

## JOHN LEECH AND *PUNCH* – TATTOOING THE STORY OF AN AGE IN A “NEWSPAPERIZED WORLD”

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### Abstract

As tattoos are both drawing and text that imprint the epidermis in inky arabesques of Delphic symbolism, *Punch* or *The London Charivari* acted, for more than one-hundred and sixty-one years (1841-2002) as the sharply witty, bitterly satirical chronicle of its own time. With a weekly circulation of approximately 50,000 – 60,000 issues in the mid-Victorian period,<sup>1</sup> *Punch* became one of the most influential journalistic witnesses in mid-Victorian Britain, renowned for its unique sense of humour, audacious approach to current social and political matters and, most of all, for an unprecedented mastery of caustic illustrations, in a fresh approach to capture and caricaturise the spirit of the epoch, equally unprecedented in its dynamism and expansion. Although throughout the 1840s the magazine built its popularity more on political analysis than on satirical drawing, “Punch's Pencillings” would turn the magazine into a vivid fresco, whose inimitable touch and magnetism have come to be osmotically associated with John Leech (1817-1864). With his undeniably remarkable artistic touch he managed not only to define the overall architecture of the magazine, but also to create a new understanding of humorous drawings, introducing the world to the concept of 'cartoon' as we all know it today. This article examines a selection of his three-thousand drawings published in *Punch*, in an attempt to recompose, through curved charcoal lines, the jigsaw of what Henry James coined as “newspaperized world,” at times when, as Lucy Brown argues, Britain was forging the modern concept of news. It is not only the social, cultural and political milieu that interests us, but also the extratextual implications of a visual appearance and narrative that pervaded the literary scene, as nineteenth-century journalism shared its boundaries with the realm of literary fiction.

**Keywords:** *Punch; John Leech; journalism; satire; social fresco*

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<sup>1</sup> Based on figures in *Punch* Archives, British Library Additional Manuscripts (uncatalogued).

## Introduction

In his novel *Author, Author*, David Lodge acknowledges the great impact Punch had on the life of the lionised late Victorian writer Henry James. Lodge writes that:

Punch had always occupied a privileged place in Henry's consciousness. His mental images of England and the English were first formed by the creased and dog-eared back numbers he and William pored over as boys in New York. When he was taken to England for the first time since infancy, at the age of twelve, and looked about him, his eye had already been trained by the woodcuts of Leech. By the time he returned as a young man, Punch, its pictorial range now extended by Keene and Du Maurier, was his guide, his Baedeker and Bradshaw, for the interpretation and negotiation of English social life. Experience soon revealed its limitations for this purpose, but Du Maurier's cartoons – the drawings rather than the sometimes ponderous text beneath them – recorded a fine-grained satirical observation of social behaviour that Henry found helpful and suggestive as, shifting his base restlessly between America and Europe in the 1870s, he developed his own 'international' fiction of manners. When he visualized his English characters, when he dressed them and had them sit down and stand up and walk about and converse in various public and domestic settings, his mental images were often in black and white, as if one of Du Maurier's tableaux had come to life. (Lodge 40).

### A Finer Sense of Mockery



An illustration from the introduction to the first issue of *Punch*, 1841, engraving. Source: Wikimedia

When Henry James settled in London, in 1869, John Leech (1817-1864) would no longer be of this world but *Punch*,<sup>2</sup> also known as *The London Charivari*,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> “As for the magazine’s name, the legend went that someone remarked the new paper should be like a good mixture of Punch — nothing without Lemon — to which Mayhew cried: “A capital idea! We’ll call it Punch!” and a prospectus was drawn up announcing “A new work of wit and whim embellished with cuts and caricatures” (Walasek 10).

