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*Th: Nast.*

Lincoln's  
"best recruiting sergeant," &  
"Destroyer of Tammany"

ROBERT BERKELMAN

*Thomas Nast, Crusader and Satirist*

In September 1864, *Harper's Weekly* published the most potent political cartoon that had yet been produced in this hemisphere. It still stands, also, as one of the sharpest attacks ever made upon appeasement. Sarcastically Thomas Nast dedicated it to the Democratic National Convention, for recently it had confessed failure to restore the Union by means of war, had demanded immediate cessation of fighting, and had nominated General George McClellan, who resigned from the army to run against Lincoln.

The drawing, "Compromise with the South," presented Jeff Davis, dressed in a resplendent Confederate uniform and equipped with a whiplash, standing exultantly with one boot resting on a grave and shaking hands with a crippled, bedraggled Union soldier whose bared head was bowed submissively. The tombstone was inscribed, "In Memory of the Union Heroes who fell in a Useless War." At the foot of it Columbia knelt in grief and shame. In the background, among burning homes, a Negro family bowed, still in chains. In one corner the United States flag, listing many memorable victories, flew upside down. In the opposite corner flew the Confederate banner, marked with "Slavery" and "Treason."

The reaction was explosive. So many thousands of soldiers and civilians throughout the North demanded copies that the edition had to be greatly increased. Ultimately the millions of reprints played a crucial role not only in the re-election of Lincoln (hitherto doubtful) but in the final fulfillment of the Union cause.

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Its success, of course, turned the spotlight on the artist—Thomas Nast, barely twenty-four years old. As though in mockery, this stocky young man strongly resembled the McClellan whom his drawing had helped to defeat—swept-back, dark hair, black mustache and pointed chin whisker, and dark, bold eyes. When General Grant, later, was asked to pick the man who had been the most important civilian during the war, he was reported as saying, “I think, Thomas Nast. He did as much as any one man to preserve the Union and bring the war to an end.” Lincoln reputedly rated him “our best recruiting sergeant.” Yet today we remember many of the generals and quite forget the cartoonist, if we ever happen to hear about him.

The son of a trombonist in a Bavarian military band, Tom Nast had come to New York in 1846 as a youngster about to begin school. There, handicapped by his fumbling English, he won attention with scores of crayon drawings. With his father, now a musician in a Manhattan theater, he saw Lester Wallack, the Boucicaults, and Charlotte Cushman; and at Castle Garden he heard Jenny Lind, the “Swedish Nightingale.” But drawing continued to absorb most of his time. Often he was up at dawn to practice. While still in his teens he won a position on the art staff of *Leslie's Weekly*. It paid only four dollars a week, when it paid at all, but it acquainted him with Sol Eytinge, afterwards known for his humorous sketches of Negroes; with Frank Bellew, to become a rival cartoonist; and with such writers as Richard Henry Stoddard and the ill-fated Fitz-James O'Brien. His phenomenal industriousness gained the attention of Mr. Leslie, and it was that editor's crusade for clean milk that gave young Nast his first glimpse into dirty government.

In the meantime Nast submitted to *Harper's Weekly* a set of drawings lampooning police scandals, significantly Nast's first work for the magazine with which he was to win fame.

After covering John Brown's funeral, Nast was sent to England by the *New York Illustrated News*, there to make his Thackeraylike sketches of the Homeric fight between the English champion Tom Sayers and the Californian John Heenan. From this fight of fists, staked by big-hearted Heenan, Nast voyaged directly to a fight for national liberation. Giuseppe Garibaldi, recently a candlemaker on Staten Island, had returned to his native land to unite it in freedom from Austria. In Palermo, Sicily, Nast shook hands with the Italian Washington, donned the red shirt of his party (which Garibaldi told him had been suggested by the uniform of the Manhattan firemen), and was so im-

pressed that he hero-worshiped the man the rest of his life. From a hilltop at Capua he was witnessing the commander's dramatic rallying of troops when shells landed impolitely among the spectators and suddenly the red paint of costume opera changed to real blood. After Victor Emmanuel had finally been assured a united Italy, the Liberator obligingly sat to Nast for a portrait.

