The Aspiring Men of *Punch*: Patrolling the boundaries of the Victorian gentleman

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ABSTRACT

In the mid 1830s, the engraver Ebenezer Landells and the journalist Henry Mayhew began discussions about establishing a satirical news magazine together. Landells and Mayhew wanted to create a London version of the contemporary Paris *Charivari*. Their aspirations were realized with the printing and circulation of the first issue of *Punch* on July 17, 1841; *Punch* was published continually for more than a century and a half from that time on. However, by the mid 1850s, the more radical ideas that had initially dominated *Punch* were stripped away and replaced with a more respectable worldview under the direction of the editor, Mark Lemon.

The increased emphasis on respectability in *Punch* can be explained by the desire of the *Punch* men to be recognized as gentlemen. The status of gentleman was much sought after in Victorian Britain, with the result that the varying definitions of this status were heavily contested. Although journalists had not frequently been recognized as gentlemen before, the efforts of William Makepeace Thackeray (a *Punch* man) to change the definitional terms of 'the gentleman' made this possible. Based on Thackeray's understanding of the gentleman, the Punchites used *Punch* magazine, and their commentary on morality, social class, and fads in Victorian men's fashion within it, to further both a shift in the popular understanding of the gentleman and their own recognition as such.

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The English Gentleman and *Punch*

In Victorian England, gentlemanly status had a prestige to which a variety of men aspired. Although the number of men who classified themselves and were socially recognized as gentlemen greatly increased in the second half of the nineteenth century (as a percentage of the total population), their numbers still remained relatively small. The Victorians had various understandings in regards to what constituted a gentleman and a variety of definitions of the English gentleman have been offered. Each stresses in varying degrees the importance of the gentleman's privileges of birth, land, and 'breeding;' personal merit, morality, and rationality. His role in empire building also figures, as does perhaps the impossibility of precise definition. As a result, a varied, and often vague, understanding of the gentleman has developed amongst current historians. This is also indicative of the fact that there was no static or consistent Victorian definition of a gentleman either. Explaining how the gentleman was perceived and presented in the popular Victorian magazine *Punch*, especially *Punch*'s understanding of his morality, his position within the social hierarchy, and the means by which he clothed himself, will help to clarify this situation.

The men of *Punch* wrote from a specific position within the Victorian social hierarchy; they were members of the upper-middle class. These men produced comedic cartoons and articles that would be accepted and understood by *Punch*'s target audience, mostly comprised of middle-class Victorians. As a result, many of the assumptions and beliefs held by the writers and editors of *Punch* are themselves incorporated into their work. As well, the content of the issues published between 1851 and 1867 can be interpreted as an attempt by these journalists to be recognized and accepted as gentlemen in their own right.

Due to various influences of the "New History," historical scholarship concerning the gentleman has been firmly based on Victorian literary sources. The influence of masculinity theories has more recently affected the field as well. Historical scholarship concerning the appeal of the gentleman can be divided into three broad categories. First, there are those such as Robin Gilmour and Shirley Robin Letwin who explain the popularity of the gentleman in terms

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of the appeal of his morality.[1] Second, there are those such as David Castronovo and Philip Mason who believe that the popularity of the gentleman is directly related to the contradictions and inconsistencies of the classification itself.[2] Conversely, Karen Volland Waters contends that it was these definitional inconsistencies that directly lead to the downfall of the gentlemanly idea.[3] Third, there are those such as James Eli Adams and J. A. Mangan who assert that the gentleman is best understood through the lens of gender theory.[4] But surely the Victorian gentleman does not fit precisely into any one of these categories. His character and social make-up was, more realistically, a compilation of these assorted aspects. Employing the various methods and ideas offered by the recent scholarship in this field will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of how the *Punch* staff perceived and gave meaning to the term 'gentleman.'

The Victorians were certainly not the first to employ the use of 'gentleman' as a marker of social standing, nor was it in Victorian England that the categorization gained such definitional fluidity. Both the uses of the term and its vague character have significantly earlier origins, but the term has always been complimentary. Penelope Corfield believes that even from its earliest usage, the term 'gentle' had both moral and social implications. In fact, from the sixteenth century, until the later part of the nineteenth century, both the term's attractiveness and flexibility increased.[5]

In 1583, Sir Thomas Smith offered a comprehensive overview of what a gentleman was. He explained that

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[1] Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981) and Shirley Robin Letwin, *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[2] David Castronovo, *The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society* (New York: Ungar, 1987) and Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (New York: Morrow, 1982).
[3] Karen Volland Waters, *The Perfect Gentleman: Masculine Control in Victorian Men's Fiction, 1870 – 1901* (New York: P. Lang, 1997).
[4] James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995) and J. A. Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1904* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).
[5] For a useful survey of the history of the English gentleman see Penelope Corfield, "The Democratic History of the English Gentleman," *History Today*, Vol. 42, No. 12 (December 1992), 40-41.

for whosoever studieth the lawes of the realme, who studieth in the universities, who professeth the liberall sciences, and to be shorte, can live idly and without manual labour, and will beare the port, charge and countenaunce of a gentleman, he shall be called master, for that is the title which men give to esquires and other gentlemen.[6]

Smith's definition of a gentleman differs slightly from that of the nineteenth century, but it does bear a certain relation to that of mid-Victorian England. He stressed the importance of the socially upright nature of the gentleman, attributes which he has garnered from his education. Smith also stresses the importance of the ability of the gentleman to live idly, without engaging himself in manual labour. While the exclusion of those who earned a living through physical labour did continue into the nineteenth century, as will be shown, the importance of an idle lifestyle did not. In fact, some have argued that because men who earned their living involved in finance or in one of the professions could be considered gentlemen, the popularity of the concept increased; certainly the men of *Punch* were anxious to be recognized as both working journalists and gentlemen. As well, the importance of the gentleman's moral character was more significant to the Punchites than it was to Smith.

It must be remembered that there was never one 'true' concept of the gentleman, and rival conceptions persisted well into the Victorian era. Basically, such conceptions of the gentleman can be divided into two broad categories; one based on the privilege of birth, land, and 'breeding,' the other based on personal merit.[7] Corfield recognizes the difficulty in identifying exactly what a 'gentleman' was. She argues that "the English 'gentleman' was remarkably like the Church of England – broad-based, eclectic, and latitudinarian."[8]

The longevity of *Punch* was directly related to its popularity amongst Victorian gentlemen. In the mid 1830s, the engraver Ebenezer Landells and the journalist Henry Mayhew began discussions about establishing a comic magazine together. Landells and Mayhew wanted to create a London version of the contemporary Paris *Charivari*. Their aspirations were realized with the printing and circulation of the first issue of *Punch* on 17 July 1841; *Punch* was

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[6] Sir Thomas Smith in Penny Corfield, "The Democratic History of the English Gentleman," 41.
[7] Corfield, "The Democratic History of the English Gentleman," 45.
[8] Ibid., 46.

published continually for more than a century and a half from that time on, as it became Britain's leading satirical magazine. Arthur Prager notes:

> The *Sunday Times* and a number of provincial papers commented on *Punch's* lack of grossness and profanity and assured the world that the new journal 'would not call a blush to the most delicate cheek.' This was an important point. There were very few humorous papers at the time that could be brought home by Victorian gentlemen and left where they could be read by wives and daughters.[9]

Although the longevity of this magazine is of interest in itself, the historical importance of *Punch* is much greater. *Punch* reached the height of its popularity and circulation in the midst of the Victorian era. It was during this period that the magazine, under its first editor Mark Lemon, an aspiring gentleman, moved away from the radicalism of its early days towards a more moderate and less offensive form of humor. Largely as a result of the efforts of Lemon, *Punch* won its way into respectable society.

Punch quickly gained an important place in London society. To dine at the celebrated *Punch* Table became a highly coveted social invitation.[10] As well, several members of the *Punch* staff, including editors Shirley Brooks and Tom Taylor, were members of the exclusive Garrick Club, a fashionable club among London's gentlemanly elite. That members of the *Punch* staff were admitted demonstrates the extent to which *Punch* became part of respectable society. The ultimate Victorian gentleman William Makepeace Thackeray, an early *Punch* contributor, and a pillar of the Garrick Club, regularly attended dinner meetings at the *Punch* offices. His association with *Punch* contributed significantly to *Punch's* credibility in society. In many respects, the *Punch* of the 1850s and 1860s furthered the vision and understanding of the gentleman expressed by Thackeray himself in many of his literary works, notably *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*. That *Punch* became so successful amongst "respectable society," demonstrates that the humor of its writers, artists, and editors captured their concerns.

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[9] Arthur Prager, *The Mahogany Tree* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1979), 66.

[10] The *Punch* Table, or the Mahogany Tree as coined by W. M. Thackeray, was located in the 'banquet room' of the *Punch* office. There, regular weekly dinners meetings of the senior staff members of the magazine were held at which the 'big cut' (or major cartoon for next week's issue) was always discussed. Often dinner invitations were also extended to notable Victorians who were not members of the *Punch* staff. See Arthur Prager, *The Mahogany Tree*, 14-17.

The writers, artists, and editors of *Punch* worked daily to satirize the contemporary topical events of the Western world. For these men, their work was an expression of who they were; how they thought; and the social norms, standards, and expectations by which they lived their lives.[11] Alternatively, their work could have been a representation of how they wanted to be understood by Britain's middle class. Regardless of which of these scenarios had a greater proximity to reality, the men of *Punch* used the magazine as a vehicle to achieve their ultimate goal of acceptance into London society and recognition of themselves as gentlemen. However, in Victorian Britain, journalists were more readily associated with bohemianism than with gentility.[12] While the editors of *Punch* can be classified as both bohemian and gentle,[13] their efforts, as expressed in the pages of the *Punch* magazine between 1851 and 1867, were more heavily influenced by a desire to be associated with the latter, and dissociated from the former.

Although the decision about what would appear in the weekly editions of *Punch* cannot entirely be explained by this desire of the editors to be recognized as gentlemen, this motivation is extremely important in explaining the shift towards a more moderate form of humour that *Punch*'s editorship attempted to solidify in the early 1850s. In 1851, a particularly interesting article appeared in *Punch* that commented on the daily work of Members of Parliament. Written in the same style as Henry Mayhew's sociological survey *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in three volumes in the same year, it discussed the work of MPs as though they were exploited cotton mill workers. The interviewee explained that:

'The long hours are too much for me. I sometimes fall asleep in the House. I should say I fall asleep most nights. I don't think the yarn-spinning the hardest work. I think taking in the yarns is harder work than spinning 'em. . . I don't know where I suffer most. I feel tired-like all over, and as if I must go to sleep. Some nights it's worse than others. It all depends on the spinner whose yarns you've got to take in. There are some of the spinners

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[11] For a further discussion of how the writing and artistry found in *Punch* represented the ideals of the editorial staff see Richard Daniel Altick, *Punch: The Lively Youth of a British Institution, 1841-1851* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1997) and Julie F. Codell, "Imperial Differences and Culture Clashes in Victorian Periodicals' Visuals: The Case of Punch," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Winter, 2006): 410 – 428.
[12] Bohemia, in Victorian terms, was the "cultural space for the experiences of unconventional artists, writers, and performers." Richard Schoch, "Performing Bohemia," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (December, 2003), 1.
[13] Ibid.

very hard on us. . . Do I often get a night's holiday? Very few, while the House is in work.
Before I went to the House-work I was fond of amusing myself, like other young fellows.
Oh yes! I went to balls a good deal, and to the Opera. I don't go to the Opera now – no,
not ten times in a season; nor I haven't been to a ball, I don't know when, except on a
Saturday night, or a Wednesday. . . I earn pretty good wages while 'the Govenor' can keep
things going. Of course, if there's a turn out, I turn out with the rest, and my wages must
stop. I haven't saved any money. I never did save any. I can't afford it.[14]

The unknown author of this article writes with a slightly veiled contempt and almost disgust
for his aristocratic subject and the pastimes with which he involves himself. However, his article
also provides further information about the position from which the author himself was writing.
The Member's mention of how easily he falls asleep reveals a lack of earnestness in his work
ethic. His discussion about holidays (or his apparent lack of them) displays the fact that he has
neglected to find himself some type of earnest work to occupy his time. His discussion about his
wages, and how they are 'pretty good' is interesting. As *Punch* readers would have been aware,
Members of Parliament did not collect a salary at this time.[15] Therefore, one would assume that
this Member is earning his wages in the forms of 'kick-backs' or 'pay-offs,' a truly immoral
activity. Finally, his reference to his inability to save part of his wages again reveals a lack of
self-control most unbecoming of a respectable man. This article is a typical representation of
how *Punch* authors told stories about various abstract personages, while at the same time
comparing them to the upright moral gentlemanly standard they themselves attempted to shape
and follow.

Robin Gilmour and Shirley Robin Letwin agree that the Victorians were drawn to the
idea of the gentleman and gentlemanliness in part as a result of the important emphasis on the
morality of the ideal gentleman. Gilmour argues that it was this appeal of morality that led many
of the notable Victorian novelists to support (and possibly further) the popularity of the concept
of the gentleman. Gilmour writes that "Thackeray, Dickens, and Trollope, [were] all fascinated
by the image of the gentleman and its relation to the real possibility for the moral life in

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[14] *Punch*, Volume 20, 1851, 84.
[15] Members of Parliament did not receive actual salaries until 1911.

society."[16] For example, the young gentleman (based on Thackeray himself) who is the hero of *Pendennis* grows to be very much concerned with maintaining a certain appearance of morality and self-control. After all, it is when the young Mr. Pen fails to control his emotions, and becomes too closely involved with certain 'low' women, that he gets himself into unwanted and unexpected difficulties.[17]

Gilmour does argue that the appeal of the gentleman to middle-class Victorians was not, however, solely based on the appeal of his morality. Strengthening the gentleman's appeal was his position in the traditional social hierarchy.[18] This position was in many important ways distinct from that of the aristocracy, and although the gentleman shared in the standing of landed society, he formed his own unique place in the Victorian social hierarchy. Gilmour contends that "the historical significance of the gentleman's location in the hierarchy of the gentry, rather than the aristocracy, was that it provided a time-honoured and not too exacting route to social prestige for new social groups."[19] That the status of gentleman was not solely determined by birth meant that the countless men making a name for themselves in the new industrial sectors could also, in theory, aspire to achieve gentlemanly status.[20]

Shirley Robin Letwin argues that it is precisely this lack of focus in scholarly study on the impact notions of morality had on the popularity of the gentleman that has led to the difficulty scholars have experienced in identifying why and how the gentlemanly notion gained such popularity in Victorian England. Letwin contends that "the morality that is the subject of [her work, *The Gentleman in Trollope*] denies that human beings are divided between reason and passion. And the consequence is a radically unfamiliar attitude to our mortal condition and in particular to the nature and significance of individuality." Letwin continues to explain that "this unfamiliar attitude to a human condition is, I believe, what defines the gentleman. . . there is a thread that connects the multifarious attributes that have been attached to the gentleman, and it can be found in the morality portrayed here."[21] That the characteristics and values so particular to the English gentleman are so foreign to us today (even the use of the term itself has shifted)

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[16] Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*, 2.
[17] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Pendennis* Volume 1 (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1910).
[18] Ibid., 5.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 7.
[21] Letwin, *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct*, ix.

has in part led to the difficulty in explaining the phenomenon of the gentleman. Letwin also realizes the usefulness of Victorian novels in her study of the gentleman, particularly those of Trollope, as a means through which to identify the popularly held perception of the gentleman.

Letwin does acknowledge the possible shortcomings of an approach such as the one she and Gilmour utilize. Understanding the popularity of the gentleman in terms of an ideal of his morality, in whole or in part, assumes that how such men conducted themselves was based on how they understood their world and their place in it.[22] As well, one must remember that simply because the gentleman's morality may have been one of the factors that led to his popularity, it does not mean that gentlemen were necessarily morally upright as we today would understand it.[23] As well, it cannot be forgotten that what mattered most was the perception of morality, not the inward focus on a prescribed code of moral conduct.

Where Gilmour and Letwin differ, however, is that Gilmour acknowledges the possibility that other aspects of the gentleman may have led to his rise in popularity in Victorian England; Letwin does not. Letwin concludes that "I, myself, have come to think that the morality of a gentleman offers a more complete and coherent understanding of a human condition than any other known to me."[24] For her, unlike Gilmour, the understanding of morality, as it is described in Trollope's works, is the central most important, and most misunderstood and underrepresented, explanation for the popularity of the gentleman.

Various other historians point to the contradictions surrounding what exactly a gentleman was, and how these both propelled and led to the ultimate downfall of the gentleman as a popular social figure. Certainly the men of *Punch* used this situation to their advantage and developed and publicized their own understanding of the gentleman. David Castronovo believes that the English gentleman is best understood based on the contradictions that surrounded him. Again, his primary sources are literary, and he focuses mainly on Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Castronovo draws attention to how Dickens stresses for his readers both the gentleman's uselessness (perhaps because Dickens himself was not really one) and his significance.[25] For Castronovo, understanding how such contradictions were represented and understood is the

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[22] Ibid., x.

[23] Henry Silver's diary reveals the ribald and impudent nature of the *Punch* men in the privacy of their intimate weekly dinner meetings.

[24] Letwin, *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and Moral Conduct*, xi.

[25] Castronovo, *The English Gentleman: Images and Ideals in Literature and Society*, x.

beginning of understanding what the gentleman was and why he was so vastly popular. He asserts that

> the ideals of the gentleman begin in these contradictory possibilities: at times nasty or noble, snobbish or generous, the gentleman – whether a fictional personage or an actual man – seems to hold within his mystique many of mankind's finer aspirations and baser instincts. Grasping, acquisitive, arrogant, selfish – such a string of charges can easily be matched with references to the gentleman's integrity, love of diversity and liberty, high moral sense, and responsibility.[26]

The contradictory representations of the gentleman in Dickens, and his contradictory emphasis on both the positive and negative attributes of the gentleman are for Castronovo evidence of the appeal of the concept of the gentleman in Victorian society. Exactly who a gentleman was and exactly how he should conduct himself were never precisely set forth. For Castronovo, this explains the popularity of the gentleman. Angus McLaren also understands the popularity of the gentleman in terms of the vagueness with which he was associated. McLaren notes that "what [the gentlemanly ideal] exactly entailed could never be fully spelled out, but the very vagueness of the gentlemanly ethic enhanced its attractiveness as a bonding credo for men who, despite the pressures of an increasingly individualistic world, saw themselves striving to maintain certain ideals of honesty and generosity."[27] In such a situation, a man aspiring to be a gentleman had nothing to lose by establishing himself as one, and everything to gain. These men could reap the benefits of an increased social status, while at the same time, they had no firm convictions or beliefs by which they had to abide.

Philip Mason also demonstrates that the popularity of the gentleman was based upon the contradictions and vagueness associated with the term. One of the reasons why the concept of the 'gentleman' achieved such popularity was that no one was really sure who was a gentleman and who was not.[28] Mason argues that the word gentleman had "different meanings in different mouths and the same person would use it in different senses. But it did stand for an ideal of

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries 1870-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 89.

[28] Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal*, 9.

conduct that was widely admired and this was one of the ties that unified the nation."[29] Mason raises two valuable points; as he understands it, the gentlemanly persona was admired, and useful as a means of uniting the English nation.

For Mason, the actual behaviour of the gentleman, if any such finite definition can be established, is of little importance. Popular perception is what interests him. This is perhaps where his argument becomes difficult to follow. As previously stated, Mason believes that a degree of the popularity of the gentlemanly concept was the result of the inability to be sure of who exactly was a gentleman. However, if no Victorian was exactly sure of who was a gentlemen, how could they admire such a vague nonspecific notion? Sheldon Rothblatt, who reviewed Mason's book shortly after it was first published, made a very relevant comment in regards to identifying the gentleman that clarifies how such men were recognized: "a gentleman was someone who behaved like one."[30] In many ways this succinctly describes the actions of the *Punch* staff. By using *Punch* to represent their gentlemanly qualities and behaviour, they were hoping to be recognized as gentlemen.

The second element of Mason's argument centers on the ability of the gentleman to further the English nation, and the English Empire. "That the Victorian upper class avoided revolution," Mason suggests, and "developed a world empire with minimum force was achieved and stood on the foundation of the concept of the gentleman."[31] The Victorian understanding of the gentleman may, if one agrees with Mason, have prevented the revolutions within the island nation that Continental Europe witnessed. Gentlemanly status was, we must remember, as a result of this newfound emphasis on morality achievable to a much wider fraction of the population in England than in many other countries in continental Europe. Thus, while the growing power and size of the middle-class, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, may have caused social frustration at the lack of upward social mobility on the continent, this was not the case in England. The English had always been willing to acknowledge wealth, and an upright manner of conduct, as a basis of social standing and as automatic qualifiers for an upper-middle class man to achieve gentlemanly status. Although men such as Thackeray did mention the

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Sheldon Rothblatt, "The English Gentleman (Review)," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Spring, 1984), 395.

[31] Ibid., 13.

importance of the gentleman in empire building, Mason's discussion in regards to Britain's avoidance of the revolutions of the continent is slightly too reductionist to be taken seriously.

The power of the concept of the gentleman came from the gentleman's social influence. Mason, as well as many other historians who have examined the gentleman, draws his evidence largely from Victorian literary sources. He argues that they are valuable because he is interested "less [in] what the gentleman actually did than what it was thought proper of him to do."[32] The gentleman influenced society at many levels. Although understanding the breadth of this influence may be difficult for us today, it was one of the many attributes that led to the desire of the middle-class men to become gentlemen. Mason asserts that

> for most of the 19th century and until the Second World War, it [the notion of the gentleman] provided the English with a second religion, one less demanding than Christianity. It influenced their politics. It influenced their system of education; it made them endow new public schools and raise the status of old grammar schools. It inspired the lesser landed gentry as well as the professional and middle classes to make great sacrifices to give their children an upbringing of which the object was to make them ladies and gentlemen . . .It was in the 19th century that the concept came to be so all-embracing and so demanding and took on with much greater strength its moral overtones.[33]

It is therefore, no wonder that a variety of men on the cusp of gentlemanly status, such as journalists,[34] made every effort to secure for themselves recognition as gentlemen.

Karen Vollan Waters agrees with Mason in that she attributes the importance of the gentleman to ideological inconsistencies within the understanding and perception of the concept itself. She also finds value in Victorian novels as a means of identifying what the ideal gentleman in fact was; however, she also uses nineteenth-century self-help books to further her understanding of the gentleman.[35] Mason and Waters differ in that Mason employs the contradictions contained within the gentlemanly ideal to explain the popularity of such a

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[32] Ibid., 10.

[33] Ibid., 12.

[34] Although many Victorian journalists were identified as 'bohemian,' several fiercely opposed such an identity. See Christopher Kent, "The Idea of Bohemia in Mid-Victorian England," *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. LXXX, No. 3 (Autumn, 1973), 361-362.

[35] Waters, *The Perfect Gentleman: Masculine Control in Victorian Men's Fiction, 1870 – 1901*, 4-5.

concept, while Waters uses these contradictions to explain the decline of the gentlemanly ideal in the very last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. She views the literary works written in the last years of Victoria's reign as an unsuccessful attempt to revive the waning popularity of the gentleman, and as such, a representation of what the ideal gentleman was. Waters understands the ideological inconsistencies that ultimately led to the marginalization of the gentleman as divisible into two categories: "the paradoxes of accessibility (is the status of gentleman a condition or a process?) and gender stability (the masculine ideal, in fact, contains characteristics of femininity)."[36] She argues that it was these aspects of the gentleman that lead to the perception of a gentleman as an illusion rather than an achievable social goal.