would thrive as the most talked-about and enjoyed British weekly-satirical periodical, with an ever increasing readership, in the age which John Stuart Mill acknowledged as “the age of newspapers” (85). Born at No. 3 Crane Court, London and launched on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1841 by the wood engraver Ebenezer Landells (1808-1860) and writer Henry Mayhew (1812-1887), *Punch* soon became one of the most applauded and witty chronicles of Victorian journalism, of immense influence that would not only recommend it as *the* satirical magazine of its age, but it would furthermore turn it into a national forum, a most genuine “National Institution” (Walasek 12), avidly read by the growing middle-classes and the educated elites alike. The magazine was an original raconteur of the stories the amazing nineteenth-century would spin at almost a whirlwind pace – the world had not witnessed similar changes prior to the technological avalanche triggered by the Industrial Revolution, the alchemy of an ever-expanding geopolitical design and the forging of new intellectual paradigms. It was *Punch* beyond all doubt that (re)defined satirical journalism, thoroughly adjusting it to the spirit of moral righteousness supported by Queen Victoria herself, as its launch was barely four years after the sovereign’s coronation, in 1837. It soon became the epitome of savoury and wholesome humour, departing its editorial style from the previously scurrilous, grotesque and quite frequently vulgar style the Georgian graphic satires and caricatures were legendary for. Gone were the days of James Gillray’s<sup>4</sup> outrageously crude and deeply offensive caricatures and their callous exploitation of both physical imperfections as well as personal flaws; with the rise of *Punch*, journalists and satirical illustrators embarked upon the long journey that finally *divorced* them from what Max Weber referred to as the “pariah caste” (25-27), unerringly chartering the road towards an infinitely more professional public perception of the concept.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Leech and the caricaturists who preceded him, as well as those who were his contemporaries, was shown in the part that beauty played in every

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<sup>3</sup> Ebenezer Landells and Henry Mayhew, the founders of *Punch*, got the idea for the magazine from a satirical French paper, *Charivari* which they used in the subtitle of *Punch* – “The London Charivari.”

<sup>4</sup> James Gillray (1756-1815) was an English caricaturist chiefly remembered for lively political cartoons directed against George III of England and Napoleon I. From around 1775 until 1810, he produced nearly 1000 prints —including brilliantly finished portrait caricatures of the rich, famous, or frivolous, wonderfully comic caricatures of people being awkward, and unquestionably the best satiric caricatures of British political and social life in the age of Napoleon. His pre-eminence in graphic satire, especially in the 1790s made him both sought after and feared. No sooner did a new Gillray print appear than it was sure to be plagiarized or imitated by contemporaries both in England and abroad. Source: <https://www.james-gillray.org/>

drawing in which it could be appropriately introduced; he may be credited with the creation of many of the loveliest creatures that ever fell from the pencil of an artist. Leech revelled in beauty as Gillray and Rowlandson revelled in ugliness. (Frith 67)

Ambiguity characterized not only the semantic corpus related to the concept of journalism, but also the condition of those pupal-stage “newsmongers,” as though first used in France in 1781, the word *journalisme* “which was used to refer to a group of public journals or those who produced them” (Eaman 139), did not begin to make its way into the English vocabulary until half a century later (138), and throughout the entire period it had been used in a rather loose manner, vacillating between the archaic meaning of “a writer of a journal or diary” (Noah Webster 1828) and that of a person who writes news stories for a living. The two quotations recorded by the 1989 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* refer to Joseph Addison's comment in *Spectator* no. 323 in 1712, which reads that “my following correspondent...is such a Journalist as I require...” (qtd. in Eaman 138), although, only two years previously, in 1710, there is Toland's observation that the Tories had “one Lesley for their Journalist in London, who for Seven or eight years pas did, three Times a Week, Publish Rebellion” (qtd. in Eaman 139). The *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, published in London, 1831, in its second part, analysing the situation of French journalism, defined the concept in the following terms,

[...] it is held to be the ruling power, and is properly honoured and enthroned. [...] Where men are insulated they are easily oppressed; when roads become good, and intercourse is easy, their force is increased more than a hundred fold: when, without personal communication, their opinions can be interchanged, and the people thus become one mass, breathing one breath and one spirit, their might increases in a ratio of which it is difficult to find the measure or the limit. Journalism does this office .... (487)

Although newspapers had existed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Nicolas Bourne and Nathaniel Butter launched the project of the first regularly published newsbook in London, *Corante, or weekly newes from Italy, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, France and the Low Countrey*, a replica of the first English-language newspaper which appeared in Amsterdam one year and a half earlier, in 1620, it was not until 1702 that history records the appearance of the first daily newspaper in England, the *Daily Courant*, soon followed by Daniel Defoe's the *Review*, in 1704, Richard Steele's *The Tatler*, in 1709, and Steele and Joseph Addison's the *Spectator*, in 1711. The first periodical that can be considered a magazine, the *Gentleman's Magazine* originated in Britain, in 1731, and though initially confined to a limited audience of the elites, by 1760, the

annual circulation of London newspapers reached almost ten million copies, only to see the figures soar to twenty-five million copies by 1815 (Eaman xiii-xxvii).