Returning to New York in time to meet Lincoln, the young reporter was asked to follow the newly elected president to the inaugural. Nast drew him speaking from a hotel balcony in Philadelphia and changing trains at Baltimore. In Washington he stayed at Lincoln's hotel, experienced the fateful tension of the capital, and heard the inaugural plea for brotherly understanding. But the wanderer who had come so recently from participating in the unification of Italy was destined to witness the disunity of his adopted land. Soon hundreds of bitter attacks were launched upon the President, many of them by Northern cartoonists. Nast, however, supported Lincoln's policies and never caricatured him maliciously. Long before it was fashionable to do so, he recognized greatness in the gawky man from the West.

In 1862 Nast became a regular worker for *Harper's Weekly*, a relationship which was to last twenty-four years and was to make magazine and artist interdependently famous. The *Weekly* had been founded only five years earlier, designed to report the news and to present the political discussion which the allied *Harper's New Monthly* purposely omitted. The impetus of the war and the vigorous leadership of Fletcher Harper had already raised the circulation to 120,000, remarkably high for the divided population of those war days. With Nast's drawings it soon became the leading illustrated paper in the country.

Historical perspective makes clear that Nast could also be dead wrong. His attacks upon President Andrew Johnson were the pictorial equivalent of impeachment, and more ingenious than wise. Young Nast failed utterly to see that Johnson was sincerely trying to carry out the conviction of the very President whom Nast respected, and allowed himself, instead, to be swayed by the vindictive malice of such Radical Republicans as Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner. The worst that can be said of his cartoons of the later sixties is that they were prompted more by cheap gossip against Johnson than by maturely balanced judgment. The best that can be said for them is that they gave warning of his potentialities in political caricature. On President Johnson he sharpened the axe that he was about to wield against Boss Tweed and his accomplices.



“Andrew Johnson’s Reconstruction” (1866), representing the President as a villainous Iago misleading a Negro soldier, was Nast’s first attack upon a national figure. His most ambitious assault was the double-page “Amphitheatrum Johnsonianum” (1867). It portrayed the President as Nero, attended by humorously recognizable advisers, all in Roman panoply and smiling down indulgently upon the massacre of Negroes in the race riots of New Orleans. Simpler but meaner was an 1867 picture of Johnson, in crown and ermine, capering with joy over his single-vote margin in the impeachment trial. From his waist dangles a pair of scissors, emblematic of his tailor’s background; and he flourishes aloft a bottle that turned his untimely lapse from sobriety into a symbol of habitual drunkenness. It took two generations to correct the false impressions about Johnson that these cartoons helped to create.

By 1868, in New York City, the voters of foreign birth—thanks to extremely lax naturalization—totaled more than half the electorate. Most of them were easily hoodwinked by William Tweed, chief of Tammany Hall. In the fraudulent election of that year he and his cronies were able to gain a stranglehold. He dictated all nominations. His police and judges manipulated the laws. Most of the newspapers were bribed or intimidated into silence. Soon the Boss bought five Republican Senators and captured control of both city and state. Purveyors of supplies were obliged to pay 35 per cent tribute. Profits came in like a tide.

The Ring was a well-balanced crew of pirates. Tweed himself was a six-foot giant, weighing nearly three hundred pounds, yet quick of foot and energetic. He had the tight mouth, jutting nose, and piercing eyes of the fighter, but upon occasion he could summon up the hail-fellow

voice and the patting hand. When Nast was an immigrant boy in lower Manhattan, Tweed, only a few blocks away, headed a fire-engine company. Soon, however, he discovered that politicians can climb faster than firemen. In quick succession he became Alderman (one of "The Forty Thieves"), Congressman, School Commissioner of New York, member of the Board of Supervisors, and State Senator. For political services "Jubilee Jim" Fisk and Jay Gould made him a director of the notorious Erie Railroad. In 1870 he owned a sumptuous mansion on Fifth Avenue. His horses were stabled in mahogany. Relatives were strategically placed and handsomely rewarded. Political cake cast upon the waters usually came back. His daughter's wedding was blessed with gifts amounting to \$100,000; her gown cost \$4000. At Christmas, Tweed played Robin Hood and gave \$50,000 to the poor.

