# *Another 'American Cruikshank' Found: John H. Manning and the New York Sporting Weeklies*

HELEN LEFKOWITZ HOROWITZ

New York in the early 1840s was the nursery of American popular culture. Alongside the penny press and minstrel theater, a new kind of publication appeared, the sporting press. These weekly newspapers—created to appeal to young literate men working in the city and living in boarding houses—mark the beginning of commercial erotic periodicals in the United States. Scholars have recently turned attention to the texts of the sporting weeklies to shed light on prostitution and to illumine aspects of American sensationalism.[1] My own work has explored sexual themes in the texts and the consequent prosecutions of the weeklies' editors for obscenity.[2] However, the subject of this study, some of the witty and irreverent drawings they con-

1. Three scholars opened the way to serious consideration of the sporting press in three important books: Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992); and David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).

2. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Rereading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002). Chapter 8 offers a full treatment of the sporting weeklies and trials for obscenity. When I began work on this subject, I learned that Patricia Cline Cohen and Timothy Gilfoyle were also planning articles on the same subject. We each presented our work at the American Studies Association in Fall 1999 and hope in the future to collaborate on a book on the New York City sporting press of the early 1840s. I am grateful to both for information and perspectives.

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz is Sydenham C. Parsons Professor of American Studies at Smith College. She held the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society in 1999–2000.

tained, has thus far never been examined. The shop of Robert H. Elton provided many images. It employed John H. Manning, who is the only known American artist featured in the 1840s sporting press and the sole delineator who signed his work. In the sporting press, Manning received the elevated title, the 'American Cruikshank.' His illustrations in the weeklies enable us to see critical elements of the popular culture created for the new male sporting life that appeared on the streets of American cities in the era preceding the Civil War.

I

In the 1830s and 1840s, New York was on its way to becoming the leading economic and cultural center of the nation. With the opening of the Erie Canal stimulating growth in population and the economy, the city had overtaken its rivals. New York City had important writers and printmakers, the major printing presses, and major and minor newspapers. By 1833 there were eleven daily newspapers in New York City, including the new penny press, cheap sheets hawked on the street.[3] Alongside the big fish were small fry trying to find a niche, such as the weekly *Hawk and Buzzard* and the *Owl*, sold from taverns and public houses to an artisanal male audience in the early 1830s. These short-lived papers spread gossip about sexual misbehavior, broadcast complaints, and issued threats through letters purportedly written by readers.[4] When statements used initials and promised to name names, they were likely to have been efforts to extort blackmail.

By the early 1840s a new group of papers appeared, aimed at a new clientele, New York sporting men or, perhaps more precisely,

3. I have profited from the many lively discussions of the penny press, including James L. Crouthamel, 'The Newspaper Revolution in New York, 1830–1860,' *New York History* 45 (1964): 91–113; Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 12–60; Andie Tucher, *Froth and Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the Ax Murder in America's First Mass Medium* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and Steven H. Jaffe, 'Unmasking the City: The Rise of the Urban Newspaper Reporter in New York City, 1800–1850' (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1989).

4. AAS holds several issues of the *Owl* and the *Hawk and Buzzard*.

those who aspired to join them. Their primary purpose was to entertain and enlighten readers. They had elements of the earlier artisans' weeklies, gossip mongering and blackmail, but they delivered these in a mocking, playful spirit. Threading throughout the papers was information to guide future sporting men about the new world of unrestricted pleasure and commercialized leisure in the city.

Who were New York's sporting men? It is best to see the term broadly as bringing together men from a number of distinct groups. At the core were the gamblers, sharpers, and organizers of prizefights for whom games were a means of gaining a living. But more numerous and thus important in this context were the diverse groups of men who identified with them. Among them were many young journeymen, who typically lived in boarding-houses. After hours some of them roamed the neighborhoods for entertainment. Here they came in contact with sailors moving up from the wharves. A range of commercial establishments had grown up along the Bowery and Chatham Street to cater to their hunger for leisure: 'free-and-easies' or saloons, theaters, improvised gambling dens, prizefight rings, and bawdy houses. Wealthier men on the town, as well as college students eager for entertainment, were attracted to the vitality of working-class amusements. Pulled into this male orbit was a group new to the city, young clerks, many just arrived from New England and upstate New York. Seeking opportunity in the growth of mercantile establishments in the city, young men left villages and towns with the hope of rising in the world. They are particularly important to a consideration of the sporting press as, unlike many in their era, they were literate and oriented to print culture. These youths worked long hours in shops during the day, but after hours they were free from supervision. Some of them came to revel in a world without masters.[5]

5. Among the most important works that have shaped my thinking about New York, the emergence of popular culture, and male sporting culture are Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*; Cohen, *Murder of Helen Jewett*; Cohen, 'The Helen Jewett Murder: Violence, Gender, and Sexual Licentiousness in Antebellum America,' *NWSA Journal* 2 (1990): 374–80; Cohen, 'Un-

The players in this mixed group who entered the new male sporting culture joined a sociable world in which wealthy associated with poor, and old with young, linked by the pursuit of thrills. Dressed in the fashion of the moment, they moved about the city in small packs in the evening, their conviviality heightened by alcohol. They walked with a certain swagger. The world they joined celebrated an ideal of leisure devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, as these males defined it. By its ethos, a blade with money to spend could take his enjoyment where he could find it, without thought of consequences or obligations. In this life, a key element of its culture was the dream of unrestricted male heterosexuality. Women were to be instruments of men's pleasure to be used and discarded freely. Thus for a sporting man with money to spend, the prostitute was the perfect imagined sexual object.

