

Cartoons from Punch.



THE BRITISH LION'S VENGEANCE ON THE BENGAL TIGER.

** An uncontrollable desire for revenge was aroused throughout England on account of the horrible atrocities committed by the native Indian soldiers after the Mutiny.

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Cartoons from “Punch”

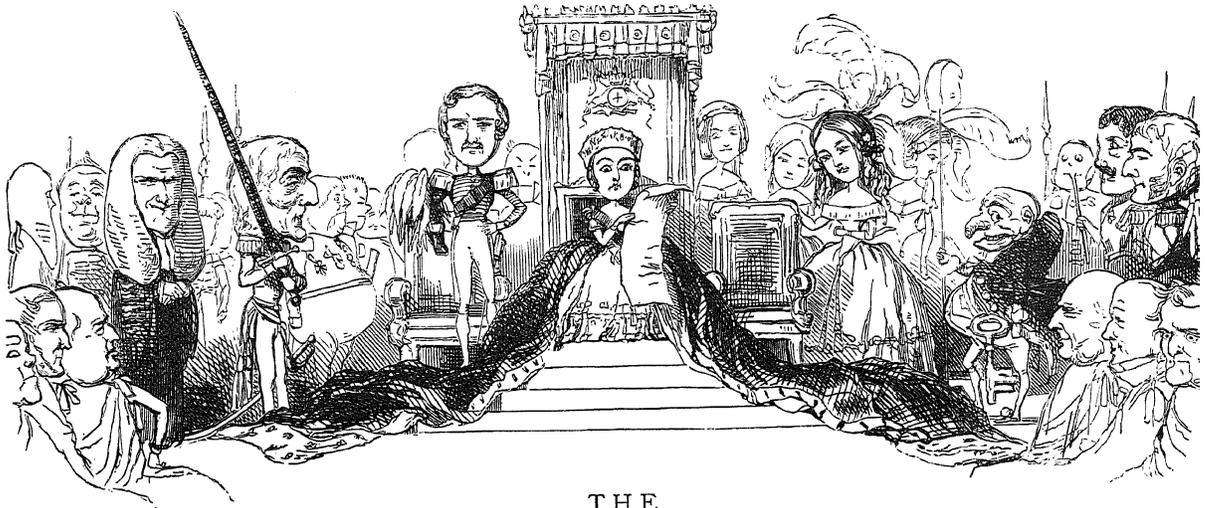
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THE
CARTOONS OF "PUNCH."

IT is the pride of "PUNCH" that the "Cartoon of the Week," in which for so many years he has regularly crystallised his opinion of the week's chief idea, situation, or event, is truthfully representative of the best prevailing feeling of the nation, of its soundest common-sense, and of its most deliberate judgment—a judgment possibly to be revised in the light of subsequent experience, but at the moment of its publication seriously formed, albeit humorously set down and portrayed. It follows, therefore, that the "PUNCH" cartoon is not to be considered merely as a comic or satirical comment on the main occurrence or situation of the week, but as contemporary history for the use and information of future generations cast into amusing form for the entertainment of the present. Current national opinion frequently becomes modified, and history may qualify—it may even radically alter—the view of the day; but the record of how public matters struck a people, an imperial people, at the instant of their happening, is surely not less interesting to the future student of history, of psychology, and of sociology, than the most official record of the world's progress. The lover of humour will recognise in the following pages the emotions, so frankly expressed, of fun or anger, which prevailed at the moment, and which now through the lapse of time appear so delightfully fresh as to be almost naïve. And the reader whose memory goes back to the times here dealt with, and who becomes, as it were, his own posterity—the child of his earlier self—will find not less interest and amusement in recalling the past in these pictures, and in weighing his former judgments in the scales of his later experience, measuring them by the standards since established by the working of time.

In the early days of "PUNCH" no one spoke of its "cartoon." "Caricature" was the public's word, as it was when Gillray and Rowlandson, the Cruikshanks,

Heath, and the rest, were issuing their satirical prints. Even Robert Seymour's little cuts were called caricatures, and not until 1830, when the elder Doyle began his "Political Sketches," unexaggerated in statement, decorous, and fair, was the public accustomed to any other term. At first "PUNCH" adopted the name of "pencilling" for his "big cut," but in 1843 the first great competition for the decoration of Westminster Palace set the word "cartoon" on everybody's lips; and as "PUNCH" must always be in the forefront of everything, everywhere, he, as Sir Oracle, omniscient and omnifarious, must have his "cartoon" also; so he gravely ranged his principal weekly engraving by the side of the vast productions which our leading artists—Watts, Cope, Armitage, and the others—were submitting to the judgment of the Government's art advisers in Westminster Hall. And thus what in Charles I.'s reign was called a "mad designe," and in George II.'s a "hieroglyphic," in that of Victoria became a "cartoon." The responsibility for the new nomenclature belongs to one of John Leech's earliest contributions, but it is likely that the notion, like most of the striking new ideas at the time, came from the fertile brain of Henry Mayhew. After this for a time "PUNCH" dropped the word "cartoon;" but the public, whose fancy had been tickled, remembered it, and has clung to it ever since, sometimes absurdly enough applying it to any insignificant sketch or drawing relating to public affairs: whereby it has robbed the word of its artistic meaning and substituted another entirely foreign to it—that of purely political significance. It will therefore be seen that although Dr. Murray's monumental lexicon attributes the first use of the term in its modern sense to one of Miss Braddon's writings of the year 1863, the word had in truth just reached its majority when he took cognisance of it.

It is obvious that the cartoon has a fourfold purpose and a fourfold use. It has, in the first place, its political and social value; in the second, its artistic value; in the third place, its educational and propagandist value; and in the last, its historical: so that the bringing together of such a collection as this in one work is not to be regarded as simply a commercial enterprise on the one hand, or on the other a means of whiling away an amusing and agreeable hour. It is the record—more intimate than any history, less formal and conventional than any diary, conceived by some of the cleverest and wittiest brains and realised by some of the skilfullest hands—of the Victorian era, and for that reason is worth the doing, as it is worth close and repeated study and examination.

Political science and sociology are so closely allied that it is difficult to find the line of demarcation. "PUNCH" has not sought to differentiate between them. The home and foreign politics of Britain, and in a measure of the world at large, together with questions of advancement and reform have regularly been dealt with; and in their salient points they will be found within the covers of this book. It was just the happy capacity of "PUNCH" to reflect the opinion of the thinking portion of the country that secured the paper the power it attained and won it the respect of each successive