Peter Sweeny, lawyer and President of the Parks Commission, was called "Brains," though he hardly looked the part, for his forehead was low under bushy hair, and he appeared cold and sullenly stupid. The City Controller, Richard ("Slippery Dick") Connolly, seemed quite the opposite. His smooth-shaven respectability made him look intellectual, though he was nothing but an ignorant bookkeeper, just shrewd enough to juggle figures.

The pirate ship had two figureheads—A. Oakey Hall and John T. Hoffman. Hall, a debonair clubman, was Tammany's Mayor of New York. Nast dubbed him "O.K. Haul" and identified him with glittering, nose-pinching glasses that gave him a perpetually worried look. Hoffman was Tammany's Governor of New York and its rumored nominee for next president.

Other periods and countless other cities have had their legalized robbers, but these men constituted perhaps the most brazenly powerful clique of hijackers on record. In honor of the Boss, once a chairmaker himself, they had the city buy enough chairs to extend seventeen miles. On paper they purchased \$7,500 worth of thermometers. A single item of stationery came to \$186,495.61. Their devices were many and devious but the erection of a courthouse handed them the juiciest pie ever cut. Plasterer A. J. Garvey theoretically received \$50,000 a day for a whole month. His total income on the job (of course the Ring intercepted the actual money) was \$2,870,464.06! In a cartoon sarcastically picking "President" Hoffman's Cabinet, Nast was to name Andrew Jackson Garvey as Secretary of the Interior—"all kinds of plaster put on thick."

For months the Ring succeeded in keeping its villainy secret. Nobody had evidence sufficient to convict. Nast, however, made daring

sallies against them when only one other publication, the heroic *Times*, had the courage to speak out. Elderly Editor William Cullen Bryant, of the *Evening Post*, was busy translating Homer. Nast's first cartoon including the whole Ring appeared in the Christmas number of 1869, opening his crusade with a loud trumpet blast. It was called "The Economical Council, Albany, N. Y." Its title purposely sideswiped the Catholic Ecumenical Council then meeting in Rome, for Nast suspected a growing alliance between Tammany and Catholicism. The drawing presented "Bishops" Tweed, O. K. Haul, and Erie opening chests of loot before "Cardinal" Sweeny and "Pope Hoffman I." A legend on the wall chanted, "I am infallible Pius Hoffman, You are infallible Cardinal Sweeny, We are infallible Tammany Ring."



Throughout 1870, Nast maintained a buckshot fire of accusations. Early in 1871, soon after Tweed's Christmas charity, he drew blood with "Tweedledee and Sweedledum," showing a furtive Sweeny taking money from the Public Treasury and passing it to Tweed, pictured with his \$15,000 diamond sparkling on his huge paunch. Tweed, in turn, gives some of the plunder to the poor, saying to his confederate, "Let's blind them with this, and then take some more." When the Boss saw the drawing he was not amused. "That's the last straw! I'll show them damned publishers a new trick!" He threw out all the school textbooks supplied by the Harpers, and had them replaced by books from a Tammany publisher.

This was a really damaging blow. Most of the Harper directors wished to retreat at once, but Fletcher Harper supported Nast. Thus encouraged, he launched another torpedo, "The New Board of Education" (May 13, 1871). In it Sweeny tosses Harper books out the window;



Tweed installs such texts as "Tweeny's History of the U.S.A." and "Sweed's Honest Government": while Teacher O.K. writes on the board, "Sweed is an honest Man" and "Tweeny is an Angel."