Waters also includes a valuable overview of the recent scholarship that utilizes masculinity theory in the explanation of the gentleman. She again offers an explanation of these concepts as understood through two broad categories: historical examination of masculinity, and literary examinations of masculinity.[37] Another important note on the subject of masculinity is that the majority of the sources she examines pertain only to the nineteenth century. The historical approach, in very general terms, Waters believes, serves to "examine the social construction of middle-class masculinity in Britain and America from 1800 to present in order to stress 'the diversity and mutability of masculinity over time.'"[38] She articulates that although the various literary approaches vary drastically as a result of their focus, they are all indebted to feminist critiques for their understanding of the literature. As a feminist, Waters attempts to "understand the ways in which [structures of male power] have been – and continue to be – reified in our literature." Thus as a result of feminist theory, we are able to better understand the previously assumed patriarchal power structure in which the Victorian gentleman developed and flourished.[39]

James Eli Adams explains the theories of masculinity by use of the specific example of the Victorian gentleman. Adams claims that the idea of the gentleman was compatible with the concept of masculinity only if that masculinity was understood to represent a "strenuous psychic regimen, which could be affirmed outside the economic arena, but nonetheless would be

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 8.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Annette Kolodny cited in Waters, *The Perfect Gentleman*, 7.

embodied as a charismatic self-mastery akin to that of the daring yet disciplined entrepreneur."[40] As Adams understands it, there was a shift in the Victorian period in relation to the definition of masculine attributes. He explains this in relation to a contemporary fear among Victorian men of modernity, and the disturbance this would bring to the social structure. George Mosse argues that "stereotypes [such as that of the gentleman] came into their own with the modern age as a part of a general quest for symbols in order to make the abstract concrete within the bewildering changes of modernity."[41] As is widely agreed, Victorian England witnessed a more dramatic degree of change than any previous generation. The Industrial Revolution, and its resulting upheavals, led to a great fear of the erosion of masculine identity; many men pondered the position they would take in this rapidly changing world. Adams believes that the gentleman served the purpose of bolstering the idea and the ideal of 'manhood,' and strengthening the position of men in Victorian society.[42]

As well as emphasizing the importance of the concept of the gentleman in bolstering Victorian masculinity, Adams, as do many other scholars who employ literary sources to understand the Victorian gentleman, stresses the significance of the view of the gentleman as a moral ideal. Adams likens the concept of the gentleman to that of a secular sainthood. The gentleman was "celebrated as a moral ideal open to all who prove themselves worthy, yet the true gentleman, apologists agree, is distinguished by his lack of self-consciousness."[43] The aspiring gentleman is, therefore, as much of a contradiction as the aspiring saint. But where many scholars have explained the appeal of the gentleman in terms of the openness of the concept to social climbers, Adams argues that this very aspect of the ideal caused a great amount of concern (because for the term 'gentleman' to remain socially prestigious, it also had to remain socially exclusive), thus the continued reassertion of the true gentleman's absence of self-consciousness.[44]

There are several difficulties in explaining the gentleman in terms of gender theories. First, the risk of confusing the gentleman with the dandy is great, for the two terms are by no

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[40] Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, 7.
[41] George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The creation of modern masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.
[42] Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, 5-7.
[43] Ibid., 42.
[44] Ibid., 152.

means synonymous. The dandy, Adams suggests, "comes into focus as a textual mark, one might say, of masculine identity under stress or revision."[45] Although the dandy cannot accurately be described as the 'countertype' of the gentleman,[46] he by no means represented the same ideals as the gentleman. The dandy was preoccupied by his physical appearance and took great pains to stress his leisurely lifestyle.[47] In *Punch*, there are many cartoons and articles dealing with this very issue. The authors and editors of the magazine went to great lengths to differentiate between gentlemen (themselves) and the swell "other" (read 'Victorian dandy'). Based on the profusion of cartoons lampooning the swell, it can be deduced that Victorians themselves had difficulties differentiating between the two types of men and thus the difficultly has been perpetuated amongst scholars today.   This thesis will in part attempt to reduce this confusion. Secondly, the social sciences, and feminist analysis of gender in particular, have demonstrated how multiple, complex, and unstable constructions of masculine identity can be within a culture.[48] As a result the study of Victorian gentility, as conducted within the premise of masculinity theory, is by no means straightforward.

   J. A. Mangan stresses how a shift in masculinity, as previously discussed in relation to Adams, came to alter the understanding of the ideal man. However, he argues that this change in the understanding of masculinity took place in the midst of the Victorian era. What is interesting is that Mangan defines masculinity in the early years of Victoria's reign as "concern[ed] with a successful transition from Christian immaturity to maturity, demonstrated by earnestness, selflessness and integrity." He suggests that in the later part of the period, such definitional terms shifted, and to the later Victorians masculinity "stood for neo-Spartan virility as exemplified by stoicism, hardiness and endurance – the pre-eminent qualities of the famous English public school system."[49] The importance of the morality associated with both masculinity and gentility are absent in his understanding, or so it would appear. Later, Mangan explains that the "gentleman was proclaimed to be the man who was an 'aristocrat of character' not an aristocrat

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[45] Ibid., 55.
[46] For a further discussion of the countertypes of masculine images see George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The creation of modern masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6-7.
[47] Ibid., 192.
[48] Ibid., 3
[49] Mangan, *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1904*, 1.

by birth."[50] As will be demonstrated, the men of *Punch* between 1851 and 1867 attempted to identify themselves (mostly) with the earlier Victorian concept of the gentleman.

While Mangan's opinions on this subject may seem contradictory, they are indicative of the complexity of identifying and explaining masculinity and the gentleman in Victorian England and attempting to relate the two. The gentleman was an ideal, thus representing different things to different people. Mosse argues that "manliness was supposed to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, but it was also regarded as an indispensable attribute of those who wanted change."[51] This multifaceted aspect of the concept perpetuates the varied interpretations of the gentleman among scholars today. As a result, attempts to fit the Victorian gentleman succinctly into masculinity theory proves to be just as difficult as identifying the gentleman himself. Perhaps a brief (and very general) overview of masculinity theory, uncomplicated by the concept of the gentleman, would help clarify this situation.

In his introduction to *Masculinities*, R. M. Connell poses the question "why are the terms masculine and feminine so confusing?" Connell's simple though helpful response to this question is that "the underlying reason is the character of gender itself, historically changing and politically fraught."[52] The recent historiography of masculinity has been plagued by such confusion, but elements of a new approach to this subject have begun to emerge thanks to work undertaken in both history and ethnography. Academic historical writings have traditionally focused on rich and famous men. In the 1970s, when feminists began to write women's history, and as a result of the 'assumption of reciprocal sex roles,' it was concluded that there was a need for a 'reciprocal' men's history. As the history of men was not new, as was women's history, a new approach to the study of men was the result. The theories of masculinity were thus incorporated into the study of men. Initially, the field was vague and generalized, but, again as a result of feminist studies in women's history, works were undertaken to examine the institutions in which the norms of masculinity are embedded.[53] Thus, masculinity theory and the gentleman, or the institution of Victorian gentility, are intimately related, and methods and techniques

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[50] Ibid., 2.
[51] Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 3.
[52] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3.
[53] For a detailed examination of the evolution of the changes in men's history, see R. W. Connell, 28-30.

employed by masculinity theorists are of great value in an attempt to identify the Victorian gentleman, both who he was, and how he was perceived.

Conceptualizing the Victorian journalist, as represented by the editors of *Punch*, within these parameters clarifies the concept of Victorian gentility. Ultimately, the men of *Punch* used their magazine, and the humour within it, to demonstrate their gentlemanly character. Based on the variety of recent scholarship concerned with explaining the popularity of the English gentleman, a greater understanding of the exact aspirations of the *Punch* editorial staff is achievable. That these men used *Punch* to reflect their own 'gentle' attributes reflects the importance of social status in Victorian England. The three categories of academic understanding of the gentleman are useful in that by revealing how the gentleman was perceived, an understanding of the gentleman himself is acquired. Gilmour and Letwin's examination of gentlemanly morality; Castronovo, Mason, and Waters's discussion of the contradictions and inconsistencies surrounding the gentleman; and Adams and Mangan's account of the gentleman in relation to masculinity theory: all offer valuable perspectives that must be considered when understanding the Victorian 'cult' of gentility. The Victorians themselves were by no means sure of exactly what a gentleman stood for or who he was. As a result, no succinct definition of the gentleman has been offered by current scholarship. However, although comprehending the ideal of the gentleman may prove difficult, it is somewhat simplified when explained in relation to the men of *Punch*.

The current fog that still surrounds our understanding of the Victorian gentleman can, at least in part, be alleviated by a closer examination of the cartoons and articles contained within the volumes of *Punch* published between 1851 and 1867. Such cartoons and articles were written and edited by men who believed themselves to be gentlemen, writing for a genteel audience. As such, they used the magazine as a vehicle to demonstrate their genteel qualities to their readership. They wrote for and from a specific social position with a host of assumptions and prejudices specific to that social class. In many ways, the goal of my work is to understand this position from which they wrote, and the assumptions that went into their work.

In respect to understanding the assumptions of the gentlemen of *Punch*, and the means by which they attempted to solidify their genteel status for themselves as journalists, the cartoons and articles can be divided into three broad categories: the gentleman's understanding of morality, his understanding of social class and status, his treatment of contemporary fads in

fashion, and finally the staff of *Punch*'s identification with the ideal gentleman. The staff of *Punch* between 1851 and 1867 (under the ultimate direction of Mark Lemon) conducted their magazine with an ultimate goal in mind. Understanding how and why they went about achieving this goal will, in turn, aid in increasing our understanding of the ideal Victorian gentleman, whoever he may have been.

Chapter 2

Mr. Punch's Moral Character

In the theatre of Victorian identity, morality, or the outward perception of it, was of the utmost importance. Mr. Punch, supported by his brigade of editors, authors, and artists, used *Punch* magazine as a means to patrol how gentlemen conducted themselves. Although there was probably no precise or unanimous understanding amongst these men of what a gentleman was,[54] the manner in which a gentleman conducted himself was, for the aspiring gentlemen of *Punch* at least, reasonably definite. While attempting to maintain a high standard of conduct amongst Victorian gentlemen, Mr. Punch also tried to shift the definition of the gentleman, and by necessity the understanding of how he conducted himself, into a form that would readily include himself and his staff within the gentlemanly category. His staff utilized commentary on the conduct of the British parliament, the *Punch* staff itself, Church of England clergymen, and the swells and gents of London, to develop an understanding and definition of the 'true' *Punch* gentleman.

Mr. Punch was the leading character in, and frequently the fictitious author of, many articles in the weekly issues of *Punch*. Many representations of Mr. Punch,[55] both in *Punch* and elsewhere, depicted a rowdy character with several notable follies. However, it was in the mid 1850s that the men of *Punch* attempted to 'clean up' their mascot who, as many gentlemen before him, matured into a more respectable man. He became a caricature of the ideal gentleman, as the men of *Punch* understood him. (Figure 1) The men of *Punch* regarded Mr. Punch as Victorian Britain's best-known journalist, and as was the case with many contemporary gentlemen, it was only after Mr. Punch overcame the frivolity and radicalism of his youth, in the middle of the nineteenth century, that his morally upright gentility developed. The preface to the fiftieth volume of *Punch*, published on the magazine's twenty-fifth anniversary, made reference to the various contributions Mr. Punch had made to his island nation over the past quarter of a century. The prefatory article imagined a dinner in honour of Mr. Punch at which a variety of

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[54] Asa Briggs writes that "the idea of a 'gentleman,' one of the most powerful mid-Victorian ideas [was] an extremely complicated one both to define and to disentangle. Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England," in *Essays in Labour History*, ed. Asa Briggs and John Saville (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), 69.

[55] Mr. Punch originated in the sixteenth-century commedia dell'arte Punch and Judy show.

famous personages toasted his success. Britannia was the first to declare what Mr. Punch had

done for her. She divulged that: "you [Mr. Punch] have made me so happy that I have scarcely

felt the flight of time. But it is twenty-five years since you became my Guide, Philosopher, and

Friend." The 'Heir Apparent' (who in 1901 became Edward VII) commended Mr. Punch on his

noble support of the Throne. The 'Primate' (Archbishop of Canterbury) commented on how Mr.

Punch had helped to correct the follies of clergymen. The Chancellor thanked Mr. Punch for

encouraging the movement of the legal system in a more rational direction, and the cabinet

minister Robert Lowe thanked Mr. Punch for doing the same in regards to education. Lord

Derby attributed the improvement of the relations between the aristocracy and 'the people' to

Mr. Punch. Miss Kate Terry a popular young actress summed up the feeling around the table

best perhaps, thanking Mr. Punch for upholding everything that was refined and graceful. The

list of Mr. Punch's contributions to Victorian society continued for nearly two pages. [56] It is thus

apparent that by 1866, the staff of *Punch* were overtly assuring their readership of Mr. Punch's

esteemed position in British society.

       The *Punch* men's initial foray into the world of Victorian weeklies was less

enthusiastically received by 'respectable' society than was their silver anniversary twenty-five

years later. In the 1840s, many of the more radical elements of the *Punch* staff were still very

active within the magazine. R. G. G. Price argues that

Punch had inherited the [radical] reputation of the Leigh Hunt circle[57]. But as soon as possible
Thackeray steered for gentleness, fun, kindly sentimental humour, and the political and social
attitudes of the West End clubman . . .The decision that England should not have a strongly
satirical paper, and should therefore be less European, was taken when Thackeray and Leech
began to lead *Punch* upwards in the social scale.[58]

It was this movement up the social scale that accompanied the staff's increased emphasis on not

only their own morality, but on the morality of their contemporary gentlemen. By 1851, William

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[56] *Punch*, Volume 50 (June 30, 1866), iii-iv.

[57] The Leigh Hunt circle references Leigh Hunt, the nineteenth century romantic poet, journalist,
and 'martyr to liberty.' He was best known for his writing and his campaigning on a variety of
liberal and human causes. See Nicholas Roe, "Hunt, (James Henry) Leigh (178401859), poet,
journalist, and literary critic,"*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[58] R. G. G. Price, *A History of Punch* (London: W. M. Collins Sons & Co., 1957), 49.

Thackeray and John Leech had succeeded in raising the reputation of the publication, while at the same time, they were able to enhance their own financial and social situations as well. As a result, this genteel publication, produced by aspiring gentlemen, gained a foothold in Britain's respectable society.

At the same time that *Punch* was beginning to place a new emphasis on moral behaviour, there was also a newly developed emphasis on morality in another famed British institution. When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, the actions of her uncle William IV and his Hanoverian predecessors, especially William's brother George IV, had extensively damaged the reputation of the monarchy in the minds of many Britons. It was the young Queen's goal to raise the moral tone of the ruling dynasty, and thus increase the popularity of the institution itself in the public mind. After her marriage in 1840, to the German Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, there was a re-strengthening of this moral emphasis in the Sovereign's household. While the aristocracy may not have admired Victoria for this shift in values, the British middle class[59] was certainly in favour of such moral reforms. Thus, while the men of *Punch* were interested in raising their own moral tone in the pursuit of gentility, Victoria was attempting to further elevate the social standing of morality itself.

Given the central importance of morality to understanding both gentility and the ideal gentleman, it is worth considering how the authors and editors of *Punch* chose to discuss this subject. Many of the cartoons in *Punch* that could be classified as 'social commentaries' can also be considered as moral commentaries. Frequently, the cartoons and articles that criticized either the upper or lower social orders based their criticism on a lack of moral character. As well, criticisms of members of the social class from which the authors and artists of *Punch* originated[60] turned frequently on issues of morality.

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[59] Although the term 'middle class,' indeed the term 'class' itself, was still relatively new at this time, even as early as 1798, this group was praised by the *Monthly Magazine*. The magazine declared that the 'middle ranks' were a group "in whom the great mass of information, and of public and private virtue reside." *Monthly Magazine* cited in Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England," 54.

[60] That is not to say that 'the gentleman' himself has any specific class origins. In fact, as understood by Victorian Bohemians, with which the men of *Punch* were known to associate, the gentlemanly category existed above class divisions. See Christopher Kent, "The Idea of Bohemia in Mid-Victorian England," 364-368.

In May of 1851, Londoners witnessed the opening of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, or simply the Great Exhibition as it has become known. Organized by Prince Albert and Henry Cole, the Exhibition was held in a specially constructed glass and iron building, dubbed the Crystal Palace by *Punch*. In preparation for this event, London and Londoners attempted to put a 'clean front on.' Shop owners and store keepers refurbished their places of business, and many private individuals as well attempted to give their own dwellings a fresh and clean look in anticipation of the crowds of visitors that the Exhibition was expected to draw to the city. Although such efforts were being conducted at the community level, there were criticisms of Lord John Russell's administration for not doing their part in helping to brighten up the city.

This shortcoming was not overlooked by the writers of the *Punch* staff who severely rebuked the Members of Parliament for being outdone by the lower middle and working classes. As the situation had garnered some attention in the early part of 1851, *Punch*'s notice of it may not seem remarkable. However, it is the means by which they criticized the failures of the M.P.s that deserves attention. In "London With a Clean Front On," the author began with a discussion of the various efforts many Londoners were making to ensure their city was presentable for the opening of the Great Exhibition. Next, the author offered a list of items that the Government Ministers should address in order to aid in this effort. Finally, the article concluded: "we know the answer will be that just at present Ministers have quite enough to do to keep themselves clean, without troubling themselves about anything else; but, in the oft-quoted words of a celebrate Irishman, we can only say then that 'It's a dirthy shame!'"[61] As the men of *Punch* understood the situation, the Government Ministers were so preoccupied with attempting to keep themselves out of questionable situations that they had no time to deal with the real business of government. It was their lack of moral character that led to their failings as Government Ministers.

The moral commentary in *Punch* did not omit references to the morality of its own staff. In the early days of *Punch*, weekly dinner meetings, including several members of the staff and the editor, hosted by the proprietors Bradbury and Evans, soon became tradition. These meetings coalesced into a '*Punch* Club' in order to, Landells wrote, "form a little society

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[61] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1850), 83.

amongst ourselves to talk over and settle upon subjects for the paper of the coming week."[62] An invitation to attend one of the weekly meetings became highly coveted. The meetings were catered and held in the proprietor's offices in Bouverie Street around the celebrated *Punch* table.[63] Later dubbed the Mahogany Tree, the *Punch* dinner table was the site of many spirited conversations and disagreements among the men of *Punch*, and as a result became endowed with a mystique of its own.[64]

The conversations that took place around the *Punch* table were not always as genteel as the *Punch* staff would have liked their readership to assume. Patrick Leary attributes this aspect of the dinner meetings to their origin. He argues that "from the beginning, *Punch* had its roots in the bibulous, talkative world of the old taverns that dotted the warren of narrow streets and alleys surrounding Fleet Street and the Strand, an area long consecrated to the printing and publishing trades."[65] Arthur Prager argues that the *Punch* table was a center of heated debate and discussion. He contends that "there the Parliament of Wits and Conclave of Humorists, who were *Punch*, deliberated on the 'big cut,' the political cartoon around which the jokes and articles that made up each weekly issue were carefully arranged . . .The dinners were hilarious; devoted to gourmandizing, hearty boozing, jokes, horseplay, gossip, obscene limericks, and finally to work."[66] Such tavern-like discussions did not in the least equate with the public reputation that the men of *Punch* wanted to solidify. In 1852, an article in *Punch*, "Morals of 'The Mahogany'," attempted to explain how the happenings of the weekly meeting had no bearing on the genteel qualifications of the staff. The article recorded a conversation between Mr. Punch and an 'M.P.' (or member of *Punch*) about dinner meetings and morality. In the interview the 'M.P.' argued that morality was associated with the heart, and dining with the stomach. Therefore, the heart

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[62] Ebenezer Landells, cited in Patrick Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 – 1874," 22.

[63] For an in depth discussion of the dinner meetings and the discussions that occurred at them see Patrick Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 – 1874" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2002).

[64] The term 'Mahogany Tree' was first coined by William Makepeace Thackeray in a poem of the same name.

[65] Mark Lemon was himself a tavern-keeper shortly before assuming the editorship of *Punch*. See Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 – 1874*,*" 21.

[66] Arthur Prager, *The Mahogany Tree: An Informal History of Punch* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1979), 12.

played no role in genteel dining, "feeling and morality [were] independent of the act of dining – of the ceremony denominated dinner."[67] Although the member of *Punch* might in many ways agree with Prager's characterization, such an image did not agree with *Punch*'s own definition of a gentleman. The men of *Punch* had to justify this discrepancy and, in part, this article was the result.

The *Punch* dinners were well known and developed a certain mystique in the minds of many contemporaries. As such, the nature and the tone of the dinner conversation, it is probable, was well known to a certain segment of genteel society. "Morals of The 'Mahogany,'" while addressing the subject indirectly and with a certain degree of humour, was an attempt to excuse this weekly indulgence of the *Punch* staff. Because, 'according to the last anatomical discoveries,' dining was completely unrelated to morality, the activities that occurred around the dinner table of these gentlemen in private had no bearing on their outward moral character.

A portion of *Punch*'s moral commentary in the early 1850s was devoted to the subject of gambling. Betting on horse racing and many other sporting and non-sporting events was widespread in the nineteenth century, and landed aristocrats especially wagered considerable amounts of money. *Punch*'s artists frequently commented on the moral degradation that accompanied the evils of betting. In one such cartoon (Figure 2), the image is split in two, the left pane displaying "a foolish and a betting man" entering a betting office, the right pane displaying "a wiser and a better man" walking into a 'savings bank' with his doting wife and young child.[68] The 'betting man' appears to be a loudly dressed gent[69] or swell, profusely puffing on a cigar, seeming as though he has nothing else in the world to occupy his time. While the reader gets the sense that the 'betting man' is making every effort to draw attention to himself, the 'wiser man' appears to be far too occupied with more important matters than to give such trivial affairs a second thought. He appears well dressed, in every sense of the phrase,

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[67] *Punch*, Volume 22 (1852), 97.

[68] *Punch*, Volume 22 (1852), 246.

[69] Not to be confused with gentleman. Eric Partridge, in *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, 7ʰ Edition* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), describes a gent as "a loudly dressed vulgarian." But the men of *Punch* had a considerably broader understanding of the gent, or the swell as he was often known. For Mr. Punch and his staff, the gent was of a lower class origin, attempting to emulate his social superiors through an exaggerated form of dress and manners. See Christopher Kent's "The Whittington Club: A Bohemian Experiment in Middle Class Social Reform," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (September, 1974), 49-50.

accompanied by his modestly fashionable wife and child. He represents everything a gentleman should be. The implication of the cartoon is that had this young gent found better means by which to occupy his time, a profession or a family, he would not have succumbed to the morally degenerating pastime of gambling. However, it is extremely easy to take this representation of the gent even further, and he is designed to arouse a certain amount of disgust in the mind of the reader; and certainly for the Victorian gentlemen who would have looked at this cartoon, he would have.

Cartoons have the ability to capture sentiments that articles alone cannot. That they were used by *Punch* to articulate their views on a variety of the subjects that were of the utmost importance to them, and to further their claims to be gentlemen, is thus not surprising. However, scholars have only recently, and still sparingly, begun to use cartoons as evidence in their own right.[70] Cartoons are of immense historical significance in that, as Julie Codell argues, "cartoons, engravings, photos, and lithographs were also read through their own conventions and through the social codes they bore as popular or high culture, 'creative' or comic, imaginative or 'realistic.'"[71] The cartoon images in *Punch* were the means by which the editors and artists chose to convey their opinions on what, to them, were some of the most important topics of the day. As such, we should use these images as an integral part of the basis of our analysis of the period and culture in which they were created. Thomas Milton Kemnitz contends that cartoons "frequently offer evidence of groups deliberately attempting to shape opinion, and [they] are a key source for historians concerned with the images of individual politicians, political parties, and social groups."[72]

Images more readily reveal 'deeper meanings' than do simple texts. As a result, images have the ability to, as Codell asserts, "generate meanings and reader identifications in

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[70] Scholars have frequently used cartoons to illustrate their points in various academic works. However, they employ such materials to further arguments garnered from other sources of evidence. See Peter Bailey, "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1880s," *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 16 (1983), 6-7. As well, much of the historical discussion of cartoons centers on political cartoons while the equally valuable social cartoons have been largely neglected. One exception being Bailey's "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday."
[71] Julie Codell, "Imperial Differences and Culture Clashes in Victorian Periodicals' Visuals: The Case of *Punch*," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2006), 410.
[72] Thomas Milton Kemnitz, "The Cartoon As a Historical Source," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. IV, No. I (Summer, 1973), 86.

periodicals."[73]   As such, the cartoon images that the *Punch* staff agreed upon at their weekly meetings readily reveal something about the societies that created and appreciated them. The cartoon was far more likely to get its point across quickly and more effectively than any other printed form of communication.[74] As Kemnitz notes, "the cartoon also is an ideal medium for suggesting what cannot be said by the printed word;"[75] surely the aspiring gentlemen of *Punch* would have agreed. Thus, it is no surprise that Mr. Punch used cartoon images to convey messages that he could not, as a gentleman, write about.

