeable friend, but not very brilliant in conversation. He is moderate in his habits, but he likes a bottle with a friend, and enjoys a good story and a merry joke—although we must confess that we never knew him to bring his share of such things to the general feast. It is strange that a fellow overflowing with genuine wit and humor on paper, should, in company, "sit like his grandpère, cut in slabaster." How many excellent jokes has he perpetrated! how many thousands of persons has he made to roar with laughter! and yet he was never heard to utter a respectable witticism in his life!

H.

THE CRY OF DEATH.

BY CATHERINE H. WATERMAN.

"I come, I come,"

And a maiden sat in her summer bowers,
In the changeful gleam of the twilight hour,
And joy was in her home.

Afar, afar,

From her happy cot, 'mid the clustering vines,
Where the pale moonbeam in silver shines,
She gazed on each bright star.

A gentle prayer

On the low night wind as it murmur'd by,
Like the sound of some passing spirit's sigh,
She whisper'd softly there.

An icy breath,

A hurrying wing, as of speedy flight,
A darkness shrouding a sunny light,
And the maiden sleeps in death.

"I come, I come,"

And a child with eyes like the sky's own blue,
Sat playing amid the flowers, and dew,
And peace was in his home.

Loudly, and wild,

A burst of joy thro' the calm air thrills,

And echo'd by mountains, vales, and hills;
'Twas the laughter of a child.

Silent, and hush'd,

The air blows chill, and the flowers depart,
And the stream grows still at the child's glad heart
And death the blossoms crush'd.

"I come, I come,"

And a worn old man with his locks of gray,
On a bed-rid couch at morning lay,
And quiet fill'd his home.

He dream'd of joy;

And the sunny light of his childhood's track
To his fading vision came brightly back,
And he dream'd he was a boy.

His eye grew dim,

And a sudden shuddering o'er him crept,
A gentle sigh—and the old man slept,
For death had shrouded him.

"I come, I come,"

It came like the blast of the dread simoom,
A trumpet tone from the hiding tomb,
And a sadness fill'd each home.