The needs and desires of men with money to spend became sources of commercial opportunity for others. Just as boarding houses and theaters emerged to cater to them, so did gambling houses, the ring, saloons, brothels, and a network of printers and distributors of erotic literature. It was in this context that sporting weeklies appeared. They were an innovation in America, created by men familiar with the world of theater and minstrelsy, who were aware of a new audience to exploit.

In early August 1841, William Joseph Snelling joined with George B. Wooldridge and George Wilkes to issue the first *Sunday Flash*. Snelling's life up to that point had combined lively writing in verse and prose with public drunkenness that had landed him in jail in Boston. He came to New York and in 1838 became coedi-

---

regulated Youth: Masculinity and Murder in the 1830s City,' *Radical History Review* no. 52 (1992): 33–52; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Peter Buckley, 'To the Opera House: Culture and Society in New York City, 1820–1860' (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1984); and W. T. Lhamon, Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Allan Stanley Horlick, in *Country Boys and Merchant Princes: The Social Control of Young Men in New York* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1975), has written effectively about the young clerk, although his examples are limited to the respectable.

tor, with blackface performer George Washington Dixon, of the *Polyanthos*, a short-lived weekly. When the two broke up, Snelling linked up with Wooldridge, who was the young proprietor of the Ellsler Saloon on Broadway, and with Wilkes, a young man-about-town with literary aspirations who had been a clerk in a lawyer's office. Wooldridge's business gave him access to gossip and a useful channel to distribute the weekly. Smart and energetic, Wilkes may have been particularly useful as a representative of the target audience for the publication. The *Polyanthos* had taken up the campaign of brothel madam Adelina Miller to vilify Thomas S. Hamblin, the impresario of the Bowery Theatre. At a critical point, Miller helped Snelling, Wooldridge, and Wilkes acquire a printing press.

The three men modeled the *Sunday Flash* after the *Town*, begun in London in 1837. They imitated its regular columns, subject matter, vocabulary, and engraved images on page one. Both papers took as central subjects the world of the public house, the racetrack, the prizefight ring, the theater, and prostitution, offering guidance and insider knowledge to their readers. (Although there are a number of ways to look at the *Sunday Flash*, perhaps the most useful is to see it as offering to clerks and other aspiring men on the town information and guidance about how to make their way in this sporting world.) The weekly traded in what one scholar of a related phenomenon has called '*knowingness*—the desire not so much to know, but to be one of those who are in the know, who are wise to the world.' The *Sunday Flash* gave the male reader paths to navigate the city so that he need not risk being embarrassed as a greenhorn. Moreover, some of the pleasure could be vicarious. Even a fellow who stayed at home or in his boardinghouse could fantasize a sophisticated entry into a saloon, a racetrack, or brothel parlor. The printed page allowed him to partake of an imagined identity as a sporting man.[6] The *Sunday Flash* set out to entertain and inform with wit and brio.

6. Philip Howell, 'Sex and the City of Bachelors: Sporting Guidebooks and Urban Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Britain and America,' *Ecumene: A Journal of Environment, Culture, Meaning* 8 (2001): 41.

The *Sunday Flash* was quickly joined by imitators. Wooldridge split from the partnership and went on to publish the *True Flash* with Dixon, and then the *Libertine*, the *Whip and Satirist of New-York and Brooklyn*, and the *Whip*. Snelling left the *Flash* in 1842 and wrote for Wooldridge's *Whip*. Dixon was briefly affiliated with the *New York Sporting Whip*. Its editor later emerged as the editor of the *Weekly Rake*. The last known issue of these publications is the *New York Sporting Whip* of March 4, 1843.[7] The writers for all these sporting papers partook of the nativism, misogyny, and racism that was a part of the very air they breathed. They shared an edge compounded of economic marginality, desire for enhanced social status, personal engagement in the world of saloons and brothels, and hostility to the mores of middle-class respectability. Unlike the London *Town*, the weeklies could not play against titled birth, what in one instance the *Town* called 'the real racy, spicy admixture of aristocratic morality.'[8] Taking its place in the American sporting press were gossip and invective directed against players in the theatrical world, rival newspapers and their reporters, and ultimately one other. All these elements were added to the staple of the earlier artisanal sheets, the airing of complaints against ordinary citizens and, most likely, threats of blackmail.