First introduced by Queen Anne to raise money for war with France, the taxes on newspapers, pamphlets and paper, also known as the “taxes on knowledge,”<sup>5</sup> were gradually reconsidered and even abolished, as was the case with the stamp duty on pamphlets (1834), the first in a long series of legal modifications that would culminate with the repeal of the *Advertisement Duty* in 1853, of the newspaper *Stamp Act* in 1855, and the total removal of the *Paper Duty* in 1861 as well as the *Securities System* in 1869 (Royle 261). The removal of such “infamous” taxes allowed the newspaper trade to breathe in an air of infinitely far more creative liberty and increased readership, and the subsequent steps translated into newspaper proprietors lowering the price of their journals whilst redimensioning their size and accelerating editorial frequency could only mean one thing – unprecedented access to a special type of narrative which, like no other, echoed the stories of the time and condenses the horizons of the world. Martin Hewitt quotes Manchester publisher and mayor Abel Heywood (1810-1893) who believed that “the newspaper is the idol of the working man. Every day unfolds to him new action, stirring events mixed up with the grave and the gay, importing to him more extended sources of knowledge and pleasure, which, before the removal of the tax, he was incapable of attaining” (Hewitt 124). Gone were the days when, in order to read a newspaper or magazine, people had to go to a reading room, club or newsroom, or even hire a paper by the hour in a public house (Hewitt 124). As a happy consequence, news reading was no longer an almost compulsory “communal activity” (Rubery 6), the moment newspapers could “be purchased, and brought home to be read by men and by women” (Hewitt 124). “By the 1870s, the formerly luxurious newspaper had already become a “necessary of life” in the eyes of one observer for the *British*

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<sup>5</sup> “‘Taxes on knowledge’ was a nineteenth-century label which was applied to some taxes imposed in 1712 which were regarded as restricting the education, political awareness, cultural advancement and moral understanding of the lower and middle classes. The term was first used about 1830 by Sir Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890), a social reformer who was at one time Secretary of the Poor Law Board, although it had been suggested that Leigh Hunt invented it.” (Dagnall 347) A first tax was imposed on British newspapers that contained any “public news, intelligence or occurrences, or any remarks or observations thereon, or upon any matter in Church or State” in 1712, only to be gradually increased towards the first half of the nineteenth century. The government announced that it hoped that this stamp duty would stop the publication of newspapers and pamphlets that tended to “excite hatred and contempt of the Government and holy religion.” (Hume 53) Alas, the tax restricted the circulation of most of the journals to people with fairly high incomes.

*Quarterly Review*” (Rubery 7). Looking at the statistics of the time conveys a sense of thorough understanding of the amplitude of the phenomenon.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the size of the publishing industry – this “Branch of the English Commerce” - was growing very rapidly. It was an important new period in the expansion of magazines, and [...] books....(Williams 191).

The daily press rose from 1% in 1800 to 1.2% in 1850 to 11½% in 1875, to 18% in 1900, to 19% in 1910, to 54% in 1920, to 75% in 1930, and to 120% in 1947 (233).

### When Drawing Became Word



John Leech, Cartoon No. 1 – “Substance and Shadow” from *Punch* (July, 15<sup>th</sup> 1843, p. 23). *Source*: Wikimedia

It was under these auspices that *Punch* came out, and though the magazine travelled centuries, the organic connection lies with its dawning moment and the story of the Victorian England, the latter otherwise incomplete had *Punch* not been a part of it. With a circulation of approximately 165,000 issues in 1850, *Punch* was renowned for its unique sense of humour, audacious approach to current social and political matters and, most of all, for an unprecedented mastery of caustic illustrations, in a fresh approach to capture and caricaturise the spirit of the epoch. The bond is inexorably tied between the two, and it may not be hazardous to say that the greatest merit goes not so much to the written text, but to the “tattooed” cartoons which superbly captured the most authentic and memorable picture of Victorian England and ironized its sideslips and weaknesses. Although the early issues of *Punch* were far more greatly indebted to writing than to drawing, they were also the most unsuccessful ones, but everything was to change with the arrival on Fleet Street of some talented artists and illustrators.