The *Punch* staff did not limit their moral critique only to overt instances of moral laxity. They also directed stinging criticisms at Church of England clergymen. *Punch*'s artists not only criticized the gentlemen of the cloth for their moral lapses, but frequently questioned their Christian virtue as well. However, in discussing the clergy, these two aspects of their collective personalities are inseparable. In "A Pretty Kettle of Fish," (Figure 3) the 'Puseyite Parson' appears sophisticatedly confused as to why his cook is quitting his service. She explains that she is simply not up to the amount of work that is require of her on fast days.[76] She explains that she is not up to preparing all the rich dishes the parson requires. This criticism of clerical excess, however, reaches far beyond the dinner menu. It was a direct attack on the moral honour of the stereotypical English clergyman. Gentlemen of the cloth were supposed to be paragons of moral virtue, emulated by their parishioners. Therefore, a moral defect in the clergy might lead to a much more widespread, and thus more serious, loss of respect amongst 'the people.'

This critique of the lack of upright moral attitudes amongst the clergy was revisited several times. In a subsequent cartoon, however, members of the public were the clergyman's criticizers.[77] In the eyes of the cartoonist, this was an even more scathing report on clerical gentlemen. That members of the public saw the need to draw attention to the clergyman's shortcomings, revealed the full extent of his denigration. Again, the men at the *Punch* table understood the failures of various Church of England clergymen in terms of their own moral code of conduct. As gentlemen, the men of *Punch* conducted themselves (at least publicly) on

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[73] Codell, "Imperial Differences and Culture Clashes in Victorian Periodicals' Visuals: The Case of *Punch*," 410.

[74] Kemnitz, "The Cartoon As a Historical Source," 81.

[75] Ibid., 84.

[76] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 47.

[77] *Punch*, Volume 23 (1852), 148.

the basis of a system of belief in which morality played a central role. Their criticism of the clergy was therefore, both a criticism of clerical gentlemen for not living up to this code, and their public profession of belief in the value of a moral code.

While several moral critiques of the clergy appeared in *Punch*, throughout the 1850s and 1860s, by far the favourite target of such commentary was the young swell. Eric Partridge defines the swell as a gentleman who was "fashionably or smartly dressed" in order to "make a show of his finery."[78] A slang dictionary published in the nineteenth century described the swell as "a man of importance; a person with a showy, jaunty exterior, 'a rank swell,' [or] a very 'flash[il]y' dressed person, a man who by excessive dress apes a higher position than he actually occupies."[79] Although the authors of *Punch* may not have agreed completely with such definitional terms, they certainly did criticize the stereotypical swell for his excessive and loud dress (but this will be further discussed in Chapter 4).   The authors and artists of *Punch* also drew attention to something unmentioned in the various slang dictionaries, the swell's moral and intellectual character, or lack of it.   In many respects, the attempts to identify the swell as morally lacking were simply an effort by the hopeful gentlemen of *Punch* to differentiate as strongly as possible between themselves, as gentlemen, and the swell. If the swell was identifiable and differentiated only by his style of dress, a clear line that separated him from the gentleman could not easily be attained. However, if the swell was also morally degenerate, morality as has been shown was central in the character of the ideal gentleman as the *Punch* men understood him, a greater degree of separation between the two characterizations could be achieved.

The *Punch* cartoons involving the swell usually had some reference to or mention of fashion, but they also incorporated many other different themes and subjects as well. Several cartoons reveal that, as the gentlemen of *Punch* understood it, the swell gave his whole mind to fashion. The swell had no better activity with which to occupy his time than the loud fads in fashion.[80] Not only did the swell have no honourable way of passing his time, he also was rarely portrayed as possessing any degree of intellectual aptitude. (Figure 4) Swells were frequently

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[78] Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 854.
[79] John Camden Hotten, *The Slang Dictionary; or, the vulgar words, street phrases, and 'fast' expressions of high and low society. Many with their etymology, and a few with their history traced* (London: R. C. Hotten, Piccadilly, 1872), 251.
[80] Victorian men's fashion will be discussed further in chapter 4.

depicted 'showing' themselves in the park, this being the highlight of their day (and in their own minds this occupation *was* their profession).[81] That the swell demonstrated such emasculated egotism was not accidental on the part of *Punch,* for the true gentleman was never outwardly proud or boastful (although always sure of himself). Indeed Thackeray himself noted that a gentleman should never give himself "airs."[82]

In 1860, a cartoon appeared in which the central characters were commenting on the newly enacted bylaw that prevented horses from being ridden in Kensington Gardens. (Figure 5) In the course of their conversation, the 'small swell,' mounted on his steed, explained that he could not understand why there was a need for such a law and why he would no longer be able to ride his mount through the park. He argued that the park officials "ought to be deuced glad of anything that adds to the beauty of the place."[83] The artist's attempt to differentiate himself from the swell, based on Thackeray's definition of the gentlemen, is hardly subtle. The true gentleman never attempted to draw attention to himself, and never expressed to others such a high regard for himself as did this swell. By over-emphasizing attributes and attitudes of the swell, such as these, the staff was both strengthening their claim as gentlemen by patrolling the boundaries between the swell and the gentleman, and challenging the swell's claim to genteel status.

Furthermore, the immoral idleness of the swell was frequently remarked on. The men of *Punch*, as working journalists, understood the pursuit of a respectable profession to be a marker of gentility. In order to be accepted as gentlemen themselves, they had to convince their readership (and Victorian society) of this, and as a result, frequently criticized those who did not expend earnest effort in their professional lives. As some scholars have argued,[84] the ability of the men of business, industry, and trade to be considered genteel helped to ensure their acquiescence in the Victorian social order. Understood with this in mind, the swell who stated that he "always had the gweatest aversion t' all kinds of business"[85] not only revealed his inability to articulate his thoughts respectably, but he drew attention to the differences between

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[81] *Punch*, Volume 28 (1855), 21.
[82] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Pendennis*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1910), 141.
[83] *Punch*, Volume 39 (August 4, 1860), 44.
[84] See chapter 1.
[85] *Punch*, Volume 27 (1854), 30.

himself and the actual gentleman. If the swell was engaged in any sort of profession, to the men of *Punch*, it must have been frivolous and required little mental exertion. In a railway car, a frequent scene of genteel interaction in the cartoons of *Punch*, an 'urban passenger' offered his newspaper to a young swell who was lounging next to him. Of course the swell refused to read the paper, because if he did, he "shouldn't have anything to do when [he] got to the office!"[86] The swellish character, perhaps a civil servant, had the strongest aversion to work. Any moral gentleman would not be satisfied with such an idle and listless profession, but for the swell who did not "care to do anything [he] could get done for [himself],"[87] such an undemanding job was the perfect fit.

Central to the working definition of the swell was his showiness and his vanity. The swells that appeared in the volumes of *Punch* possessed a sense of effeminate vanity that was rarely if ever restricted by a genteel moral code. (Figure 6) The swells and gents portrayed in the cartoons of *Punch* understood their role in society as simply a focus for admiration. For these men, physical appearance was paramount, and while their style of dress certainly seemed far too lurid, fashionable, and trendy for the men of *Punch*, these swells and gents placed a great deal of importance on how they dressed because they knew that everyone was watching them. Although the swells and gents believed the stares they were greeted with in public to be those of admiration, *Punch* revealed that they were more often glares of condemnation. Swells in *Punch* cartoons appearing in 'gorgeous array' were frequently mistaken for men of the lowest moral and social background. However, through it all, the swell remained completely unaware of these circumstances, no doubt wrapped up in his own vain thoughts.

That *Punch* associated the swell and the gent with vanity is not surprising. Thackeray identified the swell or the dandy as being full of his own importance and extremely proud, caring for no one else but himself.[88] As well, Thackeray stressed the humble nature of the gentleman. Therefore, *Punch*'s mention of the vain swell served two very important roles. By identifying the swell's lack of concern for others, they were doing all they could to establish the swell as the antithesis to the gentleman. Secondly, they were attempting to demonstrate what they

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[86] *Punch*, Volume 41 (September 7, 1861), 102.
[87] *Punch*, Volume 44 (February 21, 1863), 74.
[88] Thackeray, *Pendennis*, Volume 2, 113.

themselves were by depicting exactly what they were not.[89] The swell's role in *Punch* was as central to the staff's definition of a gentleman as the gentleman himself. The official *Punch* view was that only some sort of radical moralizing mission could save these young swells from themselves. Mr. Punch proved the perfect missionary. Such a practical and moral character, the editor and staff of *Punch* would strongly argue, could not be found anywhere else. In "A Treat for Swells," the author argued that Mr. Punch should deliver a long speech to the swells of Britain in which he would offer advice on how to live a gentlemanly life. Being a living example of that creed, who better was there to perform such an awesome task?[90]

The men of *Punch*, as has been demonstrated by the profusion of cartoons and articles on the subject, were unquestionably threatened by the possibility of being themselves confused with the swell. That many of the cartoons discussing the swell are the most entertaining is no accident. *Punch* worked hard to firmly declare and reinforce the differences between themselves and the swell. As an outright attack on the swell would have been impossible for the gentlemen of *Punch*, they achieved their goals through the type of genteel humour that became synonymous with the magazine.

Undoubtedly the men of *Punch* were, as Kemnitz postulates, attempting to shape the opinion of their readership. They attempted to create a magazine that, although funny, propagated the notion of gentility as they understood it, and demonstrated how the *Punch* staff fit into this conception. Their frequent references to morality, whether that of the clerical parson or the gambler, the swell or the gent, attempted to solidify the perception of the magazine in the minds of its readers as a moral paragon. Queen Victoria herself also advocated the furtherance of morality in the life of her British subjects. *Punch* used mock letters from Victoria to increase the sense of authority and significance carried by *Punch*'s warnings of the moral degeneration that they felt was taking place in their society. Such letters included various comments on honourable activities in daily life. One such letter also included a reminder that those Britons who engaged themselves in immoral activities would not be received at court.[91] It should not escape the modern reader that it was Mr. Punch who was given the privilege of receiving these

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[89] For further discussion on the creation of identity, see Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 5-6.
[90] *Punch*, Volume 48 (January 12, 1865), 12.
[91] *Punch*, Volume 45 (August 8, 1863), 54.

mock letters from Her Majesty. The editors used the Queen as another means to further the recognition of Mr. Punch and themselves as a shining example of virtue and morality.

For the English gentleman, as *Punch* understood him, the constant maintenance of an 'upright constitution' in any public circumstance was of the utmost importance. For the men of *Punch*, how they represented themselves and how they were perceived in public were the decisive factors in whether or not they would achieve gentlemanly status. As a result, their portrayals of great gentlemen usually included a reference to their continually honourable public presence. For example, "Valentine's Day" depicts a gentleman who, upon deciding to look out of his window to see if he has any Valentines, discovers a crowd of women stretching far beyond what the borders of the page allow the reader to see.[92] Although for the sake of the public reputation of his family and himself he does not wish to give his name,[93] the gentleman in the image bears a striking resemblance to Mr. Punch. Likewise, when an anonymous gentleman (again resembling Mr. Punch) is illustrated being accosted by a group of threatening suffragettes, rather than consider retaliating against the women himself, he inquires as to whether or not there is an Act of Parliament "to protect him from this sort of intimidation."[94] In both situations the gentleman, well aware of the value of his public reputation, went to great lengths to maintain the outward attitudes and countenance of a gentleman.

Relations between the gentleman and foreign pretenders to genteel status had always been somewhat strained. The foreigner's complete lack of ability to control himself in public disgusted the *Punch* men.[95] The English had always been somewhat suspicious of foreigners, and the gentleman was no different in his own thinking. As has already been stated, for the gentleman his public reputation was of the utmost importance. This was frequently the focus of the staff when criticizing continental Europeans, usually the French. There was a prevailing view that a continental European would do things in public that his English counterpart would have difficulty bringing himself to do even in private. As *Punch* understood it, Frenchmen were severely lacking in their public conduct. However, rather than portraying the French as dismissive of this 'fact,' *Punch* represented them as understanding these differences, and

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[92] *Punch*, Volume 48 (February 18, 1865), 70-71.
[93] Ibid.
[94] *Punch*, Volume 49 (July 22, 1865), 23.
[95] *Punch*, Volume 25 (1853), 94.

cognizant that the English gentleman conducted himself in a more moral and proper manner, especially in public, than they themselves could ever hope to do.

Punch's criticism of foreign men and their moral shortcomings again demonstrates the staff's attempts to solidify their own position within the British social hierarchy. That the foreigner received such special attention is not surprising as 'the foreigner' was the focus of a variety of criticisms throughout this period. Punch simply adapted their critique of the foreigner to fit into their own perception and understanding of the world. As well, they drew attention to the lack of specific qualities in foreign gentility, essential to the English gentleman, that they assuredly possessed themselves.

There were also gentlemen within Britain itself who needed to reform their outward moral appearance. The Punch staff felt that it was their duty to draw attention to the ever-increasing moral laxity amongst the younger generations of British gentlemen. They understood the morals of these young men to be severely defective, a situation in need of immediate attention. In "Reformatory for Young Gentlemen," the author pleaded with the parents of such children to send them to a moral reformatory especially designed for children of the gentility. He suggested that without immediate intervention, the defects in their children's moral constitution would result in their "total destruction."[96] While such concerns may represent the typical concerns of an older generation with the actions of a younger, that Punch chose to focus such generational concerns on the topic of moral degeneration again displays the importance of morality in the staff's conception of the gentleman. A 'Prudent old Gentleman,' addressing the genteel readership of Punch declared that a true gentleman must treat his moral conduct like his watch: "wind up your conduct, like your watch, once every day, examining minutely whether you are 'fast' or 'slow.'"[97] Such inward examination of one's moral constitution should begin, the staff on Punch felt, at an early age.

The gentlemen of Punch attempted to maintain a moral sentiment in every aspect of life. As many members of the Punch staff had attended public schools themselves, they believed in their value not only as educational institutions, but as social institutions as well (teaching young men to be morally upright gentlemen). Although Douglas Jerrold, Shirley Brooks (who was articled to his uncle after his early education), and John Tenniel had no lengthy formal education

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[96] Punch, Volume 28 (1855), 234.
[97] Ibid., 118.

to speak of (Tenniel did attend a local primary school in Bayswater and later briefly attended medical school in his early adulthood),[98] Thackeray and Leech both began their 'education of a gentleman' at Charterhouse.[99] Tom Taylor attended the small Sunderland Grange School, but later went onto the University of Glasgow and Trinity College, Cambridge.[100] *Punch*'s editor Mark Lemon attended Cheam School, which was, as Arthur Adrian writes, "one of the oldest private schools in England, it catered for gentlemen's sons."[101] Charles Keen attended grammar school in Foundation Street, Ipswich and then worked in his father's law office for a short time before taking up drawing.[102] These men were brought up in strictly middle-class households, although their family wealth varied a great degree. It is thus no surprise that when the Koh-i-Noor diamond came into the possession of Her Majesty, *Punch* suggested that she use the diamond to further the education system in Britain. The Koh-i-Noor diamond was at that time the largest known diamond in the world. It had appeared at the Great Exhibition in 1851, and since that time had been entrusted, although not officially given, to Victoria. It was not until the 1870s, when Victoria became Empress of India, that the diamond officially became the personal property of the Crown. In 1851, a particularly interesting article appeared in *Punch* that suggested a variety of 'appropriate' uses of the Koh-i-Noor diamond. The article explained that:

> A fatality has hitherto attended the possession of the Koh-i-Noor diamond; on which account, now that it has fallen into Her Majesty's hands, superstition might counsel the Queen to get rid of it as soon as possible. A considerably better reason, however, why our SOVEREIGN might be recommended to dispose of this piece of crystallized carbon, is, that by selling it for what it would fetch, she might be enabled to sport a much more

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[98] Michael Slater, "Jerrold, Douglas William (1803-1857), playwright and journalist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, G. C. Basse, rev. H.C.G. Matthew, "Brooks, Shirley (1816-1874), journalist and playwright," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and L. Perry Curtis jun., "Tenniel, Sir John (1820-1914), artist and cartoonist," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[99] Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity 1811 – 1846* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 79. Also, see Simon Houfe, "Leech, John (1817-1864), humorous artist and illustrator," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[100] Craig Howes, "Taylor, Tom (1817-1880) playwright and comic writer," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[101] Arthur A. Adrian, *Mark Lemon: First Editor of Punch* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 8.

[102] Simon Houfe, "Keene, Charles Samuel (1823-1891), illustrator and etcher," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

splendid jewel in that crown, which may she wear long before changing it for a better! The Koh-i-Noor would fetch a sum which might be invested in a munificent Royal foundation for educational purposes. This proposal is more especially seasonable just now, that we are all – that is, all rational and honest men – considering how best to counteract papal machinations. We cannot oppose the POPE and his servile emissaries more effectually than by disseminating knowledge. Ignorance is said to be the Mother of Devotion; which is quite true – though only true as regards that devotion that venerates nail-parings, images, anatomical preparations, and other things of a similar nature to the objects worshipped by aboriginal negroes.[103]

Within this excerpt, one finds support for an effort to use the funds that could be gained from the sale of the famed Koh-i-Noor diamond in furtherance of education. That this education could serve to reduce Papal influence in Protestant England, through advocating nationalistic ideals, was only one of the positive side effects of such action.[104] The author of the article, although in a comedic way, nonetheless supported the furtherance of moral ideals – those of "rational and honest men;" those of gentlemen. He encouraged the monarch to forego aristocratic superstition, and rid herself of the bothersome and ineffectual diamond in a productive and moral way. The author identified a number of characteristics that he believed to be descriptive of the moral gentleman.   There was an emphasis on the importance of education, a strong support for the English nation (and of course Protestantism), admonishment of aristocratic superstition, and a declaration of the importance of men being productive in their lives (not simply existing idly). The gentleman's morality extended into the far reaches of his life and personal conduct.

Although in principle the men of *Punch* may have agreed that upward social mobility was attainable by any man who had the appropriate work ethic and character, this certainly did not mean that they supported the mixing of the 'right sort' with the 'wrong sort.' For the sake of

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[103] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 165.

[104] Between 1850 and 1851 the Vatican expanded and strengthened the ecclesiastical hierarchy in England to meet the needs of a growing Catholic population. As a result of several misunderstandings, the "Papal Aggression" crisis resulted. The renewed fear of Papal authority, voiced in *Punch*, was in reference to this "Papal Aggression." See James P. Flint, O.S.B., *Great Britain and the Holy See: The Diplomatic Relations Question, 1846 – 1852* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Of America Press, 2003), 133 – 183.

every gentleman's honesty and virtue, *Punch* instructed them to avoid those baser characters in society at all costs.[105] While in theory men could improve themselves, and thus raise their own social standings, in the staff's opinion, there was no need for a true gentleman to risk association with men who still conducted themselves in an immoral manner. After all, it was highly dangerous for the gentleman to be seen, in a very public society, with personages who were not at least equal to his own social standing.

On 4 July 1857, *Punch*'s Large Cut[106] again included a depiction of Queen Victoria. On this occasion she was shown awarding Mr. Punch the Victoria Cross.[107] Victoria had first instituted the Victoria Cross in 1856, at the request of her husband Prince Albert. Usually only conferred upon members of the British Armed Forces, for valorous acts of extreme bravery in the face of the enemy, Mr. Punch was the first known exception to this rule. That Mr. Punch received this highest honour would not have gone unnoticed by his readership. Judging by the fact that the publishing of such an image was certainly a risk, the contents of this entirely fictitious cartoon, and the shape that it would take, were definitely a topic of discussion at the Wednesday dinner meeting of the editors and senior writers of *Punch*. They would have agreed that this representation of Victoria on horseback, presenting her humble servant Mr. Punch with the Victoria Cross, was the best means to transfer a sense of how they felt Mr. Punch should be understood by his readers. Such an image was an attempt to convey a sense of public recognition of the fact that Mr. Punch, along with his editors, artists, and writers, was trying to raise the moral tone of Victorian journalism.

That Mr. Punch was depicted by the artists of *Punch* receiving the Victoria Cross indicates the desire of the staff to be recognized as paragons of moral virtue, ideals to be held up and emulated. The cartoon attempts to show that even amongst the highest authorities in Britain, it was realized that Mr. Punch had been battling against the moral evils in society through his genteel journalism. Moreover, the fact that the editors felt comfortable including this cartoon in the magazine is proof that, to some extent, their readership was able to agree that Mr. Punch had become central to the reformation of Victorian journalism.

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[105] *Punch*, Volume 44 (January 31, 1863), 50.
[106] The 'Large Cut' was the full-page cartoon included in every weekly edition of *Punch*, the content of which was always a central topic of discussion at the weekly dinner meetings.
[107] *Punch*, Volume 33 (July 4, 1857), 3.

The moral tone of *Punch* between 1851 and 1867 was that of an ideal Victorian gentleman. The editors, artists, and authors of *Punch* used the magazine as well as its central character Mr. Punch to further their own recognition as gentlemen. But there were wider consequences of their efforts as well. As Aled Jones asserts, 'products of the printing press,' such as *Punch*, need to be understood not only as observers and reporters of contemporary events, but also as playing an integral participatory role in the changes that occurred in Victorian society.[108] Thus, whether intentionally (and I believe it was) or not, while these men were attempting to gain recognition as gentlemen, they were also shifting the definitional base of the term itself. The men of *Punch* were participants in creating a suitable gentleman that they themselves could be identified with. The gentleman's morality played, as it does for modern scholars, a key role in helping them understand who they were and how they wanted to be perceived. While morality is not, as Letwin believes, the solitary defining characteristic of the gentleman, for the men of *Punch* it was certainly central to their understanding of him.

The distinct moral tone the *Punch* men established was central to their definition and understanding of the gentleman. The editors, authors, and artists of *Punch* used their definitional terms of morality to establish a gentlemanly ideal that they themselves could identify with. By both critiquing and publicizing the perceived conduct of the British Parliament, the *Punch* staff, Church of England clergymen, and the swells and gents of London, the Punchites honed their definitional base of the Victorian gentleman. Patrolling the vague borders of morality with which the gentleman has frequently been associated gave further credence to the staff's claim of genteel status in Victorian Britain.

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[108] Aled Jones, "The Press and the Printed Word," in *A Companion to Nineteenth Century-Britain*, ed. Chris Williams (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 369.

Chapter 3

Mr. Punch's Treatment of Social Class

Social standing in Victorian Britain had an immense relevance in every aspect of daily life.[109] Many establishments and organizations were socially restrictive, and one's job, profession, or lack thereof, typically reflected where one fit into the social stratum.[110] However, the understanding of British class is and was, as David Cannadine notes, "vague, confused, contradictory, [and] ignorant."[111] Gentlemen were typically from the upper and middle classes, but the status of 'gentleman' did not neatly fit into any Victorian social class as such. It may seem difficult to understand why Mr. Punch and his authors and artists did not specifically state where they fit into this social hierarchy. However, upon closer examination, it becomes overtly evident that such a lapse was intentional. These men, as were many Victorian journalists and authors, were not sure themselves of where they fit into the social system under which they lived. Thus, as was the nature of the stereotypical gentleman, Mr. Punch and his colleagues evaded any specific declarations of their respective social class while at the same time they attempted to gain recognition as gentlemen.

While it was unequivocally understood by the gentleman's Victorian contemporaries that he was definitely not a member of the lowest orders, he was not distinctly middle or upper class either. As *Punch*'s numerous critiques of aristocratic men and women demonstrate, the staff certainly found their way of life difficult to identify with. The way in which the *Punch* staff perceived the various follies of aristocrats, especially those involved in government, and the staff's proposed ideas about how the lower classes could help their aristocratic superiors mend their ways, demonstrates this. The *Punch* staff's humourous commentary on social status was also a means of reducing the various threats posed by both their social superiors and inferiors.

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[109] Asa Briggs writes that the "concept of social 'class' with all its attendant terminology was a product of the [nineteenth] century. . . Attention was paid not to the broad contours of class division, but to an almost endless series of social gradations." See Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England," in *Essays in Labour History*, ed. Asa Briggs and John Saville (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), 43, 69.

[110] David Cannadine describes the British understanding of class to be "rather like sex: it is to some extent in the eyes of the beholder and in the British case takes place at least as much inside the head as outside." See David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), xi.

[111] Ibid., xii.