In their weeklies prostitutes constituted an important subject. On its masthead the *Whip and Satirist of New-York and Brooklyn* presented itself to its potential readers as 'Devoted to the Sports of the Ring, the Turf, and City Life—such as Sprees, Larks, Crim. Cons, Seductions, Rapes, &c.—not forgetting to keep a watchful eye on all Brothels and their frail inmates.' It treated the best-

7. Copies of these weeklies, beginning with the earliest copy, no. 6, of the *Sunday Flash*, September 12, 1841, form a part of the important newspaper collection of the American Antiquarian Society. They are supplemented by a small number of issues available on microfilm in the District Attorney Indictment Papers, New York City Municipal Archives and Records Center, New York, New York.

8. 'Characteristic Sketches—No. V,' *Town*, no. 5 (July 1, 1837): 1; Donald J. Gray, 'Early Victorian Scandalous Journalism: Renton Nicholson's *The Town* (1837–1842),' in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1982), 317–48.

known prostitutes as celebrities. For example, in 'A Gay Sight' it touted Julia Brown whom it called 'Princess Julia.' In this account, she took a sleigh ride with four coworkers, visiting various saloons in one evening, playing billiards, and enjoying refreshment. 'Then with a merry laugh and a constant waving of handkerchiefs, the reinsman deposited his fair cargo in safety at the mansion of the Princess.' A notice on the same page told of a new prostitute in town: 'A STAR.—Bright, brilliant, beautiful—has fallen among us. It is called Miss Sarah Green (a queer name for a planet) and is in the harem of Julia Brown at present.'[9]

Readers could believe they were getting inside information. For example, in 'Houses of Ill-fame,' a writer described his brothel tour on the preceding Sunday evening. After complimenting the good arrangements of Adelina Miller's establishment, he wrote of Mrs. Brown's on 165 Canal Street: 'This house, we believe, is patronized by some very nice young men; the girls seemed well behaved, and order and quiet reigned supreme.' Mrs. Ryerson's on 58 Leonard Street got a fuller description: 'A party of fashionable bucks sat around a table in the front room, enjoying themselves with wine. . . . This establishment is decorated and furnished in the most costly and magnificent style. We had an agreeable chat with a lively French ballet dancer, and also with the sweet Miss Louisa . . . , the most beautiful frail one Leonard street can boast of.'[10]

The tone of the reports on commercial sex in the sporting press varied. The perspective on prostitutes of even a single paper was multiple, representing in part the different interests of writers and, perhaps, individual ambivalences. In the early months of the *Sunday Flash*, for example, the weekly pursued a well-trodden literary path, familiar 'seduced-and-abandoned' stories, here presented as 'Lives of the Nymphs,' or prostitutes. Unlike many other such narratives, however, the paper did not focus on the female's victimization, but rather suggestively played with the seduction scenes with hints and winks.

9. *Whip* 3, no. 3 (February 11, 1843): 6.
10. *Flash* 1, no. 2 (June 23, 1842): 2 (second ellipsis in original).

Each weekly paper paid vice's price to virtue by insisting that it was dedicated to reform. What promised to justify the 'moral' intention of the weeklies were exposés, and writers took on older brothel madams, abortionists, and homosexual men as principal targets. For example, the *Whip* wrote of Mrs. Bowen of Church Street: 'This hag is of a most repulsive aspect, being fat and filthy.' Described as a tyrant to prostitutes in her house, she reportedly engaged in girl-stealing from places as far away as Poughkeepsie. The *Whip* warned it intended to publish the names of her male clients if they did not stop going there.[11] Particularly shrill words were used about those whom they called sodomites. Both the *Flash* and the *Whip* focused at one point on a performer at Palmo's and demanded that he be fired. In part, uncovering vice could have been a cover for blackmail. For example, the compiler of 'The Whip Wants to Know' used initials when chastising men unfaithful to their wives, but warned that the *Whip* would publish full names if the men did not cease their adulterous behavior.[12] Initialed offenders may have offered cash to buy the future silence of the weekly.[13]

Within two years the papers were no more. Private citizens subject to their invective went to the district attorney to urge indictments of criminal libel. These led the official to examine the papers and issue criminal indictments of the proprietors for obscene libel, an offense under common law. Since the culture of sporting men was not shared by those in authority in New York City, at least not when they were in public view, judges and juries ruled the publications obscene. The papers' owners were convicted and served prison terms of thirty or sixty days. Some editors might

11. 'The Brothel Expose—No. 6,' *Whip* 2, no. 4 (July 30, 1842): 2.