The cartoon evoked more laughter than action. A public meeting protested giving Tammany more power, but Tweed insolently asked, "What are you going to do about it?" and laid plans for controlling Washington.

In the meantime an ill wind suddenly blew up a great deal of good. The County Auditor was killed in a sleighing accident, and the Ring's account books went astray. Soon the *Times* began publishing choice bits from the Tammany accounts which a disgruntled bookkeeper turned over. Perspiring Connolly offered the owner, George Jones, \$5,000,000 to go away and forget it all, but he declined.

Nast packed the situation into a nutshell. The cartoon (August 19, 1871) depicted men standing in a ring, some frightened and some playing innocent. The question has been asked, "Who stole the money?" They all answer, "'Twas him." Hall points to Connolly, who points to Sweeny, to Tweed, to Chairs, Plasterer, Gas Pipes, Awnings, and so on, round and round the vicious circle.

The drawing drew blood. "Let's stop them damned pictures," snarled Tweed. "I don't care so much what the papers write about me—my constituents can't read; but, damn it, they can see pictures!" Nast was changing the public's indulgent amusement to contempt and fury. Probably no other political cartoonist has ever matched this sustained molding of public opinion.

Threatening letters came to him, one of them sketching him in a noose. Toughs loitered about his home in Harlem. A friendly police captain guarded him until he moved his family over to Morristown, New Jersey, for a change of air. A Tammany banker offered to send him to Europe to study art. After working the temptation up to a half million in gold, Nast assured his visitor, "Well, I don't think I'll do it. I made up my mind to put some of those fellows behind bars, and I'm going to put them there!"

During this autumn of 1871 Nast, only thirty-one years old, reached the peak of his expressiveness. In a few months he hammered out dozens of the most potent cartoons that this country had yet seen. At the climax of the crusade, six of his anti-Ring drawings appeared in one issue. Until the task was finished he allowed no relaxation.

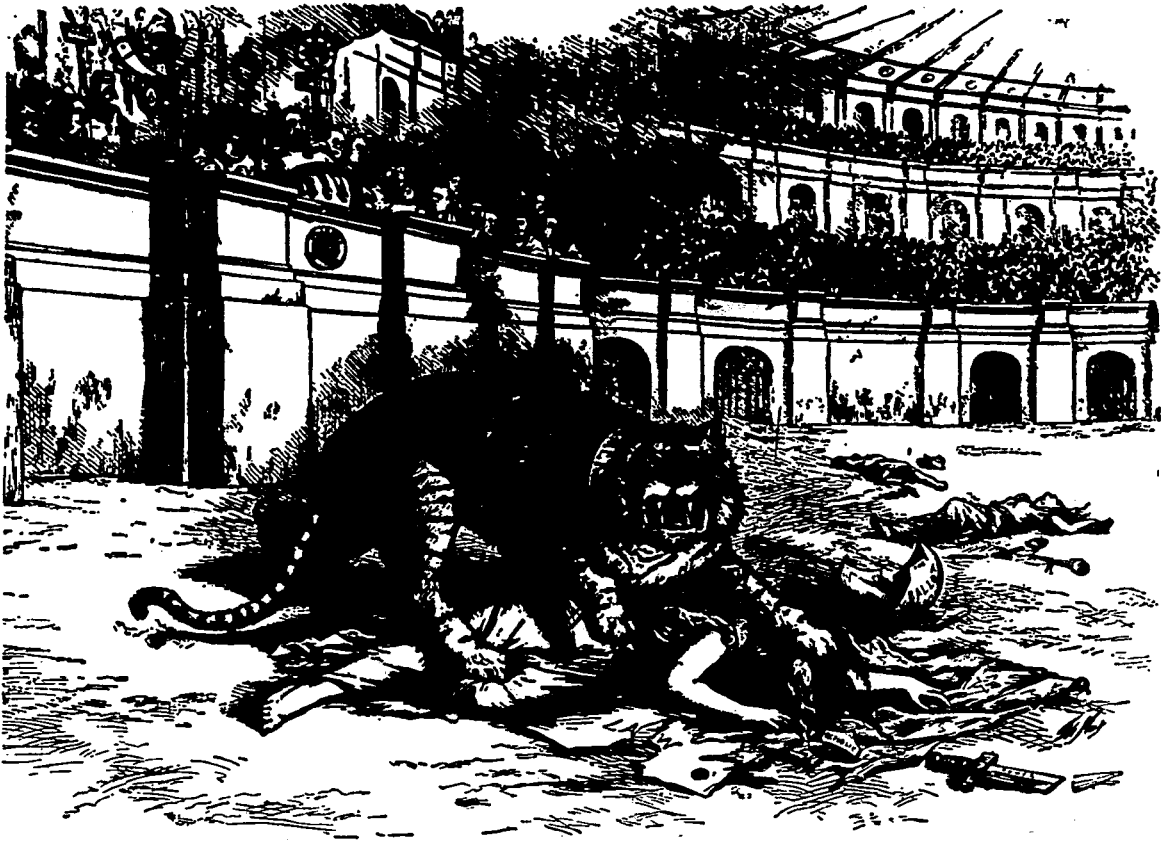
"A Group of Vultures" (September 23), one of his greatest, pictures the Ring leaders as ugly vultures squatting on a mountain ledge around