Several *Punch* men were unsure of their social standing in Victorian Britain and understood this as a proverbial 'chink' in their genteel armour. As such, they were quick to point out the plethora of negative attributes of the 'other.'[112]

The aspiring gentlemen of *Punch* were definitely certain of the morality of their lifestyles; however, their social positions could not be positively identified with any degree of such certainty. As a Bohemian, the strength of Mr. Punch's claim to gentleness did not rely to a great degree on his class affiliations. Although he was often critical of various aspects of the stereotypical aristocratic lifestyle, Mr. Punch certainly would not object to being referred to as aristocratic. Conversely, while he made frequent mention of the numerous negative aspects of the lower working classes, he believed that something valuable could be learnt from the way in which they conducted their lives. These seemingly contradictory notions can be explained by the confusion both Mr. Punch and his staff shared in regards to this subject. The gentleman himself was, after all, a class-ambiguous creature, hovering in the borderlands of Victorian society between the middle and upper classes. Bohemians felt that the true gentleman was above mere class distinctions. Thus, the men of *Punch* felt no need to clarify for their readers their own position in the Victorian social hierarchy. The uncertainty these men expressed in regards to their own social position is evident in their variety of commentaries on social class.

The *Punch* authors and artists did express frequent disappointment and even contempt for aristocratic men (and sometimes women), and the aristocratic qualities commonly associated with them. In this aspect, the Punchites are representative of the Victorian middle class as a whole. Many of the criticisms of the aristocracy in the mid 1850s had strong ties to the debacle that would come to be known as the Crimean War. The fact that the Crimean war was so strongly associated with the aristocracy meant that any military setbacks had disastrous repercussions for this social class who was also leading the army.[113] Olive Anderson argues that as the war progressed,

> war began increasingly to be seen in terms of matching supply with demand, in terms of
> organization and administration and the manipulation of material resources, rather than of
> personal bravery and leadership. From this economic conception of war it was but a short

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[112] For a further discussion of the process of 'othering' or the viewing and understanding of "those" see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 7.

[113] Olive Anderson, *A Liberal State At War: English politics and economics during the Crimean War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967), 101-102.

step to the equation of military strength with practical efficiency, and this in the 1850s was inevitably associated with the middle class and modernity, not with the aristocracy and tradition.[114]

Anderson continues that "it was the Administrative Reform Association itself and its programme[115] which alone appealed to the solid and successful business and professional men, the readers of *Punch* and *The Times*, and which therefore most faithfully reflects the impact of the Crimean campaign on influential middle-class feeling."[116] It was therefore, in this anti-aristocratic climate that the *Punch* men found an opportunity to exploit a variety of other perceived weaknesses of the aristocracy.

In the early days of 1852, Lord John Russell, still Prime Minister (for he lost the confidence of his party in February of that year), introduced the second franchise reform bill in the House of Commons. His bill proposed a further electoral expansion to include £20 householders in the counties and £5 householders in the towns.[117] In the preparatory stages of the bill, Mr. Punch had his own amendments to propose. While he expressed little concern in regards to widening the electorate, he felt that the House of Lords should undergo a radical restructuring. Mr. Punch found the Peers far too willing to "put on the drag of the Government Stage Coach when driving on the reform road."[118] The Peers understood reform as a 'down hill' process, and as such, Mr. Punch questioned the relevance of hereditary Peers in the House of Lords. He argued that men are no more born to be legislators than they are born to be doctors. Mr. Punch contended that it was far more likely that the son of a Peer would be born an ass, which he felt happened far too often, than a legislator; "the coronet hid not the donkey's ears."[119]

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[114] Ibid., 104.

[115] The programme advocated and succeeded in achieving entrance exams for many civil service jobs allowing many university educated middle class men to enter into civil service jobs that would otherwise have been unavailable to them based on their lack of aristocratic connections.

[116] Anderson, *A Liberal State At War*, 106.

[117] For further discussion of the mid-Victorian reform movement see Michael S. Smith's "Parliamentary Reform and the Electorate" in Chris Williams, *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 165.

[118] Coach drivers used to 'put on the drag' when driving down hillsides. *Punch* (Volume 22, 1852), 73.

[119] Ibid.

Mr. Punch and his cohort's proposed solution to this problem was simple. As true professional gentlemen, they proposed that Peers write and pass examinations testing their various faculties before they take their seats in the House of Lords. As many of the genteel professions (medicine and law in particular) employed the examination process, it is not surprising that they recommended this remedy. In the concluding paragraph of "Reform in the House of Lords (A Serious Omission in Lord John's Bill)," Mr. Punch explains that

> this is our scheme of Peerage Reform, to which the principal objection we anticipate is, that it is impracticable, because it can't be done; and that, warned by the confusion and disorder that has resulted from change in foreign nations, we should shrink from touching a time-honoured institution; which is as much as to say, that because our neighbours have divided their carotid arteries, we had better not shave ourselves.

Punch advocated a gradual method of reform that can hardly be understood as aristocratic. That the staff knew such suggestions would be viewed in the light of the Year of Revolutions of 1848 reveals that even in the early 1850s some of the final radical remnants of *Punch*'s younger days were still able to slip out from time to time. Although greatly toned down by Leech and Thackeray, such radical sentiments emerged in the discussion of social superiors.

Even the reform bills that followed the Reform Act of 1832 did not prevent *Punch* from criticizing members of the House of Commons. In the 1850s, regular Members of Parliament still received no annual salary. Therefore, they were overwhelmingly landed aristocrats of independent wealth themselves or directly descended from the landed elite. Only a few owed their wealth to commerce or industry. Thus, *Punch* understood the follies of various M.P.s as a result of their aristocratic nature, and criticized them as it did the entirety of the aristocracy. The men of *Punch*, as did most people, and gentlemen in particular, understood the actions of others through a filter of their own experiences, understandings, and personal beliefs. Thus, their critique of M.P.s as members of high society reveals how they understood themselves as well. The Member of Parliament[120] understood the 'honourable man' to be open to bribery, a thief and a drunkard, able to perjure himself without the slightest guilt of conscience, frequently involved in various schemes of corruption, and not above purchasing votes to ensure that he remained in

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[120] As understood by the Punchites.

his electoral seat.[121] This view was in precise opposition to how the gentleman would have viewed an honourable man. *Punch* attempted to criticize Victorian aristocratic men by revealing their absurd understanding of honour. At the same time, they endeavored to convince their readers of the necessity of extending their moral reformation beyond the borders of gentility to the whole of society, both high and low.

For such an awesome task, Mr. Punch felt that he could use certain upright members of the working classes to teach valuable skills to aristocrats. He wrote of a 'Higher Classes' Encouragement Society' that would "distribute prizes for good conduct to meritorious clowns. It consist[ed] chiefly of members of the commercial and working classes, and its object [was] the encouragement of industry and economy amongst the higher orders."[122] Essentially, the fictitious society was formed with the purpose of rewarding members of the 'higher orders' for behaving as they should, or as the men of *Punch* thought they should. For Example, the Earl of Holloway was rewarded with a new coronet for having been able to support his family of nine children on the 'meager' sum of ten thousand pounds a year without having to apply for any 'favour' from the government. The Marquis of Acton was presented with a "double eye-glass and a yard and a half of blue ribbon" for having lived at Wormholt Park, his country estate for thirty years improving the area, and never once reducing himself to raising the rents of his tenants. Captain Swelton of the 100th Light Dragoons was offered a silk pocket-handkerchief for his ability to live solely off his pay and private property and having never avoided paying his debts to his tailor. Finally, the society bestowed upon Sir Redward Tapeman a silver spoon for his twenty years of prudence and savings during his time in the diplomatic service.[123] What is quickly noticeable in this sample of awards presented is the prevalence of financial concerns.

For the men of *Punch*, the gentleman, as they understood him, was financially prudent. He did not spend frivolously, he avoided gambling and betting, and he never incurred large amounts of debt that he could not pay. Such terms of genteel identification were constructed in response to the often-observed financial incapability of many aristocrats. Gambling, and the massive debts that it often incurred, was commonplace amongst many of the most elite members

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[121] *Punch*, Volume 24 (1853), 100.
[122] *Punch*, Volume 27 (1854), 205.
[123] Ibid.

of the upper class.[124] This was one of the many aspects of the aristocratic lifestyle that prevented them from being truly moral gentlemen. As well, from the perspective of Mr. Punch and his editors, authors, and artists, it was an area of their lives where they had 'the upper hand' over much of high society. While it cannot be said that the men of *Punch* never found themselves in debt, many of Mr. Punch's associates at one time or another extracted short-term financial loans from Bradbury & Evans,[125] their accumulation of debt was maintained more secretively.

The extent to which the aristocracy was able to learn skills from the industrious working men and women of Britain did have its limitations, however. In 1864, a half-page cartoon appeared in *Punch* depicting an 'aristocratic workroom,' busy with Dukes and Duchesses preparing goods for an industrial exhibition.(Figure 7) If such a scenario alone does not seem ridiculous enough, the reader quickly has his attention drawn to the fact that the men are performing 'women's tasks,' the women are occupied in purely 'male endeavors,' and the young daughters sitting near their parents are offering helpful words of advice. The Dukes are busy with knitting and embroidering, whilst the women occupy themselves with boot making and model warship building. The farcical reversal of gender roles humorously displays what the *Punch* artists felt would happen if such personages truly were in charge of industry. As well, the demasculinization of the titled men reduces their importance in the social hierarchy, and thus their threat to the men of *Punch*. As masculine attributes were central to *Punch*'s understanding of the gentleman, such criticisms held far more weight than we today would give them. Images such as this directly questioned the role of the aristocratic male elite in the power scheme of the country. As the *Punch* staff's criticisms of their social superiors show, their movement away from the radicalism of their early days did not necessitate a completely un-radical attitude in all respects. The borders within which their critiques were formed simply shifted. *Punch*'s commentary on nineteenth-century marriages is another example of this.

Nineteenth-century aristocratic marriages had attracted criticisms from a variety of contemporary observers and *Punch*'s discussion of the aristocratic marriage was no different in its negative representation of the situation. In "Philosophy of 'Marriage in High Life'" *Punch*

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[124] The Prince of Wales himself, who came of age in the 1860s, was known to lose considerable amounts in various betting games and sports.

[125] Bradbury & Evans were often willing to act as bankers to the *Punch* staff, routinely lending sums large and small at short notice. See Patrick Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 – 1874," 199.

declared that it had finally solved the mystery as to why aristocratic marriages were usually presided over by two Church of England clergymen. The *Punch* men understood that it was the nature of the aristocratic marriage that necessitated multiple clergymen in attendance. As marriages amongst the 'superior classes' were usually entirely political and financial negotiations, more often than not it took two clerical men to unite the unwilling bride and bridegroom.[126] This commentary is interesting because frequently the sons and daughters of British gentlemen contracted marriages for many of the same reasons. While there may not have always been the antipathy between prospective couples described in the case of aristocratic unions, marriage in genteel households was seldom entirely the result of a man and a woman falling in love. However, while the outward actions of both social groups were the same, the ambitious gentlemen of *Punch* argued that the motivations were drastically different. Whereas aristocrats were only interested in gaining money and power through marriage unions, young ladies and gentlemen were also interested in established a blissfully domestic home. While young gentlemen were searching for eligible brides, they were also looking for paragons of moral virtue and women who could conduct themselves, both privately and publicly, with the utmost discretion and poise. Young ladies were looking for men that could support them in the genteel fashion to which they had become accustomed, as well as someone who could conduct themselves appropriately in the public arena.

The *Punch* staff also commented on the practice of dueling amongst the British aristocracy. While it was during Victoria's reign that the practice finally ended in Britain, it was still frequently associated with the landed nobility. The practice of dueling stretched back to the eleventh century, and was a very public method of defending one's honour. Frequently fought as the result of a slur on an individual's name, family, or sovereign, the duel was a means of redressing the situation, and the willingness of the challenger to risk his life in a duel demonstrated the depths of his own honour that had been called into question.[127] While the ultimate goal of the duel was not always death - often it was simply for the challenger to gain 'satisfaction' - mortal injuries frequently resulted. The *Punch* authors' commentary on this sport

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[126] *Punch*, Volume 22 (1852), 190.
[127] Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

of 'fools' was both a condemnation of the activity itself, and a critique of the aristocrats who found solace in such actions.[128] For example, the poem *Doggrel on Duelling* explains:

To fight a duel is a very foolish action,

Particularly with a view to satisfaction;

A pretty sort of satisfaction it is to be shot!

For if you fight, of course you're as likely to be hit, as not.[129]

The connotations are clear: the *Punch* staff extended this foolish nature beyond duelists themselves to the social class from which the majority of them came.

The *Punch* men claimed that it was more respectable for such men to seek 'satisfaction' by means other than mortal combat. They argued that bringing such matters before the courts was the genteel way of addressing these types of grievances, for "the sword of justice was more effective than the weapon of the duelist."[130] The staff emphasized a rational means of addressing such problems that still gave the injured party a sense of 'satisfaction.' By placing their faith in the gentlemen of the Courts, victims whose honour had been infringed had a much safer and still, according to *Punch*, satisfactory means of managing the delicate situation.

Not only did the practice of dueling raise the proverbial eyebrow of many of the *Punch* men, but they were also concerned about the state of the all-important relationship between parents and children in high society. They felt that the bond between parent and child, especially that of mother and child, was becoming far too weak. They believed that as a result, wider social issues amongst those children of the aristocracy, already severely lacking in moral aptitude, were developing. While every generation seems to feel a certain degree of angst in regards to how the youth are being reared, the means by which the men of *Punch* chose to voice their concerns is significant. The domestic values that were of the utmost importance to the gentlemen of *Punch* were, in theory, to be learnt in part at home, passed down from one generation to the next. If

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[128] John Henry Cardinal Newman in 1852 offered a description of the gentleman in *The Idea of a University*. The gentleman, he argued, "has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember inquiries, and too indolent to bear malice. . .It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain." See George P. Landow, "Newman on the Gentleman," *The Victorian Web: literature, history, and culture in the age of Victoria*, http://www.victorianweb.org/vn/victor10.html (accessed October 9, 2009).
[129] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 7.
[130] *Punch*, Volume 23 (1852), 14.

there were a break in this sequence of transmission, especially amongst the class from which the future leaders of Britain were drawn, disaster might ensue. By 1854, *Punch* authors suggested that the "Mother" relationship was already extinct. In "The Motherless Children of Fashion," they argued that a "maternal parent" was the new substitute for a mother in aristocratic circles. The author remarked of this situation:

> our disgust at the absurdities of a highly artificial state of society is turned into a somewhat stronger feeling, when we find the nearest of natural ties deprived of its natural name in favour of a made-up title, more adapted to the cold phraseology of fashionable life. If this sort of thing is to be carried further, it will be necessary to have a fashionable dictionary for the guidance of those who may wish to render their relationships into the terms current in 'society' – a phraseology which may fairly be termed the slang of the *salons*.[131]

The author's use of the term 'slang' should not be overlooked. To the Victorians, 'slang' was understood as a "low, vulgar, unwritten, or unauthorized language."[132] By employing such rhetoric, the *Punch* staff was openly associating the actions of such aristocratic mothers with the lowest and most vulgar miscreants of society. In the eyes of Mr. Punch and his gentlemen, aristocratic virtue was certainly not something to be emulated.

The 'mottoes' that Mr. Punch attributed to various aristocrats also displays the sense of disappointment that was a consequence of his understanding of the upper class. Mr. Punch translated for his readership the mottoes of Lord Palmerston, Lord Russell, Lord Derby, the Duke of Somerset, Lord Malmesbury, Lord Westmeath, Lord Lyvden, and Lord Clanricarde. His *understanding* of each was, respectively: "I am a judicious bottle-holder;" "rest and be thankful;" "I should like to change from without;" "faith, he'll devour you; he'll keep for the present;" "I have been indiscreet;" "the Vernons were always rather green;" and "one king, one trump."[133] Mr. Punch's interpretations of the various mottoes of the aristocracy reveal considerable prejudice against them. He understood elite society in terms of their alleged overindulgence in alcohol and their idleness; their focus on the value of a person based on his or

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[131] *Punch*, Volume 27 (1854), 232.

[132] John Camden Hotten, *The Slang Dictionary; or, the vulgar words, street phrases, and 'fast' expressions of high and low society. Many with their etymology, and a few with their history traced*, 240.

[133] *Punch*, Volume 46 (March 26, 1864), 129.

her outward appearance, not their internal principles; their lack of 'respectable' faith; and their lack of discretion (all the while making overt references to the prevalence of gambling). Mr. Punch and his men placed the aristocrat in the worst possible light. They drew their understanding from his most negative attributes, and were only too willing to draw attention to these in the public arena, while at the same time, such comments revealed their own superiority in every valuable and important aspect of daily life.

The motivations for such negative coverage of the stereotypical aristocrat are twofold. There is no doubt that in terms of readership, the majority of those who subscribed to *Punch* were not titled aristocrats. Therefore, for them, as for many others, publicizing and criticizing the faults of their social superiors was enjoyable in itself; thus, such discussions helped to maintain a readership. For the men of *Punch*, these criticisms also indirectly publicized their own moral superiority as gentlemen. Such discussions within the pages of *Punch* allowed the gentleman to 'trump' the titled nobility in a way that would not have been possible outside of the pages of this publication. It allowed these men to reveal their moral superiority through genteel means. They did not overtly spew forth pages and pages of monotonous declarations of how superior they were: rather they used discussions of their social superiors to reveal this in a more cunningly restrained way.

Members of *Punch* also found fault with those Members of Parliament who did not seem to care for the lower working classes in the paternalistic way in which the Punchites believed they should. In 1845, in an effort to reduce the severity of what would come to be known as the Irish Potato Famine, Sir Robert Peel, then Prime Minister and leader of the conservative party, repealed the Corn Laws, the duties on imported foreign grain. This gave Benjamin Disraeli an opportunity to voice his long-held contempt for Peel over a highly publicized political issue.[134] Disraeli and his Young Englanders fought openly and fiercely against the repeal, but as Peel had the support of his own party as well as that of the Whigs, Disraeli was unable to prevent its passage. *Punch* understood this as Disraeli shirking his duty to provide for and protect those less fortunate than himself. As a result, many of the cartoons in the early 1850s depict Mr. Disraeli

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[134] When Peel became Prime Minister in 1841, he completely (and understandably in view of his lack of experience) overlooked Disraeli when forming his cabinet. Before the election, Peel had been supportive of Disraeli's political ambitions.

being visited, and appearing severely frightened, by the "Ghost of Protection."[135](Figure 8)
Punch did not overlook members of the landed aristocracy, whom such a bill would undoubtedly
hit hard financially, in the lengthy discussion of these events either. A reference to them as
"starvationists"[136] is telling about the basis of *Punch*'s concern in regards to these issues. The
Punch men, as gentlemen, were earnestly concerned that government protect the 'lesser'
members of society who were unable to care for themselves. Such aristocrats as these
"starvationists" who profited from high grain prices were concerned only with their own
interests. The paternal protection of "the masses" that the English gentleman advocated was
rebuffed by the personal greed of the landed elite. This infuriated the self-perceived nobility and
righteousness of the *Punch* staff, and such articles and cartoons of attack on these aristocratic
men and their character were the result.

Prince Albert, Victoria's Consort, was arguably the pinnacle of the male Victorian
aristocratic hierarchy. As such, commentary involving him was frequent in the pages of *Punch*.
Prince Albert was born at the Schloss Rosenau near Coburg (located between Bavaria and
Prussia) in 1819. His education, from a very early age, centered on the hope that he would one
day marry his cousin, the English Princess, Victoria.[137] As such, he became widely aware of the
world in which he lived, and developed many schemes to improve various institutions that
plagued both German and English civilizations. Albert was a man who placed a high value on
morality, and indeed was a driving force behind this characteristic in Victoria.[138] As such, the
Prince may to us today seem to have a great likeness to the ultimate gentleman as understood by
the staff of *Punch*. However, Albert was not wholeheartedly praised by the men of *Punch*, and
was frequently criticized for the position he held and the influence he exerted. When discussing
Albert's representation in *Punch* one should never forget that he was first and foremost
understood in terms of his German birth: he was a foreigner.

It was, however, not only Prince Albert's birth that drew criticism from the aspiring
gentlemen of *Punch*. The Prince's expressed views of art and literature found an enemy in Mr.

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[135] *Punch*, Volume 21 (1851), 151.
[136] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 92.
[137] The cousins' mutual uncle, Leopold (the newly appointed King of the Belgians), had planned
and orchestrated the union.
[138] For a further discussion of Albert's life see Hermione Hobhouse, *Prince Albert: His life and
work* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1983).

Punch and the great authors and artists with which he worked. In one of the Prince's speeches to the Royal Academy, referenced in a *Punch* article, the Prince expressed his view that

the production of all works in art or poetry requires, in their conception or execution, not only an exercise of the intellect, skill, and patience, but particularly a concurrent warmth of feeling, and a free flow of imagination. . .This renders them most tender plants, which will thrive only in an atmosphere calculated to maintain that warmth; and that atmosphere is one of kindness – kindness towards the artist personally, as well as *towards his production*. An unkind word of criticism passes like a cold blast over their tender shoots, and shrinks them up, checking the flow of the sap which was rising to produce, perhaps, multitudes of flowers and fruit.[139]

The author of the article found such comments from the Prince, who he felt was otherwise "distinguished by such fine sense, such delicacy of appreciation, and such deep, unostentatious humanity,"[140] the hallmarks of a gentleman, to be extremely offensive. The author believed that

artists and authors [were] persons of a particular organization, with a good deal of walnut-sap in their frames; the more you thrash them, the better they flourish. And we think it the especial duty of the critic, in order to test the vital strength of flowers in the bud, and fruit in the blossom, to drench them well with a solution of vitriol; or, what may be readier at hand, a copious flow of Day and Martin.[141]

The author's position in the social hierarchy does, to a great extent, explain his criticism of Prince Albert's "effeminate consideration of the claims of art and letters."[142] All the men at *Punch* saw themselves as producers of many of the works discussed by the Prince. Therefore, the author argued that all works were not created equally, and that those worthy of praise (as *Punch*'s undoubtedly were) should not be confused as being equal to those works of a far lesser quality and value. Albert was attempting to break down borders in the world of artists and

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[139] *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 201.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid. "Day and Martin" may be a reference to the Day and Martin Company, producers of 'The real JAPAN BLACKING.' See *The Times*, January 4, 1808, 4.
[142] Ibid. The Author was probably Thackeray who had strong opinions on the matter.

authors, while the *Punch* men were tireless champions of upholding and strengthening those same borders.

Although Mr. Punch may not have unquestionably recognized the Prince's genteel nature, Prince Albert had, as recorded by *Punch*, no question as to the moral value and virtue of Mr. Punch. Mr. Punch was often called upon to save the Prince from his "ridiculous friends."[143] (Figure 9) That the authors and artists of *Punch* went to such lengths to demonstrate the fact that Mr. Punch had been accepted by the Prince Consort demonstrates the fact that they ultimately knew that Prince Albert was truly a morally upright gentleman. *Punch* was proud to have its representative be identified with the Prince because they knew that such connections were valuable to the public gentlemanly representations of Mr. Punch.

In 1855, *Punch* recognized the value of "Prince Albert's Example." The author of the article argued that it would be "good Prince Albert" who would revive the failing British Oak. He would rid the government of idle aristocratic lackeys, and replace them with men more qualified in mental capacity and honour. "A proper man," the Prince felt, should be in every important government position if the fortunes of Britain and Britons were to be returned to their previous glory. *Punch* finally recognized the Prince as a man of truthfulness and manliness.[144] The author's discussion of Prince Albert in such a way is a concerted attempt to recognize him as a gentleman. Although he was a foreigner, and as a result of his superior social position threatened the men of *Punch* to a certain degree, these men could not fail to notice the Prince's earnestly genteel attributes. He was a man of character with an impressive moral constitution, and even though he was himself an aristocrat, it is possible that the *Punch* men were cognizant of the fact that such a stereotypical label was not entirely representative of Prince Albert's true character.

In December of 1861, Prince Albert died. Whether his death was the result of a long-term illness compounded by an anxious worry over his son's frequent immoral sexual exploits, or the result of typhoid fever, scholars are unsure.[145] What is certain is that *Punch* paid tribute to Albert in the same form that it had used, and would use in the future, for its own genteel authors

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[143] *Punch,* Volume 25 (1853), 208. Perhaps an illusion to the fact that the Prince Consort felt that the English aristocracy on the whole lacked the moral restraint and earnest effort the Prince placed such a high value on.

[144] *Punch,* Volume 28 (1855), 199.