12. For example, *Whip* 2, no. 4 (July 30, 1842): 2.

13. The sporting weeklies were often charged with blackmail. Proof of this came in the *Whip* of February 11, 1843. Amid many letters and statements with threats of exposure, a piece about the dancer Madame Trust stated outright: 'Now, the drift of this is that we have on hand a queer, funny, and explicit *exposé* of the doings of a quack who married this *madame*—of her transactions—and of the secret affairs of both. If we can make any blackmail by suppressing it we will. There! We, more daring than Bennett, openly avow that we extort hush-money' (*New York Sporting Whip* 3, no. 3 [February 11, 1843]: 3).

have been able to withstand these penalties and return to fight another round, but the men involved in the sporting weeklies had little reserve capital. Snelling returned to Boston where he ended his days as the respectable editor of the *Boston Herald*. Wooldridge became the first agent for a minstrel troupe and went with it on tour to England. Wilkes began a long and profitable career that included founding in 1845 the *National Police Gazette*, a weekly that carried into the twentieth century much of the spirit of the 1840s sporting press.

II

The editors and proprietors of the sporting weeklies sought to attract readers by their pictures as well as their texts. Although the poor quality of many of the woodcut engravings testify to meager resources at hand, beginning in the third issue of the *Whip*, January 8, 1842, George B. Wooldridge had the money to bring to his weekly the cuts of Robert H. Elton. A master printer known for his comic almanacs, Elton first appeared in New York City directories in 1828.[14] An advertisement placed by Elton in the *Arena*, a two-penny sheet, stated that Elton was a 'Publisher, bookseller and stationer[,] engraver on wood, and colorist.' In his shop at 98 Nassau Street, between Ann and Fulton, could be found 'a general assortment of Toy and Song Books, Prints, Almanacs, &c.,' as well as wood engravings. He had on hand 'upwards of 3000 engravings on wood, new and second hand, adapted to newspaper and other publishers,' ranging in price from 10 cents to $2 each. The advertisement further stated that Elton had published, with many engravings, *The Life and Adventures of Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard*, two noted English criminals; *The Philosophy of Kissing*; and the *Philopoema Songsters, or Parlor Songster*. Over the text is an image of Elton's store with signs in the windows telling of the

14. *Longworth's American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory, 1828–1829* (New York: Thomas Longworth, 1828), 240; *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America*, s.v. 'Robert Elton.'

wares inside, including *The Philosophy of Kissing*, perhaps a hint that within the store were engravings of an erotic content. The advertisement nicely summarizes Elton's range and clarifies that his images were for sale to those in the publishing trade.[15] Likely included in the three thousand engravings on wood advertised were the many Elton images that appeared in sporting weeklies of the early 1840s, especially those in the *Whip* and the *Rake*.

From its early issues, the *Whip* contained a section, 'Sketches of Characters,' placed prominently at the top center of each first page. A typical sketch contained a wood engraving illustrative of a generic urban landscape above a text that put the image's action into a specific New York locale. These illustrations would have been understood in their day as 'racy,' visual representations of the sexually suggestive texts in the weeklies, designed to titillate the viewer.[16] However, in this perception, context is all-important. These engravings had most likely been created for another purpose or range of purposes, since the same cuts might be used to illustrate quite different narratives. It is the relation of the narrative to the image that shapes the perception of erotic content.

A good example is a set of woodcuts, supplied by Elton's shop and printed in the *Whip* beginning in its third issue. These images came straight from the *Town*. They are wonderfully ambiguous, allowing for a range of interpretations. For example, 'The Procuress' of January 8, 1842, portrays a mature man touching the chin of a girl standing beside an older woman. Placed in another setting, the cut could have been an illustration of a domestic scene of father, daughter, and mother. The caption forces a different scenario:

15. *Arena* 1, no. 29 (April 16, 1842): 1.

16. Needing a shorthand to cover the class of materials dealing with sexual matters intended to be sexually exciting and sold to a general public at a cheap price, I have chosen the tag 'racy' because of its frequent use at the time. Its derivation is interesting: at least from the seventeenth century 'racy' meant 'having a characteristically excellent taste, flavour, or quality,' as cider or wine; when applied to speech, 'having a characteristic sprightliness, liveliness, or piquancy.' It is related to race in that it designates an intensity connected to a species' kind or blood (*Oxford English Dictionary*, CD-ROM, 2d ed. [New York, 1992]).

[Older Man:] 'Don't be alarmed, m-y d-e-a-r! I won't hurt you.'
[Older woman:] 'Oh! no, don't be afraid, Mr. Jones won't hurt any one, I'll swear to that.'

The article that follows gives examples of New York women who procured young girls for elderly men.[17]

As in this case, many engravings feature commonplace settings, such as a woman being fitted for shoes at a shoemaker's or a female patient in a dentist's office or at the hairdresser's.[18] They are, for the most part, clever, playful images. Although the accompanying article expanding on the illustration plays on the sexual possibilities inherent when a man and woman are brought into close physical contact, these exist in the interpretative gloss placed on the representation, not in the representation itself. Although some of the images may be said to tease the viewer, they contain none of the elements of the sexually arousing illustrations of their time: the women are fully dressed in street attire and often bonneted, and their gestures are normally friendly without sexual hints.