The drawings of John Leech, Charles Keene, George du Maurier, and John Tenniel, the “Punch's Pencillings” are the looking glass through which,

like little Alice, anyone could travel to *the other side* of things, morals, customs, and play with an amazingly generous number of jigsaw puzzle pieces, composing and recomposing the patterns of the time. No other magazine in the whole wide world seems to have its name so intimately linked to the art of the *cartoon*, and readers' gratitude, past and present, alike, goes to *Punch*, the magazine which had not only forged a novel philosophy of satirical drawing, but it had also enriched the English language, the moment when John Leech added a *new* meaning to an *old* word. The illustrator became one of *Punch's* most refined and applauded contributors from issue four and his artistic style soon became the magazine's journalistic hallmark, so much so that it would not be inappropriate to assert that John Leech was *Punch* and *Punch* could not have existed without his refined mastery. Some three-thousand drawings and six hundred cartoons bear witness to that. "Fancy," once mused Thackeray, "a number of *Punch* without Leech's pictures! What would you give for it? The learned gentlemen who write the work must feel that, without him, it were as well left alone!" (Thackeray 402)

History tells us that at the editorial meeting of July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1843 it was decided that that week's *Punch's Pencillings* would have to focus on the exhibition of fresco designs that was being held at the Palace of Westminster. The exhibition featured cartoons, displaying not only artistic techniques, but also relying on the firmly established etymology of the term "cartoon," namely artists' preliminary drawings.<sup>6</sup> It was unanimously believed by all those attending the meeting that such a display would only contrast to the poverty and state of despair most of the people who lived in the borough fought with on a daily-basis. Commissioned as it was by the politicians of the time, the exhibition arguably draped itself in political attire, a fact which also accounts for the association between cartoons and public criticism. John Leech was the artist who chose the very topic of the meeting as the core subject of a drawing published under the heading *Substance and Shadow*, Cartoon No. 1. In one of his most striking sketches, the artist depicts a group of forlorn, ragged Londoners, looking dispirited and out-of-place evermore so as they are portrayed against so grandiose a backdrop as that of the Westminster Hall. The bizarreness of the situation is further deepened by the fact that there seems to be more stamina on the canvases of the grand pictures than on the *shadowy* profiles of the lookers-on, for this is what the title most astutely hints at. Ironic is not only the fact underlined by the commentary on the facing page, which reads that

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<sup>6</sup> The first record of the term *cartoon* dates back to the 1670s, referring to "a drawing on strong paper," from French *carton* or from Italian *cartone* "strong, heavy paper, pasteboard", from Latin *carta*, *charta*, from Greek *khartēs* 'papyrus leaf,' hinting thus at "preliminary sketches made by artists on such paper." Source: *OED* Before 1843, it was known that *Punch's* large illustrations appeared either under the name *Pencillings* or *big cuts*.

“They [*the Ministers*] have considerably determined that as they cannot afford to give hungry nakedness the *substance* which it covets, at least it shall have the *shadow*. The poor ask for bread, and the philanthropy of the State accords — an exhibition” (Punch 1843, 22), but also the price of admission to the exhibition itself, one shilling, another *shadowy* and harsh reality for the almost insubstantial group of portrayed paupers. The work was met with generous enthusiasm by the reading public, and soon enough a new word took its *substance* from the discussed drawing, as *Punch's* political illustrations would come to be known as *cartoons*, and their artists, *cartoonists*. John Leech was just 25 years old at the time.

Punch has the benevolence to announce, that in an early number of his ensuing Volume he will astonish the Parliamentary Committee by the publication of several exquisite designs, to be called Punch's Cartoons! (“Punch”, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1843)

In the years that followed, John Leech continued to draw for *Punch*, and he did till his last days. His work was family-oriented entertainment, equally appealing to both grown-ups and children; it was as if he drew (in) everyone's parlour and the accuracy of his diagnostics could have recommended him as one of the best clinicians of his time. “It is your house and mine:” [he draws] “we are looking at everybody's family circle” (Thackeray 405). Beyond all doubt, Leech was “a lover and depicter of beauty” (Miller 270), who “emphasized physical beauty, not the grotesque, because he was concerned with people's “finer qualities,” not with exposing their vices (270). One can see that in the attention to details he employs whenever he portrays young women, girls, children, and in doing so he managed to gain the total and unconditional love of his public.