which bolts of lightning are whizzing. Vulture Sweeny, beak-nosed, looks up apprehensively at a huge boulder about to fall into the nest. Bloat-belly Tweed stares with vulture eyes, and with his vulture talons clutches the corpse of New York. In a clutter lie the picked bones of Treasury, Rent Payer, Law, and Suffrage. The caption: "A Group of Vultures Waiting for the Storm to 'Blow Over.'—'Let Us Prey.'" In one glance the drawing conveys all of Swift's acrid disgust over the filthy Yahoos in his *Gulliver's Travels*, and adds cutting humor. Nast had a genius for hatred, and here his hatred was perfectly aimed.

Much of the same savagery went into the front-page cartoon (October 21) derived from Nation's statement that the bold Ring now feared only violent death. Tweed doffs his hat to a scaffold and bows as deeply as paunch will permit. Hall, Sweeny, and Connolly cringe behind him. Above their heads, on the wall, loom the shadows of four nooses. In the same issue appeared "The 'Brains'": the bulging body of Tweed stands jauntily with hands in pockets; in place of his head, a pear-shaped money bag with a dollar sign for features. Of all the pictures in the campaign this one punched with most direct and concentrated power.

Though Tammany accomplices began to desert the sinking ship, the Ring itself was as defiant as ever because it could still buy votes. Two days before the fall election, however, Nast stopped that connivance by means of his most devastating cartoon—"The Tammany Tiger Loose" (November 11). Developing the tiger's head that he had used before as the symbol for Tammany (it had been the device of Tweed's fire-engine club), he drew a slaving tiger rampant in the Colosseum and clawing a woman lying prostrate on the American flag. Her crown, marked "The Republic," has been knocked from her head. Other dead figures and broken swords lie about the arena. The Ring and its sycophants sit smugly in the imperial box. The imperial standard is labeled, not S.P.Q.R., but SPOILS. The title: "What are you going to do about it?" The answer: decisive defeat of Tammany at the polls.

Soon Nast depicted the results in "Something That Did Blow Over," showing Tammany Hall torn by a terrific explosion. Among the toppled stones henchmen fan a dilapidated Tweed, Hall hangs high by his middle over a tottering arm of masonry, and Sweeny, clamping hat down, scuttles off with a heavy bag. The day after election, in actuality, Sweeny withdrew entirely from public life, later escaped to France, and was forgiven when he paid \$400,000 to New York. Before the end of election month Connolly was put in jail, supposedly incapable of



paying the one and a half million dollars demanded of him. Upon his release, in a few weeks, he disappeared abroad. The dapper Mayor finished his term of office, and joined the exodus to Europe, eventually returning to a petty law practice.