Let it be said, however, that some engravings deal with female subjects in a manner that easily lends itself to sexually arousing texts. In 'Love's Signs' an older man with his back turned is reading a paper (to which Elton has added the title, *Whip*) while a young woman in the foreground behind him gazes at the reader, as she touches her thumbs and forefingers together. The poem that follows tells us that she is signaling her unseen lover hiding beneath a sofa in anticipation of their elopement. The accompanying article is filled with suggestive words and phrases, standard romantic-fiction fare, such as the touch of a woman's kid slipper on a gentleman's boot to convey 'sentiments that come burning, blazing hot, from the forge of the soul.'[19] 'The Serving Maiden,' a generic image of a female beauty dusting a doorway, carries a

17. 'The Procuress,' *Whip and Satirist of New-York and Brooklyn* 1, no. 3 (January 8, 1842): 1.
18. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 18: The Ladies Shoemaker,' *Whip* 1, no. 18 (April 23, 1842): 1; 'Sketches of Characters—No. 28: The Dentist,' *Whip* 1, no. 28 (July 2, 1842): 1.
19. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 7: Love's Signs—or the Duped Father,' *Whip* 1, no. 7 (February 5, 1842): 1.

text that tells of the domestic aiming to marry her employer's son. By adding, 'She also warmly advocates the principles of Fanny Wright,' the author informs his knowing audience that she is sexually promiscuous.[20] A cut in the April 9, 1842, issue, 'Take Care of the Warming-pan, Sir!' shows an older man beside a chambermaid. Here the image itself is potentially erotic, as is the accompanying text: she holds the stick of the warming pan in such a manner that it can appear that she is masturbating him. Perhaps this was why Wooldridge claimed it was one of the elements named in his indictment for obscenity.[21] The text has a poem contrasting an older lover to a younger man who 'laughs to scorn the warming-pan.' Its prose promises to write of maids in inns and boarding houses, not of maids in private families (as it did the week prior), for fear of letting 'the rising generation into too many secrets . . . subversive of the chastity of youth of both sexes.' In words that appear to condone sexual advances towards them, it characterizes chambermaids as 'flesh and blood, with the same instinctive desires as their masters.' Although they are not more amorous than are other women, chambermaids have unusual opportunity to gratify those desires as 'much of their time is necessarily passed alone, in remote apartments, which usually contain beds.' A man seeking their sexual services need have no compunctions, for they are 'usually vain and always ignorant, and they are marked by all mankind as lawful prey. A virtuous chambermaid is as hard to find as a pulse in a potato.'[22]

'Females in Masquerade,' an engraving supplied by Elton, shows a couple on the street, arm in arm. One is dressed as a woman in low décolletage, the other as a male dandy with his hair cropped in the back and curls toward the face. The title and the article that follow tell us that both are women, though this is likely a gloss on an otherwise conventional wood engraving of a

20. 'The Serving Maiden,' *Whip* 1, no. 15 (April 2, 1842): 1.

21. This claim, however, is not borne out by the indictment, dated July 15, 1842, which named the July 9, 1842, issue.

22. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 16: The Chambermaid,' *Whip* 1, no. 16 (April 9, 1842): 1.

man and woman out for a stroll. The accompanying text tells of women who don male clothing, some for the stage or fancy balls, some for the love of a man. It pays particular attention to prostitutes who, it states, 'frequently array themselves in male attire,' either for a lark or to check on the fidelity of their man. It shows the usual *Whip* hostility to older and fat women, making a crude joke of a possible rent in the latter's clothing. Not unexpectedly, it ends with a ringing declaration that women should dress as women.[23]

Certain Elton cuts portray scenes of male sporting life—men drinking together in public and private, a dogfight with spectators, a horse race. In Elton's 'The Fashionable Inebriate,' three gentlemen in top hats are walking. One smokes; another, distinguished by a rotund belly, has his hat over his eyes. The poem and text that follow are about the drinking places the three men have been, followed by various musings, largely celebratory, of spirits and their effects.[24] 'The Swell Cove *in* Luck' published by Elton (fig. 1), has a young fashionable, with well-turned foot in pump, seated at a table with a glass of wine as a waiter raises the bell cover over his steaming plate. He says, 'Here's a Dinner! May my LUCK never be less.' The accompanying text informs the reader, perhaps hoping to become a 'swell cove' himself, where good dinners in New York are to be had. The article moves from Blanchard's Globe Hotel, where the well-heeled eat, down a diminishing scale to Goslin's on Nassau Street or Dan Sweeny's, the resorts of writers of the sporting press.[25] 'The French Barmaid' portrays a well-dressed, bonneted woman standing in front of a rakish male in pointed-toed shoes, the mark of the dandy. He is smoking a thin cigar, and on the table are a wine bottle and glass. The text tells readers of New York nightspots, including Palmo's

23. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 11: Females in Masquerade,' *Whip* 1, no. 11 (March 5, 1842): 1.

24. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 6: The Fashionable Inebriate,' *Whip* 1, no. 6 (January 29, 1842): 1.

25. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 23: The Swell Cove *in* Luck,' *Whip* 1, no. 23 (May 28, 1842): 1.


Fig. 1. One of several sketches borrowed by Robert Elton from the London *Town* of the dandy or 'swell cove,' fashionable from head to foot—from his styled hair to the pointed toes on his shoes. [Robert H.] Elton, 'Sketches of Characters—No. 23: The Swell Cove *in* Luck,' *Whip* 1, no. 23 (May 28, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

and Pinteaux's.[26] In the Elton cut, 'The Swell Cove Doing a Tailor,' we see a fashionably dressed young man, with an hourglass figure, his small feet in high heels, looking in a mirror, while a tailor measures him. The caption reads, 'Send them to my Lodging. Don't forget the Bill.' The text tells of such fellows who cheat their tailors and then suggests a specific seller of cloth and tailor. The latter 'will measure you on the spot' and have the apparel ready in a few days; for $9.00 it would be 'the neatest fitting dress or the most gallus sporting coat, one that would make you a blood whether or no.' Such consumer advice may have been welcomed by young men eager to imitate their 'gallus' friends, a slang word for 'down and out' that seems here used for its opposite, the rakish style of young men on the town.[27]

These playful images carry the engraver's name—Elton—but not those of the delineator or artist. Many of the ones that appeared first in the *Town* seem to be drawn by the same hand. Whether these were bought and paid for by Elton or recut in his shop, they offered a set of attractive images, some of well-turned-out young men, and needed only a New York text to place the scene in the world of readers of the *Whip*.

III

Beginning in 1842, John H. Manning, a clever delineator from Boston, moved to New York for a two-year period. In 1843 Manning listed his business address as Elton's shop at 98 Nassau Street, where he found steady employment. His work for Elton, including that in the sporting press, was quite different from Elton's images taken from the *Town*.

Beyond his work, little is known about Manning. He is thought to have been born around 1820 and to have worked primarily in Boston. A wood engraver and designer, he was active from 1841

26. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 22: The French Barmaid,' *Whip* 1, no. 22 (May 21, 1842): 1.

27. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 25: The Swell Cove Doing a Tailor,' *Whip* 1, no. 25 (June 11, 1842): 1.

to about 1859. His first illustrations were in a book about seafaring published in Boston. In the early 1840s his forte became comic almanacs, published in both Boston and New York. His work in the *Whip* and in the other sporting weeklies appeared beginning in June 1842, and extended through the summer and fall. In 1851 he resurfaced in Boston, and his work took on a range of different styles. In 1852 and 1853, he was a designer in Boston for *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* and had his studio at Gleason's Publication Hall. In 1856 he teamed up with Samuel E. Brown in the partnership Manning and Brown. His period of artistic activity ended about 1859.[28]

The closest we may be able to get to Manning is in *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844*, where he appears as a character in one of his cuts. He is sitting at his drawing board in a room whose door carries the sign, 'J. H. Manning Picture.' The text accompanying the cut reads:

> A mad wag is that erratic genius Michael Angelo Manning! (or as his more matter-o'-fact dad has it, John H.) the acknowledged Cruikshanks of America, one evening enjoying his punch at Palmo's, with his legs, (such legs!) comfortably crossed under the mahogany, and taking hasty sketches of the many queer customers that nightly congregate at that famous resort.

The text continues that a wretched man sat down at his table and told him about problems with his teeth. Manning reassured him that he drew teeth without pain and invited him to his rooms. The next day, the fellow came to Nassau Street, 'and was soon in the snug parlour that forms the studio of Manning. There, seated in his luxurious arm chair' was Manning drawing a molar (fig. 2). In this comic representation, Manning presents himself as, first of all, an artist ('Michael Angelo'), with an intense gaze looking

28. *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America*, s.v. 'John Manning'; *Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Engravers, 1670–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 173–75, vol. 2, *Supplement* (1968), 113. I have been able to view Manning's illustrations in almanacs in the extensive collections at AAS and at Rare Books and Special Collections at the Princeton University Library.