[145] Hobhouse, *Prince Albert: His life and work*, 150-151.

and artists.[146] A half-page obituary appeared soon after the unexpected announcement of Albert's death, enclosed by a thick black border, discussing the values of the "gallant prince." Referencing the chivalrous gentlemen of past ages, the author declared of the Prince that "no nobler knight had [ever] won the minstrel's praise." The author went on to discuss the Prince's grace, gentle powers, wisdom, bold Christian virtues, gallantry, and bravery.[147] The men of *Punch* could not have offered a more favourable salute if they had been mourning the passing of the ultimate gentleman himself. While this may be explained by the fact that Albert's widow was still very much alive, and thus would remain vigilant in regards to references to her departed husband in the press, such motivations do not entirely explain the obituary. Prince Albert, although of German origin, was a gentleman; and, however reluctantly, the men of *Punch* realized this.

Another hallmark of the gentleman was his household's maintenance of at least one live-in domestic servant. Live-in help was not very expensive; an average young female servant could expect to earn between approximately £7 and £12 per year plus room and board,[148] but their presence was essential in the genteel household. The presence of a male domestic servant in one's household, costing significantly more than female help, indicated significant wealth and status. The role of the domestic servant in Victorian Britain was very complex. While they were certainly far inferior to their employers in social standing and background, they cohabitated closely with their masters and knew the private intricacies of their family lives. As a result, a gentleman's domestic help could become a great liability if he or she decided to quit his service and divulge the secrets of his private life in public. Mr. Punch, following in the footsteps of Thackeray, rather than ignore this aspect of live-in help and attempt to 'sweep' such threats 'under the rug,' drew attention to these idiosyncrasies in his variety of cartoons and articles that discussed the subject.

As many Victorian live-in domestic servants had a certain degree of power in Victorian households, a certain hierarchy developed amongst them 'below stairs.' This fact was not lost on

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[146] See the obituaries of Douglas Jerrold (Volume 32), William Makepeace Thackeray (Volume 46), John Leech (Volume 47), and Charles Bennett (Volume 52) for the presentational similarities to that of Prince Albert.

[147] *Punch*, Volume 41 (December 21, 1861), 245.

[148] L. Davidoff and R. Hawthorn, *A Day in the Life of a Victorian Domestic Servant* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1976), 17.

the artists at *Punch*, and several cartoons make mention of this situation. L. Davidoff and R. Hawthorn argue that discussions of servants were made funny to hide the contemporary uneasiness about the relationship between masters and servants, and the conditions in which the servants lived.[149] Beginning in the mid 1850s, a serial group of cartoons began in *Punch* entitled "Flunkeyiana." These cartoons dealt with the social hierarchy amongst the servants, and how it often seemed to subjugate the master and mistress of the house. They chronicled the life of various servants from their initial hire, through their experiences in a specific household, to their eventual resignations. In "Flunkeyiana – A Fact" (Figure 10) an 'out of place flunkey' enquires of his mistress, before he decides whether or not to accept a position in her household, whether or not he is engaged for work or for ornament?[150] The misplaced 'h' in his elocution is also significant, representative of his social-climbing motives and lower class background. To this 'flunkey' position was everything. His potential mistress was particularly unimpressed, as her countenance clearly shows, by his presumptuous attitude towards her, for she would have assumed that his gratitude to her for hiring him would have been the only verbal utterance made.

Even when such a 'flunkey' did accept the position, his pretentions to upward social mobility may not have ceased. The *Punch* artists discussed the horror of servants being mistaken for their inferior colleagues, and even the possibility of such confusion aroused great concern in the afflicted party. In a subsequent cartoon in the series, the 'Lady of the House' is depicted enquiring of one of her footmen if he can take some coals up to the nursery for the fire. The indignant footman replies, "H'm! Ma'am! If you ask it as a favour, Ma'am, I don't so much object; but I 'ope you don't take me for an 'Ousemaid, Ma'am!"[151] There are several curious elements to this statement. First, the footman understands himself as the near equal of his mistress, as it is generally assumed that employees do not perform "favours" for their employer all day, but they work for them and in turn receive some form of remuneration. Secondly, it reveals just how rigid a social hierarchy did exist not only amongst the Victorian upper classes, but amongst their servants as well. The footman goes to great lengths to ensure that he is given his due respect, even from his mistress. Thirdly, Mr. Punch's discussion of these matters reveals

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[149] Ibid., 11.
[150] *Punch*, Volume 26, (1854), 44.
[151] *Punch*, Volume 32 (January 24, 1857), 40.

that his own upstart servants did not overtly threaten him. His role as a gentleman, as he understood it, was assured by his actions and revealed through his genteel publication.

In another similar situation, depicted nearly ten years later, an interaction between a manservant and his master exposed many of the same sentiments. In this cartoon, the dignified old master (obviously a gentleman) is depicted interacting with his man at the dinner table. The Master declared: "Thompson, I believe that I have repeatedly expressed an objection to being served with stale bread at dinner. How is it my wishes have not been attended to?" To which Thompson replied: "Well, Sire, I reely don't know what is to be done! It won't do to waste it, and we can't eat it down-stairs!!"[152] Again, Thomspon, the servant, understands himself to be equal to, and almost better than, his master. That such a situation would ever occur, in the minds of Mr. Punch and his staff, was farcical, but the underlying sentiments must have been present for them to feel the need to make fun of, and as a result reduce any sense of anxiety at, the situation.

Many of the final cartoons in the "Flunkeyiana" series portrayed various situations in which domestic servants found it necessary to resign their positions. One flunkey found himself explaining to a scullery maid how he must leave due to the colour of his new livery. He found his new wardrobe completely unsatisfactory and declared that it "don't suit my complexion – never did."[153] The reference to his effeminate vanity was, and not accidentally, highly similar to the criticisms evoked from the men of *Punch* by the swell. That the two characters of vastly different backgrounds and social situations were mutually criticized again demonstrates two aspects of *Punch*'s understanding of both characters. First, by associating the flunkey with the swell in such terms, the artist was referencing the lack of social importance of both characters. Secondly, by associating the swell with a 'common domestic servant' he was further reducing the possibility of the public confusing the swell with the gentleman.

A threat to the public reputation of the male servant was another common reason, found in the pages of *Punch* magazine, for domestic servants to leave their employers. "Genteel" Thomas found it necessary to leave his situation because his master was seen on the top of "a Homnibus," and as a result Thomas could no longer reduce himself by remaining in his

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[152] *Punch*, Volume 51 (November 10, 1866), 189.
[153] *Punch*, Volume 33 (October 10, 1857), 147.

household.[154] (Figure 11) Another "poor fellow" found it necessary to resign his mistress' employ. When she inquired as to why he was no longer satisfied (one gets the impression that this conversation had been held many times previous), he explains: "well, Mem, I ain't in no ways discontented with my wages, nor with the Vittels, nor nothink of that – but the fact is, my friends say that a Young Man of my Appearance ought to better hisself and get into a situation where there's two men behind the carridge!"[155] Both "genteel" Thomas and this "poor fellow" were so distracted by a concern over their public reputation and social standing that they were willing to give up a job in service in the hopes of possibly further improving themselves. The artist emphasized their foolishness in an additional effort to reduce the threat that the all-knowing Victorian domestic servant, especially the male domestic servant, was to his or her genteel employer.

The authors', artists', and editor's uncertainty as to their exact social positions as Victorian gentlemen was definite. While they were sure of their genteel status, no such certainty existed about what this meant in terms of social standing. Their profusion of articles and cartoons that discussed these topics were a direct byproduct of such uncertainty. While they criticized various aristocrats for a plethora of perceived follies, they had no aversion to associating with their social superiors. As well as their critique of various moral laxities of the lower working classes, the men of *Punch* also pointed to a variety of positive attributes amongst these 'honourable workers.' Mr. Punch and his staff were constantly unsure of their social standing in Victoria's Britain. They used humour to reduce the threats posed by those members of society, both high and low, who unequivocally knew their place in the social hierarchy. As men who were still heavily influenced by the ideas of Bohemia, but at the same time attempting to avoid publicly identifying themselves as such, they were not completely sure of how to deal with the issues surrounding social class. While they knew that the true gentleman was above class distinctions, they wanted to ensure that this classless aspect of his character did not detract from their own social positions.

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[154] *Punch*, Volume 36 (May 14, 1859), 194.
[155] *Punch*, Volume 44 (June 6, 1863), 232.

Chapter 4

Punch's Explanation of Contemporary Fads in Men's Fashion

Victorian men's fashion, contrary to the widely held belief, was anything but dull or static. The Victorian male's wardrobe was a place of colour and variety. Men used the sartorial items with which they clothed themselves as a public representation of their inner person; this was particularly true for the gentleman. The gentleman's sober and well-appointed suits expressed the upright and moral nature of his life to all he encountered. For the gentleman's imitators however, the gents and swells, their sartorial appointments revealed exactly the opposite. The typical swell's ready-made clothing exposed his social-climbing aspirations. For the men of *Punch*, the advent of such ready-made clothing, and in particular the suit, only increased the possibility of themselves being confused with the swell. Thus, the fears many of the *Punch* staff expressed in their writings and drawings, concerning fads in fashion, should be understood in terms of their fear of being confused with their avowed archenemy, the swell, and not simply as protestations against new fashion trends alone.

Nineteenth-century fads in fashion were of the utmost interest to the men who took their place at the *Punch* table every Wednesday evening. As the gentleman was outwardly identified by his attire, it is not surprising that the *Punch* men were concerned with the latest advents in men's fashion. Brent Shannon argues that *Fashion* magazine, published in the 1890s, placed a large emphasis on the social significance of dress as "a reflection of the inner man."[156] However, Victorian men were not supposed to give any significant amount of thought to the way in which they clothed themselves. To do so, as represented in the cartoon "A Foolish and a Betting Man – A Wiser and a Better Man," implied that the man in question did not give sufficient attention to more important aspects of his life.[157] Thomas Hughes, a contemporary authority on Victorian masculinity, described the "best dressed man" as "he whose attire sits on him with careless and

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[156] Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*: *Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860-1914* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 101.
[157] Kent, Christopher, "Depicting Gentlemen's Fashions in the *Tailor and Cutter*, 1866-1900," in *The Lure of Illustration In the Nineteenth Century: Pictures and Press*, ed. Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

apparently unstudied simplicity."[158] The Victorian gentleman was expected to appear exquisitely groomed and dressed, while at the same time giving the impression that his crisp, clean, and respectable outfits were put together quickly and with little thought.

Nineteenth-century Britain witnessed a revolution not only in industry, but in men's fashion as well. Norah Waugh argues that "the nineteenth century saw, with the industrial revolution, the rise of the merchant class and the consequent domination of material and purely practical values. Any unnecessary sartorial fluctuations were discarded and men's clothes became stylized and functional."[159] Waugh's observation is not entirely correct; men's fashion did not enter a period of solely black and grey.[160] The variety of patterns and material for coats, trousers, waistcoats, and ties was quite remarkable, especially when compared to the business suits of today. It was in this rapidly changing and varied environment that the *Punch* staff's commentary on fashion reached its apex.

The men of *Punch*, and in particular its artists, had firm beliefs as to what did or did not constitute gentlemanly dress. Shannon contends that "many consumers aspired to buy their way into the upper classes, as the age-old qualifications of lineage and land were eclipsed by money, conduct, and outward appearance."[161] The *Punch* men did not feel that any man who could afford the necessary sartorial items of a gentleman should be able to pass himself off as such without meeting a variety of strict, although certainly ambiguous, qualifications. Their commentary on fashion was a means of drawing attention to this fact as well as an effort to expose those men who were simply imposters to gentility.

Early Victorian male fashion was marked by its variety and frequency of change. The height of men's shirt collars was no exception. Kent notes that "the detachable collar allowed great variety in collar height and style."[162] A cartoon that was included in a *Punch* issue in 1853

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[158] Thomas Hughes in Christopher Kent, "Depicting Gentlemen's Fashion in the *Tailor and Cutter,* 1866-1900," 1.
[159] Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Men's Clothes 1600-1900* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1964), 12.
[160] John Carl Flugel attributes the "rise of sartorial modesty to the increasing acceptance of 'the bourgeois moral virtues of industry, discipline, thrift and sobriety.'" See John Carl Flugel in David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England 1550-1850* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 200), 163. However, as *Punch* clearly demonstrates, Flugel's "Great Masculine Renunciation" does not accurately portray Victorian men's dress.
[161] Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 4.
[162] Kent, "Depicting Gentlemen's Fashions in the *Tailor and Cutter*, 1866-1900, 3.

(Figure 12) depicts a policeman and a loudly dressed swell. The caption reveals that the swell has called the policeman to him in desperate need of his assistance. The swell, "who would perish rather than disturb his shirt-collar," enquires of the officer, "A-I've had the misfortune to dwop my umbrellaw, and there isn't a boy within a mile to pick it up – a – will you have the goodness?"[163] The stiff swell is obviously far too concerned about disrupting his attire to possess even the remotest degree of rationality. In 1872, G. P. Fox described dress as "not merely as an envelope of broadcloth, cassimere, silk, satin or velvet, wrought up in more or less taste after the model of a prevailing pattern, but as one of the most significant expressions of character and sustaining an intimate relation with manners and morals."[164] Although this swell's attire was certainly eye-catching, it did not serve as an expression of genteel character, or rather it did not express a genteel character that the *Punch* men would have recognized. The cartoon artist was directly condemning any man who would attempt to pass as a gentleman by simply dressing the part.

Not only were over-dressed 'fashion plates'[165] concerned about damaging their outfits by menial tasks, they were also greatly insulted when their appearance was not recognized with the admiration and respect they presumed due to them. In one of the other many cartoons concerned with men's fashion, Young Sholomunsh,[166] a seller of ready-made suits, is depicted grossly insulting Young Snobley.[167] As Snobley walks past Sholomunsh's shop, decked out in all his latest finery, Sholomunsh declares: "Now, sir! Let me shell you a nish shuit of closhe, make yer good allowance for the old uns yer've got on!"[168] The horror and indignation of Young Snobley, at being sartorially criticized by a person of questionable social background (revealed by the misplaced 'h's), can be imagined. This cartoon quickly reveals the *Punch* staff's distrust of new

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[163] *Punch*, Volume 24 (1853), 58.

[164] Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 41.

[165] " 'fashion plate' was already in use as a slightly disparaging term for the man who dressed with a bit too much care and attention." Kent, *The Gentleman's Coat*, 9.

[166] Sholomunsh, a distortion of Solomon, is meant to imply Jewishness. For a further discussion of the "process of distortion" of the Jew in Victorian writings see Anne Aresty Naman, *The Jew in the Victorian Novel: Some Relationships Between Prejudice and Art* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1980), 50.

[167] Kent explains that "the mark of someone attempting to pose as a gentleman who obviously wasn't was that his coat was 'bought ready-made'." *The Gentleman's Coat*, 1.

[168] *Punch*, Volume 29 (August 18, 1855), 72.

fads in fashion, and their condemnation of them and those who wore them. Thomas Carlyle defined the dandy as "a clothes wearing man, a man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to the wearing of clothes wisely and well: so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress."[169] The *Punch* men shared a similar understanding of the dandy or, as they liked to call him, the swell. The criticisms they employed were a direct attack on the swell, as they understood him. Undoubtedly such a cartoon as this would have damaged the ego of any man who gave 'every faculty of his soul' to his dress. Although the men of *Punch* saw themselves as gentlemen, they were by no means gentle men.

The issues many middle and upper class Victorians had with ready-made clothes were again addressed in "A Tale of Cheap Trousers." The gentlemen of *Punch* fully agreed with the negative stereotypes associated with ready-made clothes and those who wore them; men who aped a higher social identity than that to which they were born wore such clothing. The swells and gents who wore coats and trousers that were not especially made for them by a tailor were, it was believed, attempting to present themselves as something they were not. With the advent of ready-made clothes, it was easier for those members of society who lived in the borderlands between the lower working and the lower middle classes to dress similarly to their social superiors. Victorians placed a high degree of emphasis on the importance of clothing in determining the social qualifications of the wearer. With the advent of ready-made clothes, however, this made such identifications much more difficult and resulted in a hyper-concern over the most minute detail of a gentleman's dress.

The authors and artists with whom Mr. Punch worked, already concerned about being mistaken for swells or gents, realized that the advent of ready-made clothing would only increase the possibility of such misidentifications. In "A Tale of Cheap Trousers," not only does the author identify the gent as the only purchaser of such sartorial items, but he also discusses the nature of ready-made clothing manufacturing. The tailor, in this specific instance a man of Jewish origin, did not make these items himself, but paid poor women to do the actual work. The author notes, "by grinding the workpeople down to the dust, henceforward you'll pause ere you buy them, we trust."[170]

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[169] Thomas Carlyle in Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 129.
[170] *Punch*, Volume 34 (January 30, 1858), 47.

The *Punch* men as well used criticism of the swell by his social inferiors to further strengthen their representation of the swell's foolish fashion sense. The cartoon "Truth Is Great" (Figure 6, Chapter 2) is perhaps the best example of this. The setting for this cartoon image is in front of a tailor's shop that displays a sign reading "gentlemen's own materials made up."[171] An "Unsophisticated Little Girl" is shown chiding her younger brother, Billy, who is throwing a tantrum, as a young swell walks past. The little girl threatens her young brother: "Now, you a' done Billy. If you aint quiet directly I'll give yer to this great, big, Hugly Man!"[172] The fact that even a young street-girl (assumedly naïve in the ways of the fashionable world) recognized the ridiculousness with which the swell attired himself would not have gone unnoticed by *Punch*'s readership. The men of *Punch* wanted to maintain the outward persona of gentlemen. As such, they could not simply and blatantly insult all the men with whom they assumed to be in competition for genteel status. However, using the unsophisticated young children of the street as their mouth-pieces, the *Punch* staff could continue to pursue their ultimate goal (the public humiliation of their competition) while maintaining the impeccable moral reputation of gentlemen.

The umbrella was, as demonstrated in the pages of *Punch*, another important fashion accessory to the Victorian male. In "A Horrible Idea," a 'Languid Swell' is depicted with his friend recovering from an attack of illness brought on by a female's unsightly umbrella. The umbrella was so unsightly that the swell announced: "that female's umbrellaw – completely – flawed me – my dear Charles – conceive being obliged to carry – but no, the thought is – too horrible!" The two men then "shudder, and walk on."[173] In a latter cartoon (Figure 13) a pair of swells are remarking on a shabbily dressed character that passes them. The second swell shares his disgust with such 'would-be' smart men who are willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of their appearance.[174] Both these cartoons show that the umbrella was a very important accessory to the Victorian male, at least the Victorian swell as the Punchites understood him. For these

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[171] *Punch*, Volume 27 (1854), 18. The window sign reading "Gentlemen's own materials made up" is a subtle reference to the fact that no true gentleman would bring his own materials (usually purchased at a cheaper price than they would be available for at the tailor's) to have a tailor make up a suit for him.

[172] Ibid.

[173] *Punch*, Volume 29 (November 17, 1855), 195.

[174] Ibid., 216. Although the man's shabby nature of his dress is probably a reflection of his poverty, these arrogant swells see it as a reflection of his need to dress beyond the fashion.

Punch men, a true gentleman was to be meticulously dressed and accessorized in a specific way, but paying too much attention to how he put himself together or to how other men appeared was, to use the *Punch* phrase, 'swellish.'

The apparent condition of a man's umbrella was not the only aspect of that fashionable accessory that garnered remark from the men of *Punch*; size was also important. In "Reaction," a respectful and conservatively dressed gentleman (holding a small umbrella) encounters a 'Great Swell' carrying an enormous umbrella. When the gentleman asks why his acquaintance carries such a 'Thing as that,' the 'Great Swell' replies that "the fact is, you know, every Snob, you know, has a Little Umbrella now, you know; so I carry this to show I'm not a Snob, you know."[175] The over-sized nature of the swell's umbrella is representative of his over-concern in regards to his fashionable appearance. He is so consumed with attempting to differentiate himself from the snob, based on his style of dress, that he neglects the arguably more important aspects of the genteel social status that he apes. For Mr. Punch and his associates, over-emphasis of particularly genteel characteristics was also a means by which to identify social climbers. The subtlety of the true gentleman could not be mirrored.[176]

Another fashion accessory important to the ideal gentleman, and therefore ultra-important to London's swells and gents, was the glove. Shannon argues that the "expensive sartorial game of cat and mouse represented an attempt by the elite to deter social climbers, making it socially and financially difficult for middle-class aspirants to keep up with the ever-increasing number of costumes and rules governing dress."[177] Gloves were certainly part of this game. As the availability of ready-made gloves in department stores increased, the elite placed an even stronger emphasis on subtle details to differentiate ready-made from tailor-made gloves. *Routledge's Etiquette for Gentlemen* declared that a gentleman should "never be seen in the street without gloves; and never let your gloves be of any material that is not kid or calf. Worsted or cotton gloves are unutterably vulgar. Your gloves should be fitted to the last degree – of perfection."[178] The artists of *Punch* also commented on gloves as a means of singling out

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[175] *Punch*, Volume 39 (December 8, 1860), 230.
[176] Thomas Hughes asserted that "if there is one thing worse than being quite out of the fashion, it is being ultra-fashionable." Christopher Kent, "Depicting Gentlemen's Fashions in the <u>Tailor and Cutter</u>, 1866 – 1900," 8.
[177] Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 169.
[178] *Routledge's Etiquette for Gentlemen* in Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 169 – 170.

the swell.   A cartoon published in 1863 depicts a railway official asking a swell for his ticket. The swell responds: "Haw, don't want to split my Gloves – would you be kynd enough to take it yourself out of my Waistcoat Pocket?"[179] The swell is obviously attempting to pass himself off as someone of a significantly higher social position through imitating the gentleman's style of dress. That he is concerned about splitting his gloves shows that either his gloves were ready-made, and do not fit his hands properly, or that they were made of a material inferior to that normally worn by genuine gentlemen.

For the men of *Punch*, close examination of the Victorian upper and middle class male's umbrella and gloves were subtle means of discovering the true nature of his wardrobe (whether it was truly genteel or whether it was simply genteel-imitation). The fact that *Punch* dedicated so much time to discussions of the dressing of swells and gents reveals the extent to which contemporary males were judged based on their wardrobe. However, men could never be seen or heard discussing such sartorial aspects of themselves or other males without injuring their aspiring claims to gentility. Consequently, the pages of *Punch* were a safe haven for the discussion of a variety of subjects inappropriate in the 'real world;' genteel fashion was but one.

As well as giving the impression that they paid little or no attention to their dress, Victorian gentlemen were also expected not to be proud of the way that they appeared. "Did You Ever!", a cartoon in *Punch*, depicts two friends engaged in conversation following the recent marriage of one of the men, Sprat. When Sprat's friend enquires as to how he is enjoying marriage, Sprat reveals that there are difficulties and uncomfortable situations that have recently developed in the early days of his marriage. Sprat whispers to his friend "Entre Nous – Mrs. S. is so confoundedly jealous of me!"[180] Sprat is depicted adjusting his bow tie, and is clearly referencing the fact that his wife is jealous of his physical appearance and style of dress. Sprat takes an effeminate pride in his appearance, something a truly masculine gentleman would never do. For the men of *Punch*, men who were overtly proud of their appearance were not only ungentlemanly, they were unmanly.

Victorian gentlemen were also keen to use a well-tailored suite to enhance their muscular physique. Shannon notes that "the Beau Brummell-era dandies were not the only ones who occupied themselves with cutting a physically attractive figure, for Victorian men in large

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[179] *Punch*, Volume 44 (January 17, 1863), 28.
[180] *Punch*, Volume 29 (December 1, 1855), 224.

numbers wore corsets and other body-shaping undergarments, widely advertised in newspaper and periodicals."[181] As in many other instances, the *Punch* swells too took this concern with physical attractiveness to the extreme of obsession. In "A Fact," two young gents walking in the street come across a hard-working man. Staring at the working man, the 'Young Gent' declares to his companion, "I wonder how the deuce that fellow gets those legs."[182] The cut of a man's trousers could only improve the look and shape of his legs to a certain degree; perfection was rare. However, this innocent and naive gent is, true to form, interested in realizing nothing less than perfection in regards to the appearance of his legs. The men of *Punch* portrayed the gent as a slave to fashion. The fact that this gent is completely unaware of why the labouring man is 'lucky' enough to have such legs is yet another example of the subtle jabs at the intellectual character of gents and swells that the *Punch* artists went to great lengths to include in their cartoons.