Tweed himself was the most artful dodger. His odyssey is a picaresque tale of in-again, out-again. Following his release on a million-dollar bond paid by Jay Gould and company, he was re-sentenced to twelve years of a lax imprisonment that allowed him to go riding with his keeper and to dine in his own home. Even this, though, proved too confining. He escaped through Cuba to Spain. There the long arm of Nast caught up with him. A sharp-eyed officer identified him by his memory of a cartoon of Tweed showing him in prison stripes. A U. S. warship escorted him home. In his baggage was found a carefully preserved collection of most of Nast's drawings of him. Before he died in jail he had sixteen months to study them.

All in all, the City recovered less than \$1,000,000 of the loot, but it had learned a precious lesson—a lesson it was privileged to learn several times again. *Harper's Weekly* had trebled its circulation, and Thomas Nast had become known around the world. Poets praised him; preach-

ers made sermons out of him. Newspapers once cautious, now boldly credited him with being the leading spirit in a great cause. London papers ranked him with Hogarth, Cruikshank, and Doré.

Not nearly so praiseworthy were Nast's associations with General Grant. His aid in the two successful election campaigns added considerably to Nast's prestige at the time, but in the light of history the whole story reveals a less flattering side of the cartoonist.

"Two things elected me," testified the general, "the sword of Sheridan and the pencil of Nast." The artist never recovered from the tribute. With more loyalty than judgment he supported Grant through thick and thin. When the President negligently implicated himself in the gold conspiracy that precipitated the fearful "Black Friday" panic, the cartoonist who had blasted Tammany with pictorial lightning met the Republican debacle with an innocuous picture of ruined Wall Street and the caption, "What a Fall was there, my Countrymen!" When Charles Sumner and Carl Schurz pressed for national reform, increasingly needed in Grant's wayward administration, Nast ridiculed the reformers unsparingly, drawing Sumner as a pompous ass and Schurz as a ludicrous string-beanish Don Quixote. When Grant naively appointed corruptible men and condoned their thievery with misplaced loyalty, Nast looked the other way.

While Grant was coming up for re-election, Nast went to Washington for a closer look at national affairs. The Republicans rolled out their lushest carpets. Prominent officials honored him with receptions. Several times the White House invited him to dinner. The Grant faction certainly did not hire him secretly; Nast was unquestionably too honest for that. But men in power instinctively went out of their way to capture the great fighter with honey. His gratitude grew swiftly into lasting attachment. Thereafter President Grant and his friends could do no wrong. Those who opposed him, or even criticized him, in Nast's judgment, were either rascals or simpletons.

The caricaturist's campaign against Horace Greeley was clever, funny, and poisonously partisan. He pictured the great editor as a boor dancing a jig and shouting, "Hurrah for Horace Greeley for President!" He drew him as a doltish old lover—bald pate, fringe whiskers, hunched shoulders, and spread knees—proposing to a beautiful young Columbia. He implied that the Tammany thieves, Ku Klux Klan, and all the political riff-raff were crowding with Greeley into a Trojan horse on the plains of Washington. Readers laughed Grant into a second term.

That second term was fouled by worse scandals. Of these the most notorious concerned the *Crédit Mobilier*. A construction company formed by the Union Pacific Railway in order to drain off personal profits, it had distributed shares to strategically placed officials, some of them very close to the President. Here was an opportunity for another crusade. But Nast's arraignment of the wrongdoers was mild and vague. Washington friends convinced him that the affair was very, very complicated and that he had better wait until everything was clearer. Readers, however, asked, "Where's Nast?" Rival journals mockingly published his obituary.

During Grant's second term, about \$75,000,000 of public funds trickled into private pockets. Instead of airing the Republican scandals, Nast kept busy peppering decrepit Tammany and defending hero Grant from the plots of reformers. Of the many times he portrayed the great commander and weak president he never once caricatured him. Only once did he criticize him and that was for a wrong of which Grant had been guilty all too often: standing by an untrustworthy friend.