Now, anyone who looks over Mr. Leech's portfolio must see that the social pictures which he gives us are authentic. What comfortable little drawing-rooms and dining-rooms, what snug libraries, we enter! What fine young gentlemanly wags they are, those beautiful little dandies, who wake up gouty old grandpapa to ring the bell; who decline aunt's pudding and custards, saying that they will reserve themselves for anchovy-toast with the claret; who talk together behind ball-room doors, where Fred whispers Charley, pointing to a dear little partner seven years old, 'My dear Charley, she has very much gone off; you should have seen that girl last season! (Thackeray 403-404)

Charles Dickens, the author whom John Leech most enjoyed working for, wrote about him in 1841, two years prior to their first collaboration, in 1843, when, most likely, at the writer's recommendation, Chapman and Hall commissioned

Leech to illustrate the iconic, forthcoming book, *A Christmas Carol*.<sup>7</sup>

In all his designs, whatever Mr. Leech desires to do he does. His drawing seems to us charming, and the expression, indicated by the simplest means, is exactly the natural expression, and is recognised as such at once. Some forms of our existing life will never have a better chronicler. His wit is good-natured, and always the wit of a gentleman. He has a becoming sense of responsibility and restraint; he delights in agreeable things, and he imparts some pleasant air of his own to things not pleasant in themselves; he is suggestive and full of matter, and he is always improving. Into the tone as well as into the execution of what he does, he has brought a certain elegance which is altogether new, without involving any compromise of what is true. Popular art in England has not had so rich an acquisition. (Qtd. in Frith 69-70)

The elegance of the artist and his delicate approach to criticism did not make the drawings any less moralizing and to illustrate this suffice to look at the cartoons that target smoking “weed” by juveniles in order to have a clear understanding of what John Leech's refined satire looks like. In 'Sound Advice' (1852) and 'Our Boys' (1853) the same epitomized Master Tom daringly confronts Gran'pa and Granma, respectively, with the 'appropriateness' of a triumphantly acquired, gentleman-like custom. “Master Tom: Have a weed, Gran'pa?” “A what, Sir?” asks the grandfather, “A weed! - A cigar, you know”, benevolently explains Master Tom, introducing his grandfather into the labyrinth of fashionable social jargon. “Certainly not, Sir”, unhesitantly comes the reply with an additional explanation, “I never smoked in my life.” Master Tom, in a superb exercise of filial concern, concludes “Ah! Then I would not advise you to begin.” 'Cool Assurance' and 'Very Kind', both published in 1854, oppose the adult authority of family and academic staff to the ridicule pretences of maturity two undergraduates construct for themselves through smoking - “Well, good-bye, Uncle! I've enjoyed myself very much in the country! And if you will run up to London at any time, I'll show you a little life!” utters the nephew in total confidence, while puffing a cigar, much to the bewilderment of his kith and kin.

Published just one year apart, the first appearing in 1846, the two homonymous cartoons 'The Rising Generation' speak of equally distressing aspects, when education becomes an old-fashioned concept and the 'ways of the world' turn into the only solid moral instances youngsters limit themselves to. “Shakespeare?” muses one “clever juvenile” “Pooh! For my part I consider

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<sup>7</sup> For details on the special personal, as well as professional relationship between Charles Dickens and John Leech see Jane R. Cohen's book, *Charles Dickens and His Original Illustrators*. Ohio State University Press, 1980, Chapter 7 “John Leech”, pp. 141-151.