In another cartoon of the same issue, a young swell's legs are again the focus of the conversation.(Figure 14) Having just received "promise of a Commission in a Highland Regiment," this young swell inquires of his female companions whether or not a kilt would suit his calves.[183] His "tittering" sisters meet such a ridiculous question with the expected degree of humour. The young ladies' reference to their swell of a brother as absurd demonstrates that even unworldly women understood there to be something amiss with a young man so obsessed with his appearance. Again, the men of *Punch* reduce the threat of the social-climbing swell by demonstrating his hyper-concern with his appearance, a huge character flaw in any true gentleman.

Victorian men did not, however, rely solely on their style of dress to display their honour and social status. Beginning around 1850, Victorian men began to let their beards grow out as another means of displaying their inner qualities. Christopher Oldstone-Moore argues that "bearded manhood responded to [the] new-found difficulties of masculinity in the industrial age."[184] Oldstone-Moore maintains that full beards did not appear until 1850 because of their previous association with political revolutionaries. However, after the failure of the 1848

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[181] Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 7.
[182] *Punch*, Volume 35 (August 14, 1858), 70.
[183] Ibid., 256.
[184] Christopher Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Autumn 2005), 8.

revolutions on the continent and the evaporation of Chartism in Britain, "fearful associations of facial hair had dissolved, and respectable men were at liberty to let their beards grow . . .as a signifier of masculine identity."[185] There were many Victorian arguments about the practicality of beards as well. For example, beards were thought to act as a filter against the foul air of London's streets. Beards were also thought of as useful in maintaining privacy, hiding weakness or doubt. Perhaps more important when discussing the gentleman, however, beards were thought to ensure a man's honour by displaying "individualized grandeur."[186]

Beginning in 1853, commentary on this new "Beard Movement" was frequent in the pages of *Punch*. Oldstone-Moore postulates that "articles appearing in the late Victorian age – even [those] supporting the beard style – tended to view the questions of beards with curiosity and humor rather than seriousness."[187] *Punch* certainly fits into this category. Therefore, it is difficult to decipher whether or not the men of *Punch* were pro-beard or not. Although only Tom Taylor is recorded as having a full beard,[188] muttonchops were popular amongst some of the staff.[189] In 1866, Henry Silver noted in his diary that Tenniel, Lemon, and "the Professor" (Percival Leigh) were all growing moustaches.[190] For the *Punch* men, the full beard did have certain military connotations. A cartoon that appeared in 1854, entitled "The Moustache Movement – How to Flatter a Gent" depicts a young gent walking past Mr. Noses' shop. Noses mistakes the young Gent for an army captain on account of his facial hair and asks him if he has any left-off uniforms.[191] In another cartoon, appearing the same year, a Cabby mistakes a 'Little Gent,' who possesses a moustache, for an officer.[192] Several gents and swells found such military associations enjoyably entertaining. Young Snobley, who we are informed is a "regular Lady-killer," is depicted in a *Punch* cartoon walking down the street and, as per usual, attracting the attention of multiple ladies. As Snobley gallantly passes his adoring female audience he thinks to himself, "How the Gals do stare at one's Beard! I suppose they think I'm a Horficer

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[185] Ibid., 10.
[186] Ibid., 21-24.
[187] Ibid., 29.
[188] See image included in Taylor's ODNB entry by London Stereoscopic Co.
[189] See the images that accompany Lemon, Thackeray, Leech, and Tenniel's ODNB entries.
[190] "Les trois Moustachequestaires!" See Henry Silver's Diary, January 17, 1866.
[191] *Punch*, Volume 26 (1854), 54.
[192] Ibid., 139.

just come from the Crimear!"[193] The military associations of the full beard were, for some social climbers like Snobley, clearly appreciated. This agrees with G. M. Trevelyan's argument that the new bearded style was "an imitation of the heroic and hirsute soldiers returning from the Crimea."[194] In 1851, Colonel Edward Elers Napier published an article on reforming military dress in *Colburn's United Service Magazine*. Napier argued that the beard was the best form of facial protection in extreme weather, and that the bearded soldier was more impressive, but he thought that the beard would be considered too "un-English" to really become popular.[195] The beard did, however, become popular, not only amongst army officers, but amongst civilian males as well. There can be little doubt that associations of the beard with the ultra-masculine figure of the ideal officer helped to further the beard craze amongst those men concerned about the perception of their own masculinity.

The beard also played a role in *Punch*'s discussion of social climbers. The beard was a relatively inexpensive means of modeling one's self on one's social superiors, and the men of *Punch* were openly concerned that London's gents and swells would take full advantage of this new fashionable trend. In "The Moustache Movement," a popular serial cartoon during the years of the beard mania, a trendily dressed bearded gent calls in on an acquaintance. A young 'Foot Boy'[196] answers the door and declares that "Master his at 'ome, but he's confined to his room. He's a growin' of his moostarshers, and ain't allowed to see nobody but his 'airdresser."[197] A subsequent cartoon entitled "The Beard Movement" (another serial appearing frequently during these years) depicts the dismay of a swell upon seeing a postman with "Moustaches."[198] (Figure 15) Both of these cartoons demonstrate the importance that the *Punch* swells placed on their newly bearded appearance. *Punch's Almanack for 1859* included a cartoon showing Tomkins and Jones, "odious rival[s]," retiring to a secluded village to grow out their moustaches and inadvertently meeting each other.[199] The men of *Punch* must have felt that the beard did play some role in the physical appearance of a gentleman. Although the swells and gents no doubt

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[193] *Punch*, Volume 30 (1856), 98.
[194] G. M. Trevelyan in Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," 1.
[195] Colonel Napier in Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," 12.
[196] A 'Foot Boy' was cheaper to maintain than an actual footman and reveals that this household was certainly not genteel.
[197] Ibid., 28.
[198] Ibid., 136.
[199] *Punch Almanack For 1859*, Volume 36.

took the facial hair craze to the point of excess, as they did all other new trends in fashion, the fact that *Punch*'s social commentaries from these years so frequently include the mention of beards or 'moostarshers' reveals the contemporary importance of the gentleman's facial hair.

To the Victorians, facial hair not only signified honour and social status; it also symbolized masculinity and athletic virility. "How Very Embarrassing" depicts a conversation between little Gustavus and his Mamma, in the company of Miss Grumph. (Figure 16) Gustavus enquires whether or not "Moustachios" are the fashion. When his Mamma replies that she believes they are, little Gus responds "Oh! Then, is that the reason why Miss Grumph wears 'em?" The cartoon caption continues, as a means of explaining Gustavus's inquiry, "Miss Grumph, as well as being strong-minded, is rather masculine in appearance."[200] The insinuations are clear: to the Victorians who read and wrote for *Punch*, facial hair, as well as strong-mindedness, were true representations of masculinity; facial hair was an easily noticeable, distinctly male feature (with the exception of Mrs. Grumph).

As understood by *Punch*, the moustache was also associated with a sophisticated style of male dress. In a continuation of the serial "The Moustache Movement," two young gents, Alphonso and Tom, are discussing the comfort of their 'moostarchers.' During the conversation, Tom divulges to his companion that he is going to have to cut off his 'moostarchers' because "one's obliged to dress so doosed expensive to make everything accord!"[201] This socially climbing swell evidently, in the eyes of the *Punch* staff, should not allow himself to grow the beard of a gentleman if he cannot afford to dress and act the part as well. While Tom had the difficulty of coping with the fact that he could grow facial hair, but could not afford the clothing to go with it, young 'enery's problems in "The Beard Movement" were reversed. (Figure 17) Young 'enery's difficulty in growing a beard (evidently an important aspect in the physical presentation of a gentleman) was the focus of the *Punch* artist's sarcastic ridicule.[202] The *Punch* viewpoint was clear: those who were unable to bear facial hair for whatever reason (whether it be financial or effeminate restraints) should not attempt to pass themselves off as gentlemen.

For some young gents the prospect of losing one's beard or moustache was particularly horrifying. A *Punch* cartoon, "Alarming Proposition," depicts two young and 'hairy' gents in a

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[200] *Punch*, Volume 29 (November 3, 1855), 174.
[201] *Punch*, Volume 32 (March 7, 1867), 100.
[202] *Punch*, Volume 33 (September 19, 1857), 122.

restaurant. A waiter stands by their table and offers them some oysters, but when the waiter asks

if he should take "yer beards[203] off," the gents become very uncomfortable.[204] The two hairy

gents have an "uncomfortable idea" about what is going to happen and are extremely nervous (as

their faces show) about the prospect of this waiter de-bearding them; they are unaware that the

waiter is referring to the oysters. Again, the *Punch* artists, while discussing the importance of

facial hair to the gent of the 1850s, also hint at the intellectual laxity of London's fashion plates.

For many *Punch* gents, beards were a means of transferring specific messages. For example,

Dangle, during his discussion with Dingle, in "De Gustibus, &c.," reveals that he uses his style

of whisker "to give a Wild Beast sort of expression."[205] (Figure 18) Again, a man's facial hair

was used to display strength and ultimate masculine power. It is consequently not surprising that

the two 'hairy' gents in "Alarming Proposition" were highly frightened at the thought of the

waiter removing their beards, regardless of their scruffy condition.

As late as 1864, Mr. Punch, aided by his associates, felt it necessary to dedicate an entire

page to the explanation of various styles of facial hair, in this case those worn by the clergy.

"Nature's noblest adornment to the face" was "altogether the property of the Establishment, - no

Popish priest in this country has entrenched upon this prerogative. The Dissenters shave in the

gloomy silence, leaving this noble field of ecclesiastical adornment to the Clergy of the

Establishment."[206] The *Punch* author went on to describe the multitude of 'barbine' styles

witnessed amongst the English clergy. The Mufty was a "very bold development in the hirsute

privileges of manhood." The Rufty, a highly pleasing facial ornament, was "a very insinuating

beard." Tufty was seen as "a most facetious arrangement of the pilose adornment." The Fan

was highly impressive to those more serious minded preachers. The Mosaic Horn communicated

rigidity. The Turkeycock was "a most admired form [of] perfection." The article continues to

explain the various values of other styles such as the Gibbon, the Lynx, the Goat, and the

Niagara.[207] Although the *Punch* staff's discussion of clerical beards is somewhat 'tongue-in-

cheek,' it is certain that many Victorian men did use their various styles of facial hair to shape

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[203] The 'beard' of an oyster is another term for the gills of an oyster (sometimes removed before consumption).

[204] *Punch*, Volume 36 (April 9, 1859), 150.

[205] *Punch*, Volume 39 (November 3, 1860), 171.

[206] *Punch*, Volume 46 (March 5, 1864), 98.

[207] Ibid.

their public perception. Beard growth was a means of both disguising possible defects,[208] whether perceived or actual, as well as a means of transferring a certain sense of self-assuredness and individuality to anyone the wearer encountered.

Trends in men's fashion were often highly influenced by the styles of dress found within the British military.[209] The tightly tailored pants, high collars, and beards and moustaches that became fashionable in the mid 1850s may all have had military origins. The officers of the British Army had, at least in popular perception, a reputation for being highly concerned with their sartorial presentation. A cartoon entitled "Preparations For War" displays this attitude. The officer depicted amidst his preparations for war,[210] Ensign Stubbs, is in reality in a tailor's shop having his uniform fitted. The caption explains that "Ensign Stubbs[,] having been appointed to the 121st, goes to try on his Uniform."[211] The *Punch* men were quick to note that Stubbs' first act after his new commission was to ensure the fit of his uniform. The attitude of this *Punch* cartoon character is remarkably similar to that of the swell. Both are represented as possessing a hyper-concern for fashion as well as an air of superiority, the one difference being that the swell's style and form of dress were directly modeled on the sophisticated army officer.

As the *Punch* men understood them, the gents and swells that featured so prominently in the pages of *Punch* were highly susceptible to any new fad whether in dress or any other aspect of fashionable life. As aspiring gentlemen greatly influenced by Thackeray (a gentleman of the established order), the *Punch* men were critical and often suspicious of new fads, and thus used this as another avenue of criticism to pursue against their stereotypical gent or swell. A cartoon portraying a scene in a commercial room [212] of a pub shows an overly fashionable young "Incipient Commercial" engaged in conversation with a "Crusty Old Traveler." The young "Incipient" is garbed in a loud checked jacket and is sporting the Tufty style of beard previously discussed in regards to the clergy. His conversational companion is dressed in the attire of a respectable gentleman, but one aspect of his appearance is highly fashionable in the eyes of the young swell who declares: "you're always in the Fashion, I see. Last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, Mauve was the prevailing Colour, and your Nose was Mauve. Now Magenta is all

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[208] Such as the 'weak chin.'
[209] Kent, "Depicting Gentlemen's Fashions in the *Tailor and Cutter*, 1866-1900," 6.
[210] Most likely the newly waged war in the Crimea that began in October of 1853.
[211] *Punch*, Volume 26 (1854), 138.
[212] Or a room for traveling salesmen.

the go, and it's changed to Magenta."[213] The swell was always attentive to the slightest changes in fashion, as this cartoon clearly shows. However, the *Punch* men were not in the least bothered by such quickly changing trends. For them, such short-lived fashions seemed frivolous and wasteful; it was more valuable to spend time improving one's outward moral character than one's wardrobe.

One final fashion topic that raised the proverbial eyebrow of the *Punch* staff was hairstyles. Interestingly, an article on this topic, "The Savage Art of Hairdressing," begins with a conversation on female hairstyles and then smoothly transitions into a discussion about the hairstyles of the swell. It is clear that the *Punch* author did not see that there was enough of a difference between the hairdressing of women and that of swells to necessitate a differentiation; the efforts to demasculinize the swell are clear. The author also criticized swells, arguing that swells "frequently bestow more care upon the outside of their heads than they devote to the inside, and precisely the same thing, we find, is done in savage Africa. Our dandies very often spend a great part of their lives in parting their back hair, and cultivating their moustaches; but they are not more attentive to their hirsute decoration than the dandies of Latooka."[214] Not only did the author compare the swell to the unworldly naïve female, but also to the "savage" of Africa. For the contemporary *Punch* reader, this would have held far more meaning than it does for the modern reader. The *Punch* staff was attempting to reduce the swell, in the most savage terms an aspiring gentleman could employ, in an effort to make clear to their readership that the men of *Punch*, although with social aspirations themselves, had no similarities with the socially climbing fashion plate known as the swell.

As the variety and frequency of *Punch*'s commentary on fads in men's fashion clearly shows, early Victorian men's wear was certainly not dull or homogeneous. Although gentlemen were not supposed to give a great deal of attention to sartorial items, either their own or those of other men, *Punch*'s commentary reveals the degree to which this perception varied from reality. While the swells and gents were the focus of the Punchites' fashion critiques, their concern with these ultra-fashionable upstarts did not end there. The men of *Punch*, especially following the advent of ready-made clothing and the further difficulties this entailed in regards to the

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[213] A reference to the older salesman's partiality for alcohol, *Punch*, Volume 41 (November 23, 1861), 212.
[214] *Punch*, Volume 52 (March 9, 1867), 95.

identification of a 'true' gentleman, were concerned about being themselves confused with the social climbers they depicted as swells or gents. The success of their claim to gentility depended on whether or not they could clearly be recognized as such; the swell, and his attempts to imitate genteel fashion, only muddied these already murky Victorian waters.

Chapter 5

The Gentlemen of *Punch*

The authors and artists who contributed to *Punch* magazine between 1851 and 1867 developed the magazine, at least in part, around one central goal: to increase their recognition as gentlemen. In many respects, the weekly issues of *Punch* from this period served to mold the public image of these Punchites into a form that would be accepted by respectable society. That is not to say that the *Punch* men conducted every aspect of their lives in a gentlemanly manner. As was the case with many Victorian gentlemen, the Punchites' public and private personalities and attitudes differed sharply. Understanding how these men conducted themselves in private serves to further our understanding of why they chose to shape their public characters as they did. Henry Silver's diary provides an unobstructed glimpse of the sociable atmosphere shared by the *Punch* men at their weekly dinner meetings, and as such is the best source through which to discover the true character of these *Punch* men.

By the time Henry Silver first took his seat at the *Punch* table in 1857, he had been an outside contributor to *Punch* for nearly ten years. As a young man of twenty, Silver's first *Punch* article was an obituary that humorously recorded the death of an eighty-five year old elephant in Wombwell's traveling Menagerie. After the deaths of Gilbert à Beckett and Douglas Jerrold, Silver was invited to become a regular member of the *Punch* staff. The first dinner Silver attended was held at the "Star and Garter," Richmond, at the end of August 1857.[215] From 1857 until March of 1870, he regularly attended the weekly dinner meetings and recorded the topics of discussion, which *Punch* members were present, and the editorial decisions made,[216] at every meeting.

As a man of thirty, Silver was the youngest associate at the *Punch* table when he finally joined the weekly meetings in 1857. Professionally, he served as the magazine's drama critic

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[215] Henry Silver, Introduction to his diary added February 11, 1908, British Library, London.
[216] The editorial decisions made centered on the "big cut." The "big cut" was the single full-page cartoon that appeared in every issue. Focusing on prominent issues or events of the past week, the *Punch* staff saw the "big cut" in more serious terms than many of the other smaller cartoons called "socials," that appeared in each issue. Patrick Leary notes: "some Large Cuts struck the public mind with such force that the events or issues they depicted remained associated or framed by those cartoons forever." See Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 - 1874," 51.

and "writer-of-all-work." Arthur Prager describes Silver as "the mid-Victorian Pepys of the early *Punch* days."[217] Although he wrote for *Punch* for more than fifty years, as Patrick Leary explains, "no Victorian literary figure is more obscure." Silver was "a quiet, bashful, almost compulsively self-effacing man of modest talents. . . and had served the longest apprenticeship of any *Punch* staffer."[218] Silver's legacy is perhaps most valuable for what his diary reveals about the true nature of the men who sat around the 'Mahogany Tree.' While the *Punch* men were extremely concerned about maintaining the perception of gentility and an air of respectability in their weekly publication, Silver's dairy reveals the true nature of these men when they were untrammeled by their Victorian readership. Leary argues that the diary

captures, however imperfectly, the kind of unreserved male conversation – with all its casual bawdiness, grossness, unvarnished prejudice, and intimately personal gossip – whose echoes had been so rigorously banished from respectable print culture over the preceding thirty years, a campaign of banishment to which *Punch*, under Mark Lemon, had enthusiastically contributed and from which, as we have seen, it substantially benefited.[219]

The degree to which these men were able to alter their public personas is impressive. After the dinner meeting held on December 9, 1858, Silver recorded a joke about a parrot, told by Mark Lemon. "M.L. tells of bringing out [a] face called 'Punch' at the Strand – wherein a new parrot [was] introduced one night from Knockingshop, which instead of saying what he ought began "Show us your cock."[220] Silver later recorded that "B. [Shirley Brooks] would like a photograph taken of my modesty and compared with my impudence some 500 dinners hence."[221]

Such conversation bore no resemblance to that of the Punchites who publically "sat their horses well, who belonged to clubs and hunted foxes and would not have been out of place in

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[217] Prager, *The Mahogany Tree*, 4.
[218] Leary, "Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London: The *Punch* Circle, 1858 – 1874," 37.
[219] Ibid., 40.
[220] Silver, December 9, 1858. Although the joke can be interpreted in terms of masculinity (understanding the dirty joke as a male bonding experience), the fact that such jokes were never shared by the *Punch* men in public reveals the fact that they knew such jokes would only damage their public persona – that of gentlemen.
[221] Ibid.

any drawing room in England."[222] Understood in the light of Silver's diary, it is easier to realize why these aspiring gentlemen of *Punch* worked so hard to construct a public character akin to that of gentlemen. Their hyper-concern and fear of being mistakenly recognized as gents or swells, or worse yet Bohemians, was more a fear of being 'found out.' This, they shared in common with many Victorian gentlemen. By way of commemorating *Punch*'s twenty-fifth year of publication, Shirley Brooks jokingly explained his understanding of his fellow *Punch* colleagues.

> Look at us. All come from different spheres of society and bring our experiences thence to be fused in the Punch fire. . .Tom Taylor who mingles with aristocrats, and Horace [Mayhew] who is only known in the back slums of the Haymarket etc. I begin with Horace. . .who lives in the most unmitigated profligacy but has the kindest of hearts and in his time has done much good work on Punch. Of Tom Taylor I need only say that we are all proud to work with him. . .Charles Keene lives in Baker Street and is connected with the Wax Works, but when not engaged as showman makes most capital Punch cuts. The Professor lives at Hammersmith and indulges in improper intercourse with very elderly females (Mrs. Snorter!) but is never late with his 'copy,' and writes what everyone delights to read. Of John Tenniel I need only say it is our pride to have him illustrate our thoughts. . .Then I come to Silver who lives nobody knows where – when I wake a'nights, to think where Silver lives and what he does when he's not writing is one of the puzzles that perplex me. But he is up in sporting matters and keeps us well informed in yachting and shooting, and he is a good fellow (which is best of all). Then I come to DuMaurier whose Legend of Camelot is an honour to Punch – and I hardly know which to praise most, his pencil or his pen.[223]

Brooks's description reveals not only how he thought of his colleagues, but also how he understood the ideal Victorian gentleman. A high moral sense was central to Brooks's definition of the gentleman. However, if this characteristic was lacking, that did not prevent one's genteel

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[222] Prager, *The Mahogany Tree*, 17.
[223] Silver, June 27, 1866.

status from being confirmed by his peers.[224] Quality *Punch* contributions were of course

essential, as well as knowledge of shooting and sporting matters. Although Brooks had his own

adaptations of the definition of a gentleman, his sense of that social status was such that he,

along with his colleagues, could safely be included within its borders.

Mark Lemon, sole editor of *Punch* from 1842 to 1870, was one of the strongest

influences in establishing and maintaining the public character of the Punchites that Silver's

diary so readily undermines. Lemon was born in a small house in Oxford Street to Martin and

Alice Collis Lemon on November 30, 1809. His parents were both from relatively prosperous,

securely middle class, families. The myths about Lemon's Jewish origins, begun by Edmund

Yates, are nowhere supported by his ancestral history.[225] When Lemon was only eight, his father

died and he was sent to live with his paternal grandparents on a farm near the village of

Hendon.[226] During the three years spent with his grandparents, Lemon attended Cheam School

in Surrey. Arthur Adrian argues that "some idea of the *prestige* of Cheam may be gathered from

a list of its alumni, who include Dr. Charles Davenant, son of the poet, in the seventeenth

century; Henry Addington (later Sixth Viscount) in the eighteenth century; Lord Randolph

Churchill in the nineteenth century; and, more recently, Lord Louis Mountbatten (1910), the

Duke of Edinburgh (1930-3), and Charles, Prince of Wales (1957-8)."[227] However, in 1820,

Lemon's grandfather died and he was forced to leave Cheam and move to his maternal uncle's

home in Boston, Lincolnshire where he learned the hops business.

By 1836, Lemon had moved to Soho in London, but only a year later he left the city to

work for the brother of his mother's second husband who owned a brewery in Kentish Town.[228]

During this time he also contributed, under the pen name Tom Moody, to the *New Sporting*

Magazine. After the closure of the brewery in Kentish Town, he became the landlord of

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[224] Brooks accused "The Professor," as Percival Leigh was called, of having improper relations
with older women, and this did not result in his banishment from the *Punch* Table.
[225] Edmund Yates who was, in the words of Maurice Woolf, "hostile to Lemon" argued that
Lemon was certainly "a Jew, as his *prénom* and surname sufficiently testify." See Arthur A.
Adrian, *Mark Lemon: First Editor of Punch*, 3.
[226] Lemon's grandfather had inherited a "considerable fortune" upon the death of his own father.
See Adrian, *Mark Lemon*, 5.
[227] Adrian, *Mark Lemon*, 8.
[228] Ibid., 16-17.

Shakespeare's Head public house in Wych Street, London.[229] Although Lemon no doubt enjoyed the company of the various poets, playwrights, artists, and journalists who frequented the Shakespeare's Head, he was an unskilled man of business and, at the end of 1840, found himself without a source of income.[230] Thus, when Henry Mayhew and Joseph Last proposed the establishment of a new magazine based on Charles Philipon's Paris *Charivari*, Lemon enthusiastically agreed. Lemon recalled, at a *Punch* dinner in March of 1866, I "was at the seaside when Henry Mayhew wrote 'come to town – here's a man with a notion for a comic newspaper, and he has £2000 to lose.'"[231]

Based on Lemon's pre-*Punch* life, it is easy to understand both his self-consciousness and the precarious legitimacy of his claims to gentlemanly status. While his early life certainly mirrored that of many Victorian gentlemen, the misfortunes that befell him in his early adolescence solidified in part his own personal belief that those who had the resources should support those members of society who were unable to support themselves through no fault of their own. It was also perhaps Lemon's tumultuous and varied previous experiences that helped him to manage so many *Punch* contributors, each with different attitudes and social backgrounds, with such success.