All in all, the attachment brought Grant a loyal and powerful supporter, but it debilitated Nast at the height of his career, when the nation most desperately needed his castigating vigor. It turned his political astuteness and bold idealism into mere partisanship and made him more intemperatè than forceful. This Samson was blinded though not shorn.

The New York Public Library possesses eight folios of Nast's drawings and four of his own large scrapbooks containing news clippings, letters, and odds and ends. Most significant are the underlinings in news items and editorials and the marginal sketching of cartoon ideas. Others often volunteered suggestions, but he seldom used them. Before the five children arrived, his wife read aloud to him from the classics while he worked. As soon as he could afford it he hired a college student to read to him. Often James Parton—relative by marriage, best-selling biographer, and a hardy Republican—came to discuss politics.

Despite extremely brief schooling, he accumulated background that brought variety and distinction to his work. He transformed Greeley into Mr. Pickwick addressing the Club. Sumner and Shurz became Robinson Crusoe and Friday. A modern Don Quixote spearing some political windmill was a repeated favorite. Occasionally he echoed the Bible. With delicious comedy he often appropriated Shakespeare's

most famous lines or transmogrified his characters. Paunchy Tweed became paunchy Falstaff reviewing an army of jailbird vote-repeaters. Elsewhere, Tweed objects to being given the ass's head of Bottom. A candidate with a dark blot to hide is ludicrously cast as Lady Macbeth muttering, "Out, damned spot!" Shakespeare, in fact, grew upon him until he became practically his chief assistant.

Though Nast eventually mastered the subtleties of crosshatched shading, his technique left something to be desired. His perspective could be defective and his lettering sketchy. As early as his middle twenties, however, he displayed phenomenal skill in catching likenesses. He needed no name labels. In 1865 his title-page drawing for *Mrs. Grundy*, a short-lived weekly, won a competitive prize. In the boxes and gallery of its pictured theater he drew, with pencil on wood block, nearly a hundred faces that were clearly recognizable though each was scarcely as large as a pin cherry. For the spoken words of his figures he never resorted to the awkward loops customary before the Civil War. Dialogue appeared at the bottom of his pictures, or he lettered comments in the background. Often he cluttered his inferior cartoons with too much ambitious detail. The best, though, were both simple and massively striking, both transparent and solidly unforgettable—such as the Tweed with money-bag head and the Ring as vultures. Those two possessed all that can be demanded of a truly great cartoon: immediately recognizable aptness, high moral conviction, and comic force.

The cartoon of the Tammany tiger in the arena, by itself, may not have given up its meaning with the quick stab that is so desirable; but it demonstrated Nast's most distinctive contribution to cartoon art: a planned, climactic continuity. That quality made his anti-Tweed campaign his master achievement. He did more than make a point; he drove it in, and by reiteration he made it stick. Each picture took added force from those that went before, and the accumulation emotionalized the idea.

He also established recurrent symbols as an effective device. Uncle Sam had been used before, but Nast's representation is the one that has persisted. His version of Columbia, said to be modeled from his own wife, was accepted as the embodied conscience of the nation. The Tammany tiger was his own invention, as were also Labor's cap, apron, and hammer, and the workman's full (or empty) dinner pail. The Democratic donkey had pricked up his ears as early as Jackson's term, but it was Nast who established him clearly as a conventionalized

symbol. Hardest of all the political symbols that he created or popularized was the Republican elephant, which he invented in 1874. All of these symbols offered the satisfaction of recognition, the basis of much art, and they helped to dramatize his ideas.

As an ardent crusader, Nast was always stirring if not always right. We have seen his bias against Johnson and his obsessive partiality to Grant. Through the Franco-Prussian War the German in him led him, not wrongly but immoderately, to ridicule Napoleon III; and he nourished a bitter phobia against Roman Catholicism in politics and public education.