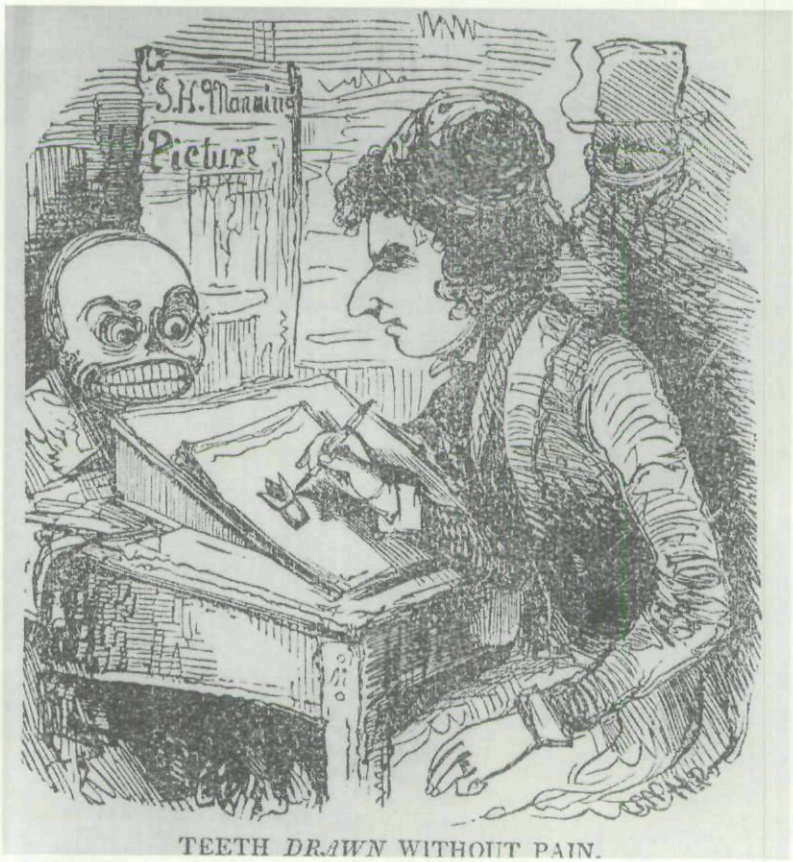


Fig. 2. John H. Manning, 'Teeth *Drawn* Without Pain,' *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844* (New York: Robert H. Elton, 1843), 5. American Antiquarian Society.

across his drawing table at a toothy figure of fright. Manning's curly dark hair topped by a cap, aquiline nose, trim body ('such legs!'), and elegant dress epitomize an urban dandy. He drinks his alcohol at Palmo's on Chamber Street, New York's premier night spot, known for its Concert Saloon, where male and female singers entertained nightly. He has a studio that is a 'snug parlor,' not a business office, and sits in a 'luxurious arm chair' as he draws. His forte is comedy, but this is elevated to art by the title

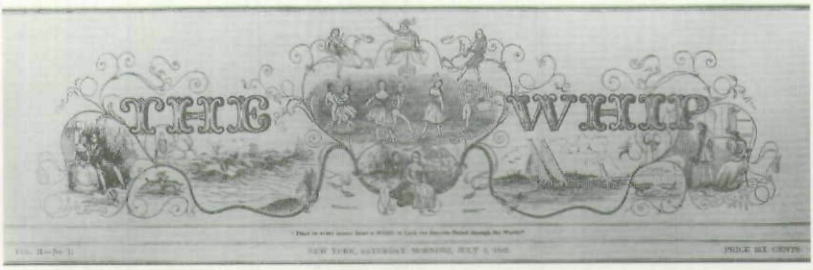


Fig. 3. The *Whip*'s masthead, drawn by John H. Manning and engraved by Robert Elton, debuted on the first number of the second volume. It indicates Manning's versatility as it features domestic scenes more often associated with women's periodicals rather than a comic design. *Whip* 2, no. 1 (July 9, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

(shared with others of his time, to be sure), 'the acknowledged Cruikshanks of America.'[29]

Manning drew the masthead that Elton engraved for the *Whip*, adorning the weekly beginning July 9, 1842 (fig. 3). It is unlike his comic designs. Amid gentle, almost tender leafy tendrils, the kind of lines that decorated women's periodicals, are scenes of a dog-fight and a cockfight, fox hunting and sailing, a fish, a fencing sword, three musicians in costume above seven dancers—four female and three male—and three dramatic illustrations that appear to be a man courting a woman, proposing to her, and finally standing beside her, a gentleman's top hat in hand, as she weeps.[30] This commission was something of a coup for the *Whip*, for the sporting weeklies make it clear that Manning was a celebrity in his New York years.

When George B. Wooldridge puffed his forthcoming semi-weekly the *Libertine*, he announced that the woodcut to adorn each issue would be drawn by Manning.[31] Somewhat later, when

29. 'Teeth *Drawn* Without Pain,' *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844* (New York: Robert H. Elton, 1843), 5. Almanacs from this period are generally unpaged. I have established pages using the cover as p. 1. On p. 25 is an image of a newsboy selling the almanac; he calls: 'Got the only true and correct portrait of the great and never-to-be-excelled artist, *Manning*, who lives upon *Fun*, sleeps upon *Jokes*, drinks out of *queer mugs*, can't shave himself for laughing; and sich a lot of other pictures!'

30. *Whip* 2, no. 1 (July 9, 1842): 1.

31. *Whip* 1, no. 22 (May 21, 1842): 3.