Although some of the early *Punch* contributors, such as Henry Mayhew, felt that Lemon had severely compromised the "paper's early political principles in an attempt to placate the upper middle class,"[232] many of the later contributors whole-heartedly supported Lemon's respectable aspirations for the comic magazine. Prager argues that it was the arrant snobbery of the Punchites that ultimately "kept *Punch*'s standards high for such a long time."[233] Douglas Jerrold referred to Lemon as "the spoon with which the volatile ingredients that made up *Punch* were stirred into a smooth emulsion."[234] Even though the majority of the *Punch* staff's social aspirations did coincide with Lemon's, they still needed a strong central figure to direct them; this, arguably, was the single most important aspect of Lemon's editorship that enabled *Punch* to achieve the success it did.

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[229] R. M. Healey, "Mark Lemon (1809-1870), magazine editor and playwright," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Silver, March 7, 1866.
[232] Prager, *The Mahogany Tree*, 44.
[233] Ibid., 35.
[234] Ibid., 49.

Lemon did not begin his life as an unquestioned gentleman, as Thackeray and arguably Leech had. This may, in part, explain the zealousness with which he pursued genteel social status for himself, the magazine, and its contributors. At the *Punch* dinner meeting that coincided with the completion of the fiftieth volume of *Punch*, Silver recorded:

the contributors should mark to-day, at the end of Volume 50, their affection and respect for one who in his tact and skill in government equals our lamented premier (Palmerston) – our dear friend Mark Lemon. . .And then handeth over a watch and chain, with 11 links, the mystic number of the Punch Staff. . .Mark sitting at the head of the tablecloth, flanked on the right by Pater[235] and on the left by Shirley, covers his eyes for a moment. "It needeth not this, my friends, to assure me of your esteem for me. But I shall ever wear it next my heart. . .The Punch Brotherhood has been one of the most extraordinary literary brotherhoods the world has ever seen. We have never had a serious dispute. And in our so working together, proprietors and contributors, lies the secret of our great success. . .Our brotherhood shows that, irritable as authors may be called, they yet can work together, if joined by real friendship and working for a good end."[236]

Lemon's establishment of a respectable staff was essential to his understanding of 'The Punch Brotherhood.' Douglas Jerrold, like Lemon, was not born into a gentleman's family. He did not attend a reputable public school. As a result of these deficiencies in his upbringing, Jerrold was harshly criticized. The same "arrant snobbery" that Prager argues kept the *Punch* standard high, led Thackeray to describe Jerrold as a man who "ate peas with his knife."[237] Jerrold's lack of education probably explains Thackeray's comment. Douglas Jerrold was born in January of 1803 in Greek Street, Soho to Samuel Jerrold and his second wife Mary Reid. His father was a provincial actor and theatre manager, and he spent his early years with his family in Kent near his father's theatre company in Cranbrook. As a young child, Douglas Jerrold was often included in his father's plays whenever small children were required. Douglas received a simple education from an actor in his father's company, J. P. Wilkinson, and later attended

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[235] As Silver explained, "Pater" Evans, was Mr. Bradbury's "cheery partner." Silver, Introduction, February 11, 1908.
[236] Silver, June 27, 1866.
[237] Prager, *The Mahogany Tree*, 35.

schools in both Sheerness and Southend.[238] Due to Jerrold's early upbringing, he developed a

great interest in Shakespeare, whom he referenced periodically in his *Punch* work. The early

Bohemian influences in his life, as a result of being brought up with, and partially educated by,

the actors who worked in his father's company, not only served to widen Jerrold's literary and

theatrical knowledge, but they also reduced his genteel credibility in later life.

In 1813, Jerrold entered the navy as a "volunteer of the first class" under the patronage of

Captain Charles Austen, brother to the famed Jane.[239] Aboard the *Namur*, a Nore guard-ship,

Jerrold organized many private theatricals with the future artist and friend of Charles Dickens,

Clarkson Stanfield.[240] Jerrold was soon transferred to the *Ernest* which, in 1815, helped

transport wounded soldiers back to England from the Battle of Waterloo. Michael Slater argues

that this may have been the time when Jerrold developed his ardent disgust with the cult of

military glory.[241] However, in 1816, Jerrold's naval career was cut short. Samuel Jerrold had

become too sick to run his floundering theatre company and the family relocated to London

where Douglas became apprenticed to a printer and also supplied scripts to private theatres.

Douglas Jerrold's involvement with *Punch* dated from the second issue printed in 1841.

In a biography of his grandfather, Walter Jerrold notes "that when the title of *Punch* had been hit

upon for the projected periodical some one thought that it would not do, owing to its having

formed part of the title of Douglas Jerrold's satiric sheet of nearly ten year earlier; but one of

those who knew Jerrold best readily vouched for it that he would have no feeling of objection to

the title being used again." The younger Jerrold continues "he [Douglas] was probably invited to

send something for the first number, but nothing was received from him in time, and it was in the

second number that his earliest contribution appeared."[242] Jerrold became, as his grandson

describes, "one of the most voluminous of contributors,"[243] and his initial 'Q' papers ensured the

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[238] Slater, "Jerrold, Douglas William (1803-1857), playwright and journalist," *ODNB*.

[239] Ibid.

[240] The painter Clarkson Stanfield had been pressed into the navy under the alias "Roderick Bland." See Pieter Vander Merwe, "Stanfield, Clarkson (1793 – 1867), painter," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Walter Jerrold, *Douglas Jerrold and 'Punch'* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1910), 11.

[243] Ibid.

success of his contributions.[244] *Punch* suited his satirical style of writing and gave him a venue to express his radical ideas. These radical ideas, however, were exactly what Lemon, over the subsequent ten years, attempted to eliminate.

Jerrold died suddenly on June 8, 1857, and in the *Punch* issue that appeared on June 20, 1857, its staff paid tribute to the fallen Punchite in their customary form. The obituary that appeared in the magazine acknowledges that even in the late 1850s, though the majority of the *Punch* staff had completed the transition from radical to respectable, Jerrold had not. The obituary reads as a list of excuses for this man who, the author argued, was really a gentleman despite his harsh social criticisms. The opening stanza compared Jerrold to the British lion and continued:

> Those who but read the writer's word,
> Might deem him bitter: we that knew
> The man, all saw the sword he drew
> In tongue-fence, was both shield and sword.
>
> That sword, in the world's battle-throng,
> Was never drawn upon the meek:
> Its skill to guard was for the weak,
> Its strength to smite was for the strong.[245]

The *Punch* staff, in the wake of Jerrold's death, hoped to shape the memory of their fallen colleague in a way that would benefit the *Punch* men he left behind. The author, probably under the direction of Lemon himself, attempted to shed a gentle light upon Jerrold's writings. The *Punch* men wanted to leave an image of Jerrold the protector, overriding that of Jerrold the persecutor, in the minds of the reading public who, the Punchites believed, considered the men of *Punch* to be gentlemen.

The preeminent *Punch* gentleman, the one that Mark Lemon needed least to worry about bringing down its moral or respectable tone, was William Makepeace Thackeray. Thackeray was born in July of 1811, in Calcutta, India. He was the only child of Richmond Thackeray,

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[244] Michael Slater, *Douglas Jerrold 1803-1857* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 123.
[245] *Punch*, Volume 32 (June 20, 1857), 243.

secretary to the board of revenue in the East India Company, and his wife Anne Becher. Thackeray spent his early years in the company of a close-knit group of friends and family. The Thackerays placed a significant degree of importance on their own family heritage and that of their extended family. Gordon Ray contends: "it can be argued that a knowledge of forbears is more essential in understanding William Makepeace Thackeray than any other English novelist."[246] His interest in family genealogy is evident in his dedication to tracing the genealogical lines of many of his novels' characters. In 1815, the sudden illness and subsequent death of Thackeray's father brought an abrupt change to the family's tranquil and luxurious life in India. Although the Thackerays were well provided for upon the death of Richmond, young William was sent back to England in 1816.[247] In the fall of 1817, at age 6, he entered the Arthurs' school at Southampton which he later described as "a school of which our deluded parents had heard a favourable report, but which was governed by a horrible little tyrant, who made our young lives so miserable that I remember kneeling by my little bed of a night, and saying, 'Pray God, I may dream of my mother!'"[248] In 1818, Thackeray entered Chiswick school presided over by his mother's cousin, the Reverend John Turner, D.D.[249]

In 1822, Thackeray entered Charterhouse, beginning the education of a gentleman. Although he referred to Charterhouse as "Slaughter House"[250] well into mid-life, Thackeray did benefit from his education there, and through it became acutely aware of the class system in Britain. By 1829, after rigorous preparations, Thackeray was finally ready to enter Cambridge.[251] Thackeray's elite educational experience was one of the most important elements in his construction of the gentleman. As noted above, it was around Douglas Jerrold's educational past, or lack thereof, that Thackeray's dislike for him was formed. As Gordon Ray argues, "Thackeray attained [his] high position among[st] his contemporaries chiefly by redefining the gentlemanly ideal to fit a middle-class rather than an aristocratic context," and for him education was the basis of his 'new' gentleman. Thackeray began to "free the central and timeless qualities of gentlemanliness from its outmoded aristocratic trappings. By scraping away

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[246] Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The uses of adversity 1811-1846* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955), 19.
[247] Ibid., 65.
[248] Thackeray in Ray, *Thackeray: The uses of adversity 1811-1846, 70.*
[249] Ray, *Thackeray: The uses of adversity 1811-1846*, 71.
[250] Ibid., 79.
[251] Ibid., 107.

the meanness, the affectation, and the arrogance that disguised it; by emphasizing its simplicity, urbanity, gentleness, and manliness; he showed it to be as worthy as ever of allegiance."[252]

Thackeray's association with *Punch* began in 1844. By 1846, Thackeray and Jerrold had come to despise each other, each having a different view of the direction the magazine should take. Ray reveals that the major issues between Thackeray and Jerrold were disputed and resolved at the *Punch* Table.

> There Thackeray's chief ally was Leech, who hated Jerrold's radicalism as much as his 'low breeding.' But Thackeray also had the support of Gilbert à Beckett, Percival Leigh [the Professor], Dicky Doyle, and Tom Taylor, all of whom adhered to the gentlemanly code. Mark Lemon himself was shrewd enough to see that the point of view which Thackeray urged upon *Punch* should be adopted for the good of the magazine.[253]

Ultimately Thackeray's hopes for the future of the magazine trumped Jerrold's and were adopted by the staff as a whole. As a result of Thackeray's vision for the magazine, *Punch* attained a high standing amongst respectable Victorians. Although Thackeray ultimately resigned from the magazine in 1851, over the cartoon "A beggar on Horseback; Or, the Brummagen Bonaparte out for a Ride" that appeared at the end of December,[254] he still frequented the weekly dinner meetings and his presence loomed large over the men who wrote and drew for *Punch* on a weekly basis. At the dinner meeting on October 21, 1858, seven years after Thackeray's formal resignation, Silver's diary reveals that it was Thackeray's suggestion (a depiction of a poor man lecturing the rich) for the 'Big Cut' that was accepted over that of Ponny (Henry Mayhew).[255] Although Thackeray was the prime ideologist of the Victorian gentleman, the stories that he shared with his fellow Punchites around the Table were not always centered on the kindness and morality that were central in his definition of the gentleman. For example, Silver recorded a joke that Thackeray told at one of the meetings in March of 1859. Describing his recent introduction

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[252] Ibid., 13.

[253] Ibid., 370.

[254] Thackeray thought that the critical cartoon provoking Louis Napoleon was not only unwise, but indecent. As this cartoon appeared so soon after "The Judicious Bottle Holder," viewed by Thackeray as an unjust attack on Viscount Palmerston, the Prime Minister, he felt he had no other choice but to resign from the magazine in an effort to maintain his public reputation. Ibid., 172.

[255] Silver, October 21, 1858.

to a Miss Peawell, Thackeray revealed to his fellow gentlemen his strong inclination to respond, "My dear Miss Peawell – I wish I could."[256]

Thackeray's significance within the *Punch* circle cannot be overstated. His colleagues at the magazine, no doubt in part as a result of his popularity and literary success amongst Victorian society as a whole, held him in such high esteem that they came to see him almost as semi-divine. Silver recorded in his diary quite gleefully that, upon first meeting the famed author, Thackeray did the favour of taking champagne with him.[257] Thackeray's views were taken as truths and frequently incorporated into the art and articles that appeared in the issues of *Punch*. Whether the references to Thackeray were subtle or not, his influence over the men and the magazine lasted well beyond his official involvement with the publication. Even Carlyle, who had not enjoyed an easy relationship with Thackeray, wrote of him: "he had many fine qualities, no guile or malice against any mortal: a big mass of soul."[258] Carlyle's comments demonstrate the extent to which many contemporaries understood Thackeray as the ideal gentleman. His high position in *Punch* society was thus a direct result of the *Punch* men's attempts to further strengthen their claims to gentility through their relationship with Thackeray.

William Makepeace Thackeray died on Christmas Eve, 1863. Silver recorded in his diary how he heard of the sudden death of Thackeray:

S. [Shirley Brooks] tells me of his [Thackeray's] sudden death, after breakfast on Saturday – they would not spoil my Xmas Day by letting me hear of it. I never felt a loss so much, except of course those of my relations. And yet I was not privileged to rank myself as more than a casual acquaintance. But his kindliness extended to the smallest of his visitors, and he never snubbed one or ignored one's presence.

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[256] Ibid., March 2, 1859. Thackeray may have been referring to the side effects of a venereal disease he contracted in the slightly wilder days of his youth. Alexandra Mullen argues that Thackeray caught the venereal disease while in France – based on his continual reference to France as "the Incontinent." Thackeray often referred to a urethral stricture that he labeled"hydraulics" as causing "a constantly recurring set of symptoms of discomfort," and which prevented him from socializing with "Xtian society especially of ladies' company." See Thackeray in Ray, *Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847 – 1863*, 366 and Alexandra Mullen, "Vanity Fair and Vexation of Spirit," *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter 2002), 233.
[257] Silver, October 21, 1858.
[258] Carlyle in Catherine Peters, *Thackeray: A writer's life* (Guildford, Surrey: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 267.

Thackeray's obituary was included on the first page of the *Punch* issue published on January 9. The author of this obituary also drew attention to the fact that Thackeray was still very much involved with the magazine only days before his death. "In the history of this Periodical he became a Contributor to its pages, and he long continued to enrich them, and though of late he had ceased to give other aid than suggestion and advice, he was a constant member of our council, and sat with us on the eighth day from that which has saddened England's Christmas."[259] The obituary also revealed that the men of *Punch* remembered Thackeray for the "affectionate nature, the cheerful companionship, the large heart and open hand, the simple courteousness, and the endearing frankness of a brave, true, honest Gentleman, whom no pen but his own could depict as those who knew him would desire."[260] As in the case of Douglas Jerrold's obituary, the men of *Punch* who survived Thackeray were sure to strengthen their own position as gentlemen in the wake of their loss. They were sure to draw attention to both their relationship with Thackeray and his noble qualities, qualities that the readers would have undoubtedly attributed to his friends as well.

John Leech was one of Thackeray's life-long friends and he too had a gentlemanly influence on the *Punch* magazine that matured in the mid 1850s. Leech was born in August of 1817, at 28 Bennett Street, Stanford Street, London, the only son of John Leech and Esther Amery. The senior Leech was the assistant proprietor, and later the sole proprietor, of the London Coffee House on Ludgate Hill. As Simon Houfe notes, the younger Leech was raised in an environment of "sociability, debate, and knowledge of the public prints, mixing with politicians, businessmen, and journalists in his father's public rooms."[261] Leech began his formal education as a day boy at Charterhouse in 1825, and became a boarder there a year later. It was at Charterhouse that Leech met his lifelong friend Thackeray, who was a senior boy when Leech first began at the school. In 1833, Leech entered medical school at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. However, after a year of study, Leech decided to pursue his artistic talents instead of medicine, and left the program.[262] His time studying medicine allowed him to develop a friendship with another future Punchite, Percival Leigh[263] that proved professionally beneficial

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[259] *Punch*, Volume 46 (January 9, 1864), 1.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Houfe, "Leech, John (1817-1864), humorous artist and illustrator," *ODNB*.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Nicknamed "The Professor" by his *Punch* colleagues.

in his future career. Shortly after Leech left medical school, an event in the life of the senior Leech dramatically affected his younger son. John Leech senior was not an astute businessman. While his son was away at school, the London Coffee House began to lose money. He subsequently sold the establishment and purchased another in Fleet Street. This establishment fared no better than the previous one and the senior Leech soon found himself in bankruptcy court.[264] This humiliation had a profoundly negative effect on the relationship between father and son, and affected the younger Leech dramatically throughout his young adulthood.

John Leech's aptitude for drawing revealed itself at an early age. At the age of three, one of Leech's artistic attempts attracted the attention of Flaxman, the sculptor, who advised that "he should 'not be cramped with lessons in drawing; let his *genius*,' he said, 'follow its own bent, and he will astonish the world.'"[265] Although Leech did receive some professional training, it was not until 1836 that he focused on his professional artistic career in earnest. He travelled to Paris to study art, and returned to England heavily influenced by *comédie humaine*, a response to, and turn away from, the harsh characterization that typified the comedic art of the Regency.[266] Leech began his work for *Punch* in 1841, and as the magazine grew in popularity, so too did Leech's artistic ability.[267] Leech was the first comedic artist of his kind. As Graham Everitt argues,

> John Leech was the keenest of observers, noting and satirizing as no one before his time had attempted, or indeed had been able to do, the cant and hypocrisy, the pride and selfishness, the upstart and arrogant exclusiveness, the insular prejudices and weaknesses, which form a part of our national character; but doing this, he loved his countrymen and countrywomen for their finer qualities, and hated the bungling foreigners who presume to caricature them without the barest knowledge of their subject.[268]

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[264] Houfe, "Leech, John (1817-1864), humorous artist and illustrator," *ODNB*.

[265] Flaxman in Graham Everitt, *English Caricaturists and Graphic Humourists of the Nineteenth Century: How they illustrated and interpreted their times* (New York: Books For Libraries Press, Reprint of the 1885 ed.), 278.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Everitt, *English Caricaturists and Graphic Humourists of the Nineteenth Century: How they illustrated and interpreted their times*, 285.

[268] Ibid., 291.

Beginning in 1858, Leech's artistic contributions to *Punch* began a steady decline that ultimately ended with his untimely death in 1864. As the reduction in his *Punch* drawings suggests, Leech's battle with ill health had persisted for some time before he eventually succumbed.[269] In March of 1864, Lemon and Frederick Evans[270] were adamant that, as a result of the increased circulation of *Punch*, the copy had to be submitted earlier to ensure that the number went to press early Saturday night. When this plea was raised at the dinner meeting on the 16th, Leech retorted: "then we must try and reduce the circulation."[271] This comment, although no doubt made in jest, reveals the extent to which Leech was aware that his capacity to produce was falling swiftly: seven months after that Wednesday's meeting, Leech was dead.

John Leech's obituary appeared in *Punch* at the end of a year that began with the obituary of Thackeray. The deaths of the two men, who had so ardently pushed for the respectability of *Punch*, served as markers of the beginning and the ending of another *Punch* year. Leech's obituary reveals the extent of the admiration in which his fellow colleagues held not only him but also his artistic ability. The full-page obituary, a phenomenon never before seen in the pages of *Punch*, concluded that

> while society, whose every phase he has illustrated with a truth, a grace, and a tenderness
> heretofore unknown to satiric art, gladly and proudly takes charge of his fame, they, whose
> pride in genius of a great associate was equaled by their affection for an attached friend,
> would leave on record that they have known no kindlier, more refined, or more generous
> nature than that of him who has been thus early called to his rest.[272]

While the *Punch* epitaph for Leech, written by the aspiring gentlemen that called him friend, recorded the fame his artistic ability had garnered for him, it did not neglect to explicitly point to the more important aspect of his gentlemanly character. This was, for the men of *Punch*, how John Leech should be remembered.

When the decline in quality and quantity of Leech's work was noticed and reflected on by Mark Lemon, he realized that an artistic supplement to Leech had to be found; he turned to John Tenniel. Tenniel was born on February 28, 1820, at 22 Gloucester Place, New Road,

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[269] Perhaps Leech's illness was precipitated by overwork. Ibid., 317.
[270] Representative of the publishers of *Punch*, Bradbury & Evans.
[271] Silver, March 16, 1864.
[272] *Punch*, Volume 47 (November 12, 1864), 195.

Bayswater, London to John Baptist Tenniel and his wife Eliza Marie.[273] John Baptist was a fencing and dance master, and the Tenniel family lived in genteel poverty in Kensington. Young Tenniel attended a local primary school, but was later removed and studied fencing and other "gentlemanly arts" at home under the guidance of his father.[274] It was while learning the art of fencing from his father that Tenniel lost the use of one of his eyes when his father inadvertently struck him in the face. As a result, Tenniel was partially blind when he began his early artistic career as a painter of large frescos. He was talented at this pursuit and was selected to paint a fresco in the hall of poets in the House of Lords.

Tenniel's career drawing for *Punch* began in 1850. He had attracted the attention of Lemon and Jerrold, and when Richard Doyle left the magazine, a protest against *Punch*'s anti-Catholic rhetoric, Tenniel was brought in to replace him.[275] Tenniel often drew on classical imagery as the basis for his cartoons. His well-known depictions of Britannia, the British Lion, and Mr. Punch, are just a few examples of Tenniel's prolific work while at *Punch*. In 1861, Tenniel was chosen to replace Leech as *Punch*'s political cartoonist.[276] As Rodney Engen explains, "Tenniel's acceptance of the chief political cartoonist position was a major boost to his career, one which he greatly valued during the forty years he held the post."[277] While the post benefited Tenniel, it also had a gentlemanly effect upon *Punch* magazine. Tenniel, like Leech, was a conservative gentleman of the old order. Strict and private in his personal life, his genteel conservatism and popular reputation only increased *Punch*'s respectable character upon his appointment to the position of chief political cartoonists. As L. Perry Curtis notes, Tenniel was known amongst polite society for his "exquisite manners and 'sunny wholesome disposition.'"[278]

Although Silver recorded in his diary the regular attendance of Tenniel at the weekly *Punch* dinner meetings, he rarely recorded any active participation on Tenniel's part in the convivial or business conversations that took place around the table. However, Tenniel did come to enjoy and look forward to the weekly meetings, one of the few events in his regularly monotonous social calendar in which he had the opportunity to interact with others. Engen

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[273] Rodney Engen, *Sir John Tenniel: Alice's White Knight* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), 3.
[274] Curtis, "Tenniel, Sir John (1820-1914), artist and cartoonist," *ODNB*.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Engen, *Sir John Tenniel: Alice's White Knight*, 46-47.
[277] Ibid., 47.
[278] Curtis, "Tenniel, Sir John (1820-1914), artist and cartoonist," *ODNB*.

argues that "one suspects Tenniel viewed the antics of his colleagues with a mixture of voyeuristic interest and silent disapproval."[279] In 1900, seven years after receiving a knighthood from Queen Victoria, Tenniel retired from *Punch* after fifty years as a contributor to the magazine. Frankie Morris notes that Arthur J. Balfour, British Prime Minister from 1902 – 1905, "envisioned Tenniel's cartoons as 'one of the great sources' from which historians of the future would judge of 'the trend and character of English thought and life in the latter half of the nineteenth century.'"[280] When Sir John Tenniel died in 1914, at the age of ninety-three, his legacy was regularly referred to as *Punch* began its slow decline in the twentieth century.