His effectiveness in satire tended, however, to obscure the fact that he engaged also in many constructive drives. He made sustained pleas for fairness to the American Indian and to Oriental immigrants, for understanding between Capital and Labor, for adequate financial support of the Army and Navy, for personal temperance and municipal cleanliness. His fights for civic honesty were worthy of a great soldier, said Theodore Roosevelt, who told him, "I ought to make a good official. I learned my politics of your cartoons." To delight children all over the world he drew pictures of Santa Claus every Christmas. From Nast's Germanic saint, more than from any other pictorial concept, comes our present popular idea of the jolly bringer of toys, with white beard, glowing cheeks, fur cap, mittens, and German-named reindeer, with

his account books of children's names and his spyglass with which he looks down from his icicled parapet. The man whose cold fury routed the Tammany tiger also enriched Christmas with his warmth.

About 1875, Nast's career reached its zenith. His prestige was immense. Billed on an illustrated lecture tour as "Destroyer of Tammany" he took in \$40,000 in seven months. His regular annual income climbed to \$25,000, untaxed—a princely sum for those days.

But in 1884, when he was only forty-four, two catastrophes struck him crippling blows. He had entrusted much of his fortune of more than \$100,000 with the investment firm of Grant and Ward. Suddenly, through the colossal dishonesty of Ferdinand Ward, it collapsed. The innocent ex-President, duped again by an unworthy friend, lost everything, even his military trophies. Nast, misled into the venture by his well-meaning idol, lost nearly all but his house.

That same summer the Harpers led the movement against the Republican nominee for President, James G. Blaine, the unplumed knight of spoils. With gusto Nast joined the Independents and campaigned for Democratic Cleveland. If his pictures did not elect the Democrat they undoubtedly helped to defeat the Republican.

The defeat of Blaine, however, was a Pyrrhic victory. From Republican regulars *Harper's Weekly* and Nast received thousands of abusive letters. The disaffection cost the Harpers about \$100,000 and a loss of circulation never quite regained, and Nast's influence declined steadily. Two years later he resigned. The Democrats employed him to draw for Cleveland's second campaign but failed to pay in full when Cleveland lost. His work appeared here and there, but with no memorable continuity. The public began to forget him. Newspapers, intending no sarcasm, now and then referred to him as the late Mr. Nast.

Thus his career reversed the pattern for artists. His struggles came *after* fame. Eventually he was reduced, his youngest son tells us, to sketching portraits of dentists, lawyers, and tax collectors to pay the family bills. His dwelling needed paint and the hinges of the carriage gate were rusty because, he said, they had not been used since General Grant's family last visited him. At auctions he sold his original drawings and letters from the eminent. Occasionally he went to The Players but it was only to sit and listen to the merriment of others. His hair and beard were now white, and a kindliness induced by suffering had replaced the boldness in his face. His last public drawing, fittingly, was a Christmas picture, in 1901, for *Leslie's Weekly*, the old magazine in which his career had begun, forty-six years earlier.





In 1902 President Roosevelt, whom he had long since caricatured favorably, came to the rescue and offered him a consulship in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Though he was not quite sure where it was nor how the name was pronounced, he jumped at the opportunity. After five months of increasingly effective service in which his genial considerateness won over the reluctant natives, he succumbed to yellow fever. They wrapped him in the flag of his country and buried him in the far-off land. His portrait appeared on the first page of the weekly whose fame he had shared.

Bernhard Gillam and Joseph Keppler, founder of *Democratic Puck*, had been worthy rivals. They died several years before Nast. On *Harper's Weekly*, which grew more domestic and less political, he had been succeeded by W. A. Rogers. Nast had sounded prophetic alarms and had sharpened his art as an independent weapon for stirring and cauterizing. The new cartoonists tended, instead, to echo editorial policy and to comment humorously on recorded events.

Nast was our Jonathan Swift. American literature has not yet produced satire to equal his Olympian war upon dishonesty and greed. His best reached high. For ingenious craftsmanship with creative variety, for comic force and savage incisiveness, for crusading idealism and the power to sway public opinion he leads American cartoonists and stands among the half dozen greatest in all history.

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