Shakespeare a much over-rated man,” addressing an equally blasé and lost in thoughts friend of his, both wrapped in heavy clouds of cigar smoke. Equally delightful are the sequence cartoons that seem to play with a sort of Alice's looking glass, mirroring both sides of the story and making words all but redundant. 'Artful Excuse' (1847) plays with the delights of the domestic life and depicts a servant maid who interrupts what seems to be a habitual family reunion under the false pretext of going out “for half-an-hour and buy a bit of a ribbin?”, while, in fact, the reason for her stepping out of the house is waiting for her in uniform and large smile by the gate. 'Here and There, or, Emigration: A Remedy' (1848), on the other hand, abandons the light, humorous style and returns to the tone of the first cartoon, 'Substance and Shadow', contrasting the life of a ragged and miserable family of six members in Great Britain ("Here"), to the right image ("There") where all six members of a beautiful and happy family thoroughly enjoy the cosy atmosphere of their hearth and delights of a good dinner in the United States. The same claw-like limbs that he used to draw in the spectral profiles of children in *A Christmas Carol* resurface in the depiction of the British children, a powerful and bitter criticism against state policies and general indifference. Family had remained at the very heart of his artistic concern and the somewhat artificially gilded customs that would become rituals for any member of a respectable middle-class family. The 'Battle of the Pianos' (1855) tells the amusing story of two families, whose young daughters summon the muse of music, Euterpe, contrary to what anyone would imagine, not to enchant, but to “silence the enemy's piano if possible.” (Punch, *The Battle of the Pianos*) The novelty of the cartoon comes not only with its already familiar two perspectives, but with the use of the speech balloons, which make Leech's drawings look so modern. 'Stunning Politeness' (1856) is a one-panel cartoon that uses the same technique of speech balloon only to echo, with the help of two competing boxers, the reputed British chivalry and fair-play, and it magnificently manages to do so not at the expense of dimming the sense of rivalry that exists between the two. “Excuse my glove” and a determined posture is all it takes for the reader to draw a smile on his/her face. Of all the nine cartoons which appeared under the title 'The Great Chartist Demonstration,' all published in 1848, only the last one, 'The Beginning and the End' is a two-panelled drawing, opposing the *before* and *after* episodes. The former, in the left image, presents an agitator, aflame with unstoppable revolutionary pathos, urging the mob to rebellion, and the latter, on the right, portrays a meek and coward individual, this time, who while bursting into tears, abjures his loudly acclaimed republican views and solemnly acclaim the Sovereign's institution and authority.

Leech's contemporaries and modern audience alike have taken Mr. Briggs, a comical and helplessly bumbling gentleman to their hearts. This funny character appeared as the central protagonist of a series of cartoons known as

'The Pleasures of Housekeeping' that came out from 1849 until 1851. There was an unprecedented storyline that united the adventures of this middle-class gentleman which distinguishes the cartoons from the rest and singles out their protagonist. We come to witness how Mr. Briggs indulges in the pleasures of Fishing, Horsekeeping, Housekeeping, Hunting, Racing and Shooting only to disastrously fail in all of them.

Look well at the economy of the famous Mr. Briggs. How snug, quiet, and appropriate all the appointments are! What a comfortable, neat, clean, middle-class house Briggs' is (in the Bayswater suburb of London, we should guess from the sketches of the surrounding scenery)! What a good stable he has, with a loose-box for those celebrated hunters which he rides! How pleasant, clean, and warm his breakfast-table looks! What a trim maid brings in the boots that horrify Mrs. B.! What a snug dressing-room he has, complete in all its appointments, and in which he appears trying on that delightful hunting-cap which Mrs. Briggs flings into the fire! How cosy all the Briggs party seem in their drawing-room, Briggs reading a treatise on dog-breaking by a lamp, mamma and grannie with their respective needlework, the children clustering round a big book of prints—a great book of prints such as this before us, at this season, must make thousands of children happy by as many firesides! The inner life of all these people is represented (Thackeray 404-405).

It was not only Thackeray, Leech's dearest friend, who enjoyed following the unfortunate adventures of Mr. Briggs, it was also George du Maurier and even Prime Minister William Gladstone and all those who read Punch and continue to look at his fine drawings and appreciate a wholesome sense of irony that have kept Mr. Briggs alive. Each of his cartoons (and their exquisite attention to details) translates itself as a generous invitation to visit a gentleman's household and make acquaintance with his daily routine and attempts to succeed in various more or less exciting enterprises, but beyond all that lies one of the most honest professional pledges a caricaturist can make – to invite his public to laugh *with* his characters and not *at* their expense.

## Conclusions

John Leech's life was short in years but long in terms of artistic legacy as “from week to week, for twenty years” it enabled him “to play directly, and without intermission, on the hearts of a whole nation” (“Obituary”, Cornhill Magazine 758). His unique talent shaped not only the editorial policy of one of the most famous and loved Victorian magazines, but it also sketched the kaleidoscopic picture of one of Britain's greatest moments; and since cartoons reflected the

society and culture of those days in their unique and appealing manner, Leech's drawings may be regarded as some of the most honest and good-natured testimonials any kind of journalism has ever recorded. No one could expect any less from the "Satyric Genius" who "appears once in a century" (Thackeray 401).

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- An illustration from the introduction to the first issue of *Punch*, 1841, engraving. *Source*: Wikimedia
- John Leech, Cartoon No. 1 – "Substance and Shadow" from *Punch* (July, 15th 1843, p. 23). *Source*: Wikimedia

### BIONOTE

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