Shirley Brooks was another well-known *Punch* man. Upon the death of Lemon in 1870, it was Brooks who was chosen by Bradbury and Evans to assume the editorship. Charles William Shirley Brooks was born to William Brooks (an architect) and his wife Elizabeth Sabine on April 29, 1816, at 52 Doughty Street, London. He passed the Incorporated Law Society's bar exam in 1838, but there is no evidence to suggest that he ever worked as a solicitor. Instead, he worked from an early age as an author, contributing to many of London's best periodicals including the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Illustrated London News*.[281] Brooks did not, however, begin his career as a journalist revering *Punch* magazine. He was a man who could strike hard, not caring "a horses' mamma."[282] In the years before he became a member of *Punch*, Brooks penned many harsh criticisms of it, including, as Spielmann argues, "one of the severest assaults on *Punch* ever published."[283]

In 1851, Brooks's sentiments changed with his first contribution to *Punch*. The Punchites welcomed the addition of Brooks who was a "useful all-round man."[284] He was a prolific writer who was able to work very quickly, signing his *Punch* articles "Epicurus

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[279] Engen, *Sir John Tenniel: Alice's White Knight*, 48.
[280] Frankie Morris, "John Tenniel, Cartoonist: A critical and sociocultural study in the art of the Victorian political cartoon" (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 1985), 3.
[281] G. C. Basse, rev. H.C.G. Matthew, "Brooks, Shirley (1816-1874), journalist and playwright," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
[282] Spielmann, *The History of "Punch,"* 357.
[283] Brooks wrote the article for *Man in the Moon* (edited by Angus B. Reach) in November of 1847. The article, "Our Flight with *Punch*," was an imitation of Tom Taylor's "Flight with Russell." It was, as Spielmann notes, "the more severe for the excellence of its quality," Ibid.
[284] Ibid., 356.

Rotundus."[285] Spielmann notes that it was Brooks's "charm and grace as much as his vigour that compelled the admiration of his fellows and their admission that he was the most valuable accession that the Staff had ever received."[286] It thus came as no surprise to the staff when, only a week after Lemon's death, Brooks was invited to become the editor of the magazine by its publishers Bradbury and Evans.[287] Brooks maintained the journal that Mark Lemon had established. His tenure was marked by a "steady-as-she-goes" attitude[288] rather than any marked change. In describing the change of *Punch* editor that occurred in 1870, Price contends that

> *Punch*'s Editors have been able and varied and on the whole each new reign has meant attention to some part of the work hitherto neglected. The least of the changes was the change from Lemon to his right-hand man. . .he[Brooks] made no big changes, but then it is probable that he had been responsible for a good many of the improvements during the pervious ten years.[289]

In many respects, Brooks's editorship was simply a continuation of the program that he and Lemon had begun when Brooks first became involved with the publication in the early 1850s.

Tom Taylor was another influential *Punch* man who left his mark on the magazine. He was born on October 19, 1817, in Bishop-Wearmouth, a suburb of Sunderland, to Thomas Taylor and his wife Maria Josephina. His father began his working life as a farm labourer, but, as Winton Tolles asserts, "by hard work, thrift, and a shrewd business sense he rose to a position as head partner of a brewery in the Town of Durham, fourteen miles from Sunderland."[290] As a young boy, Tom Taylor began his education at Sunderland Grange School. In 1832, he continued on to the University of Glasgow, and in 1837 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts degree.[291] Taylor moved to

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[285] Brooks was perhaps most well known for his "Essence of Parliament" which ran in *Punch* for twenty years. Basse, "Brooks, Shirley (1816-1874), journalist and playwright," *ODNB*.
[286] Spielmann, *The History of "Punch,"* 358.
[287] Spielmann includes a story about Brooks to describe how "he would defend his paper with spirit. When an ill-mannered acquaintance told him 'that of all the London papers he considered *Punch* the dullest,' Brooks replied, 'I wonder you ever read it?' 'I don't,' said the other. 'So I thought,' retorted the Editor, 'by your foolish remark.'" Ibid., 359 - 360.
[288] Basse, "Brooks, Shirley (1816-1874), journalist and playwright," *ODNB*.
[289] Price, *A History of Punch*, 107.
[290] Winton Tolles, *Tom Taylor and the Victorian Drama* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 27.
[291] Howes, "Taylor, Tom (1817-1880) playwright and comic writer," *ODNB*.

London in 1844, to take up the position of professor of English at the University of London. While teaching in 1845 and 1846, Taylor also worked as a dramatist and writer. It was during this time that he made his first contribution to *Punch* magazine.[292]

In the 1850s and 1860s, Taylor contributed an average of six columns each month to the weekly magazine. Described as a "kind-hearted philistine, fond of modest and sentimental pictures, and unsympathetic to innovation,"[293] Taylor fitted in well with the other *Punch* members who took their place around the Table on Wednesday evenings. Mark Lemon quickly accepted many of his suggestions for the 'Big Cut,'[294] and when a discussion of the parliamentary franchise came up in conversation, Taylor's views were identical to those of Tenniel, Brooks, and Leigh.[295] It is thus difficult to understand why the magazine faltered and changed under Taylor's editorship in the mid 1870s. Upon Lemon's death in 1870, Taylor became Shirley Brooks's unofficial assistant editor, later becoming sole editor in 1874. However, Taylor's editorship was marked by a sense of trying to keep up with the past success of *Punch*. M. H. Spielmann notes, "it cannot be said that his [Taylor's] editorship was a success. His fun was too scholarly and well-ordered, to veiled, deliberate, and ponderous; and under him *Punch* touched its lowest point in popularity."[296] Price's evaluation of Taylor's tenure as editor is not quite as harsh, while Howes summarizes the views of this *Punch* period thus: "while *Punch* easily survived Taylor's editorship, under him it became rather sombre and pompous."[297] The men with whom Taylor shared so much in common, who took their places at the Table in the 1850s and 1860s, would have been horrified had they known the "pompous" turn the magazine would take in the 1870s. Pomposity was already a characteristic of the swell, that interloper the Punchites so detested. Taylor's ideas, than which in the 1850s none better could be found, in Silver's opinion,[298] shifted drastically in the 1870s, a period that marked the end of the style of gentlemanliness found in Lemon's *Punch*.

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[292] Tolles, *Tom Taylor and the Victorian Drama*, 33.
[293] Howes, "Taylor, Tom (1817-1880) playwright and comic writer," *ODNB*.
[294] Silver, September 1, 1858.
[295] "Either wealth or brains should be the ground for having a vote says Tom: and so say we all of us." Silver, December 22, 1858.
[296] Spielmann, *The History of "Punch*," 340.
[297] Howes, "Taylor, Tom (1817-1880) playwright and comic writer," *ODNB*.
[298] Silver, January 26, 1859.

Price argues that "the Dinners of the Staff were only the centre of *Punch* conviviality. *Punch* men visited one another, they went for holidays together. They dined out of town in small parties. They punted at their clubs – the Garrick, the Savage, the Reform and the Athenaeum in particular – as well as in all the small private clubs and night-clubs, often scandalous, of Thackeray's day."[299] The men of *Punch* certainly saw themselves as gentlemen and wanted to be recognized as such. Despite their sometimes ungentlemanly behaviour, as described in part by Henry Silver, they used *Punch* to bolster both their claims to gentility and their public recognition as respectable, upright, and moral men. That these men tried so hard to further this public perception in their magazine demonstrates the extent to which they felt their gentlemanly status was questioned by Victorian society. Frequent references to gentlemen like Leech, Tenniel, and above all Thackeray, served to bolster the social standing of the *Punch* men. In much the same way as the magazine was used in its infancy as an outlet for the radicalism of its staff, the *Punch* that matured in the mid 1850s was used to further the recognition of its staff as gentlemen.

       Punch magazine, as produced between 1851 and 1867, in many respects served to mold the public image of these Punchites into a form that would be accepted by respectable society. Although these aspiring gentlemen certainly did not behave as such all of the time, this tension was not particular to them. As was the case for many Victorian gentlemen, the Punchites' private personalities and attitudes diverged from those of the ideal gentleman. However, *Punch*'s commentary and its understanding of the gentleman's morality, his position within the social hierarchy, and the means by which he clothed himself help us to understand more fully what exactly it meant to be a gentleman in mid-Victorian Britain.

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[299] Price, *A History of Punch*, 99.

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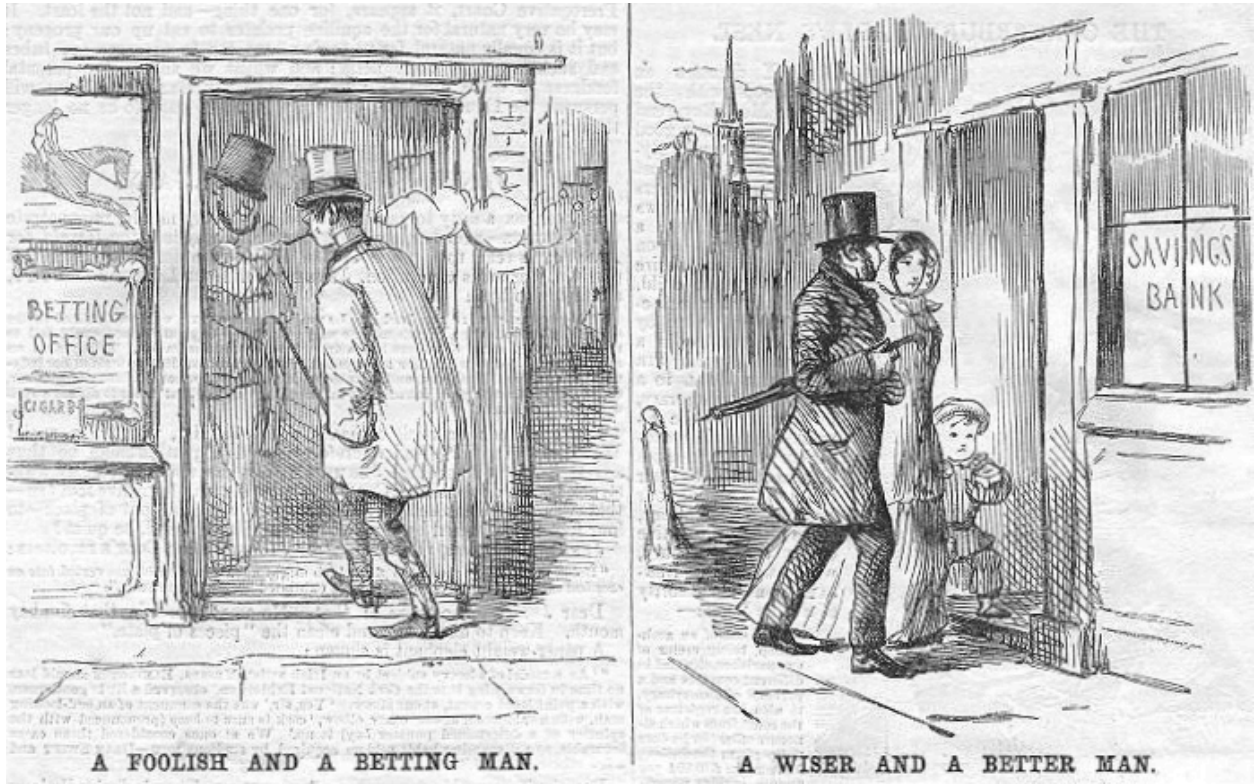
Figure 1 – "Mr. Punch at Home," *Punch*, Volume 29 (December 22, 1855), 245.

A FOOLISH AND A BETTING MAN.

A WISER AND A BETTER MAN.

Figure 2 – "A Foolish and a Betting Man – A Wiser and a Better Man," *Punch*, Volume 22 (1852), 246.

A PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH.

Puseyite Parson. "WHAT! WANT TO LEAVE YOUR SITUATION! WHY, I THOUGHT YOU WERE PERFECTLY SATISFIED?"

Cook. "WELL, SIR, THE FACT IS, I AIN'T EQUAL TO THEM FAST DAYS; FOR WHAT WITH A HEGG HERE, AND A HEGG THERE, AND LITTLE BITS O' FISH FOR BREAKFASTES, AND LITTLE BITS O' FISH FOR DINNERS, AND THE SWEET OMELICKS, AND THE FRIED AND THE STEWED HOYSTERS, AND THE BASHAWED LOBSTERSES, AND ONE THINK AND THE HOTHER, THERE'S SO MUCH COOKING, THAT I AIN'T EVEN TIME TO MAKE UP A CAP!"

Figure 3 – "A Pretty Kettle of Fish," *Punch*, Volume 20 (1851), 47.
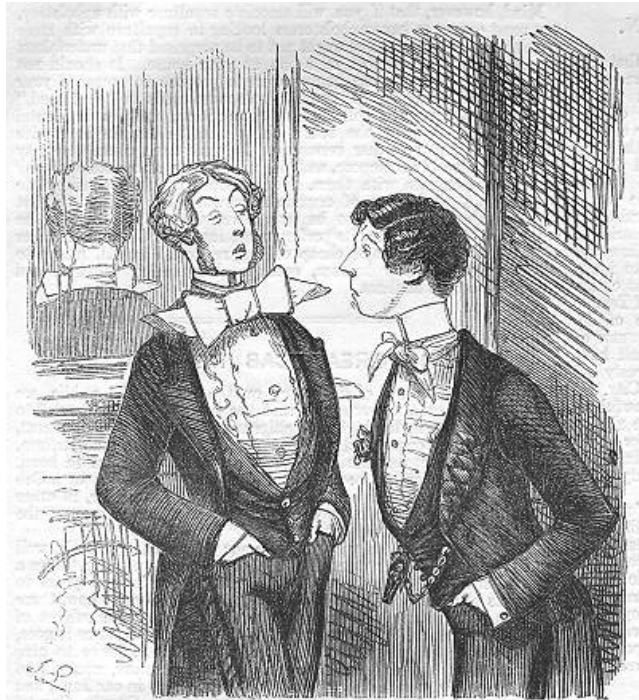
Figure 4 – *Punch*, Volume 25 (1853), 18.

DECIDEDLY.

Small Swell. "MOST 'BSURD ROW THEY'RE KICKING UP ABOUT EQUESTRIANS IN KENSINGTON GARDENS! WHY THEY OUGHT TO BE DEUCED GLAD OF ANYTHING THAT ADDS TO THE BEAUTY OF THE PLACE—MY 'PINION!"

Figure 5 – "Decidedly," *Punch*, Volume 39 (August 4, 1860), 44.

Figure 6 – "Truth is Great," *Punch*, Volume 27 (1854), 18.

Figure 7 – "The Aristocracy Manufacturing Their Wares for an Industrial Exhibition," *Punch*, Volume 47 (December 24, 1864), 258.

THE GHOST OF PROTECTION APPEARING TO
MR. DISRAELI.

Figure 8 – The Ghost of Protection Appearing to Mr. Disraeli," *Punch*, Volume 21 (1851), 151.
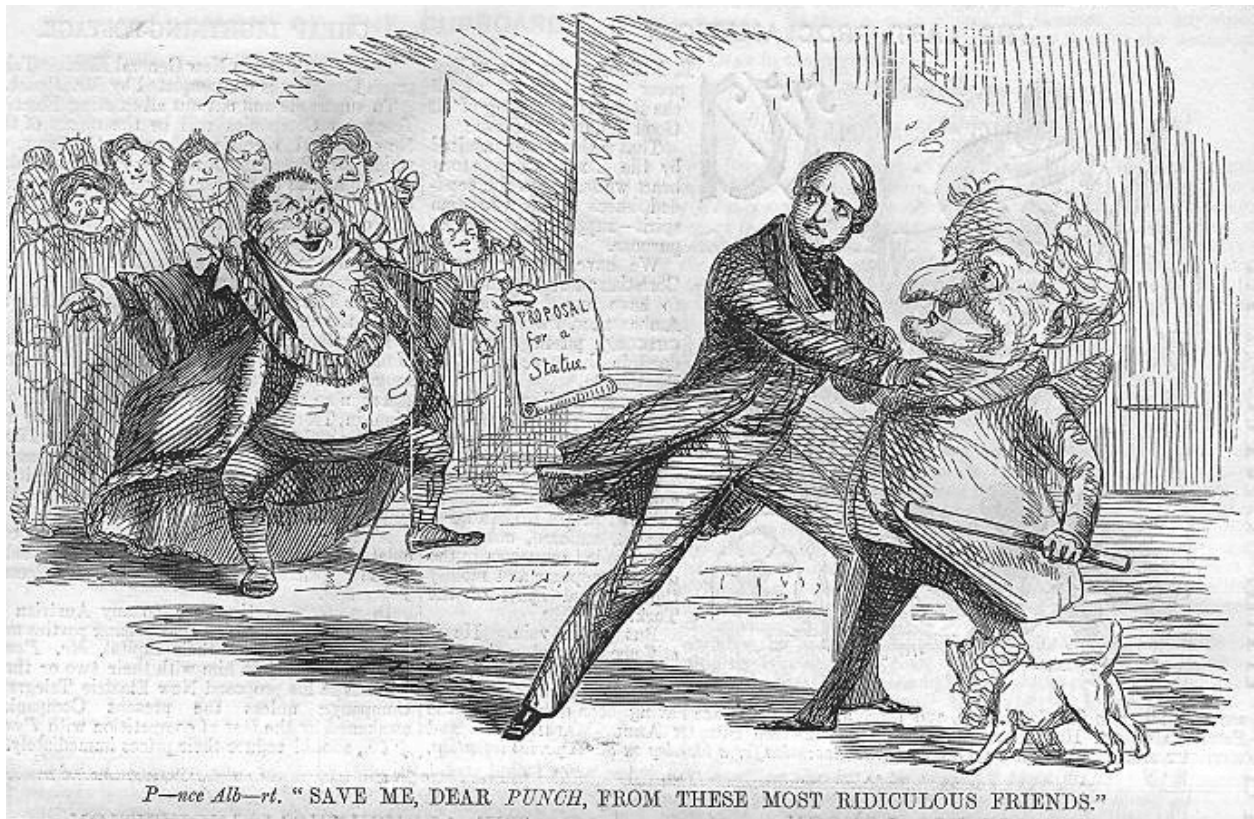
P—nce Alb—rt. "SAVE ME, DEAR *PUNCH*, FROM THESE MOST RIDICULOUS FRIENDS."

Figure 9 – *Punch*, Volume 25 (1853), 208.

FLUNKEYIANA—A FACT.

Flunkey (out of place). "THERE'S JUST ONE QUESTION I SHOULD LIKE TO ASK YOUR LADYSHIP—HAM I ENGAGED FOR WORK, OR HAM I ENGAGED FOR ORNAMENT?"

Figure 10 – "Flunkeyiana – A Fact," *Punch*, Volume 26 (1854), 44.

FLUNKEIANA.

Lady. "RESIGN YOUR SITUATION! WHY, WHAT'S WRONG NOW, THOMAS? HAVE THEY BEEN WANTING YOU TO EAT SALT BUTTER AGAIN?"

Genteel Footman. "OH NO, THANK YOU, MA'AM—BUT THE FACT IS, MA'AM—THAT I HAVE HEARD THAT MASTER WERE SEEN LAST WEEK ON THE TOP OF A HOMNIBUS, AND I COULDN'T AFTER THAT REMAIN ANY LONGER IN THE FAMILY!"

Figure 11 – "Flunkeiana," *Punch*, Volume 36 (May 14, 1859), 194.

Figure 12 – *Punch*, Volume 24 (1853), 58.

Figure 13 – *Punch*, Volume 29 (December 1, 1855), 216.

AN INTERESTING QUESTION.

Young Swell (who has just received promise of a Commission in a Highland Regiment). "NOW, GIRLS! WILL THE KILT SUIT MY CALVES?"
Sisters (tittering). "REALLY, DEAR, YOU ARE TOO ABSURD!"

Figure 14 – "An Interesting Question," *Punch*, Volume 35 (December 25, 1858), 256.
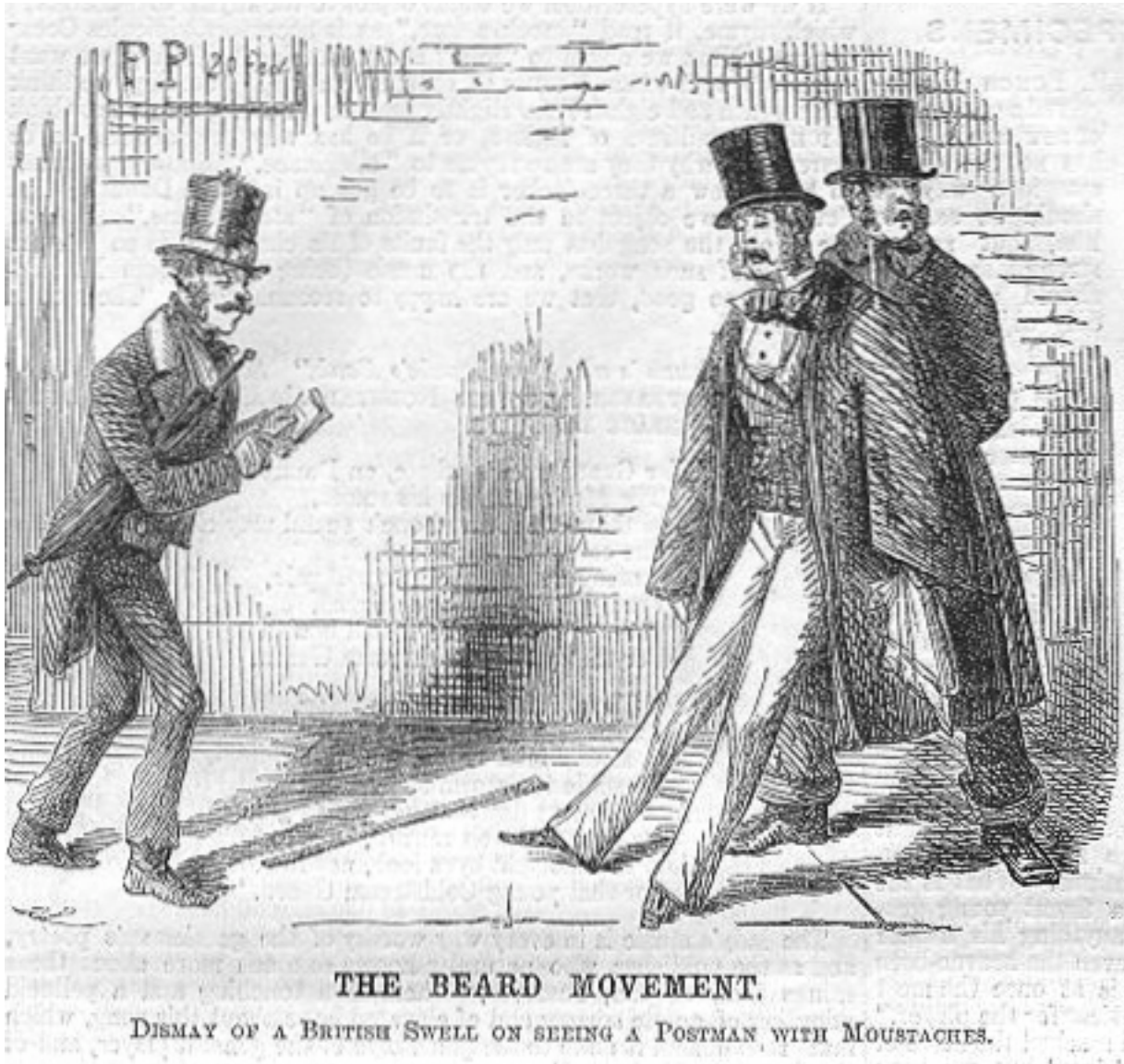
THE BEARD MOVEMENT.

DISMAY OF A BRITISH SWELL ON SEEING A POSTMAN WITH MOUSTACHES.

Figure 15 – "The Beard Movement," *Punch*, Volume 26 (1854), 136.

HOW VERY EMBARRASSING.

Gustavus. "MAMMA, DEAR! ARE MOUSTACHIOS FASHIONABLE?"
Mamma. "WELL, GUS, I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY, BUT I BELIEVE THEY ARE."
Gus. "OH! THEN, IS THAT THE REASON WHY MISS GRUMPH WEARS 'EM?"
MISS GRUMPH, *as well as being strong-minded, is rather masculine in appearance.*

Figure 16 – "How Very Embarrassing," *Punch*, Volume 29 (November 3, 1855), 174.

Figure 17 – "The Beard Movement," *Punch*, Volume 33 (September 19, 1857), 122.

"DE GUSTIBUS, &c."

DINGLE. "That style of Whisker seems to me to give a Wild Beast sort of expression."
DANGLE. "'Course it does. Exactly what I'm Going in for !!"

Figure 18 – "De Gustibus, &c.," *Punch*, Volume 39 (November 3, 1860), 171.