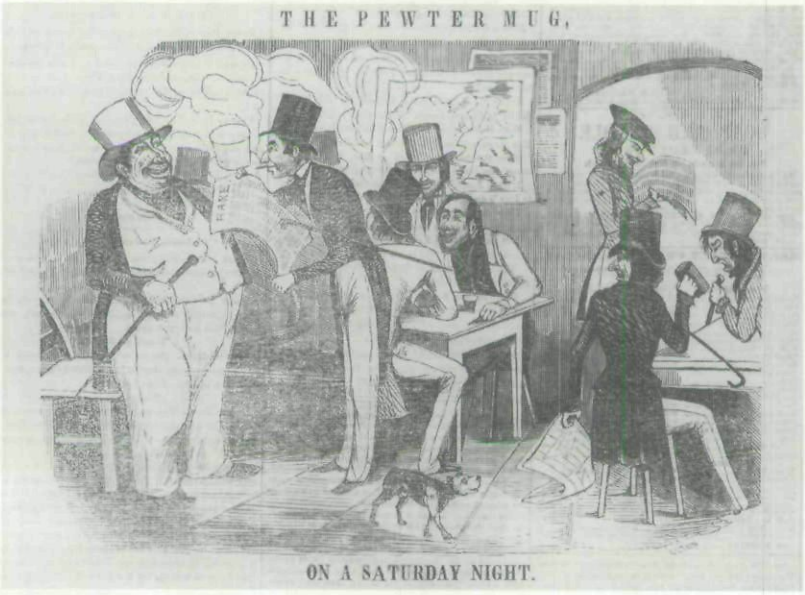


Fig. 4. John H. Manning's drawing of 'The Pewter Mug, On a Saturday Night' pictures men in a saloon conversing and reading newspapers, one of which is the *Rake*. *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 19 (October 22, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

legal and financial problems beset the *Whip* and the paper was reduced to using tired European fictional or theatrical images—probably cheaper than Manning's creations—its writer was limited to this invocation: 'How would an illustration of the above look, in Manning's best style?'[32] In the *Weekly Rake*, a rival to the *Whip*, the statement accompanying 'The Pewter Mug, On a Saturday Night' (fig. 4), with Elton's familiar name as engraver, stated that it was by John H. Manning. It pictures men in a saloon standing and reading newspapers, which include the *Rake*, or sitting in small groups, drinking. The text informs the reader that this establishment is of the highest type, a place where conversa-

32. The writer told of Tom Nichols, editor of the *Tatler*, who had won the heart of the prostitute Sal Wright, the adopted daughter of Phoebe Doty, a brothel madam frequently insulted in the *Whip*'s pages. A fight ensued between Sal and Lize Lougee, accused by Sal of kissing Tom. The *Whip* related that as Nichols finished his editorial for the *Tatler*, he buttered Sal's bruises, while she washed his shirt. 'A Female Fight or Bully Tom Nichols,' *Whip* 2, no. 17 (October 29, 1842): 3.

tion reigns. It was the kind of place where Charles Dickens, a recent visitor to New York, might do his word studies. In making the identification, the *Rake* stated: 'There (above) is the interior of the Pewter Mug, on a Saturday night! It was taken by the American Cruickshank, Mr. Manning, on what particular Saturday night is no body's business—they are portraits—every one of them' and should be recognized by friends.[33] In the same issue, Manning and the well-known engraver Thomas Strong are quoted as the authors of somewhat scatological puns. Such attention suggests that Manning was a frequent contributor of images to the sporting press and was well known to readers. He is the only artist named by any of the sporting weeklies.

In 1842 it was a high compliment to call Manning 'the American Cruikshank,' a title shared by a number of other delineators of the time, especially E. W. Clay and David Claypool Johnston. George Cruikshank was a renowned English graphic artist, perhaps best known in New York circles in the early 1840s as the illustrator of London scenes for Dickens's 'Sketches by Boz.' In the first decade of Manning's career when his work was primarily comic, his drawings bear close relation to those in Cruikshank's almanacs. The older English artist's work appeared in almanacs beginning in 1835. Starting in 1841, the youthful Manning produced designs for covers and internal woodcuts for almanacs published in Boston and New York, some of them strikingly similar to those of his model. They offer the broad, low humor characteristic of the genre. Around monthly calendars offering basic information about the phases of the moon, tides, and astronomical signs are pages of comic drawings and text meant to amuse readers. For example, *The Old American Comic Almanac, 1841*, published in Boston, has a cover image designed by Manning in

33. *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 19 (October 22, 1842): 1. This image appears in *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844*, p. 21, with the caption, 'Alderman Joker informs Major Broadgrin that the Comic IS out.' In another issue of the *Weekly Rake*, existing only as a fragment at AAS, written after August 5, 1842, was the announcement that Nichols was to be the editor of the *Pictorial Wag* to be published by Elton and to have drawings by J. H. Manning, 'the best comic artist in America.'

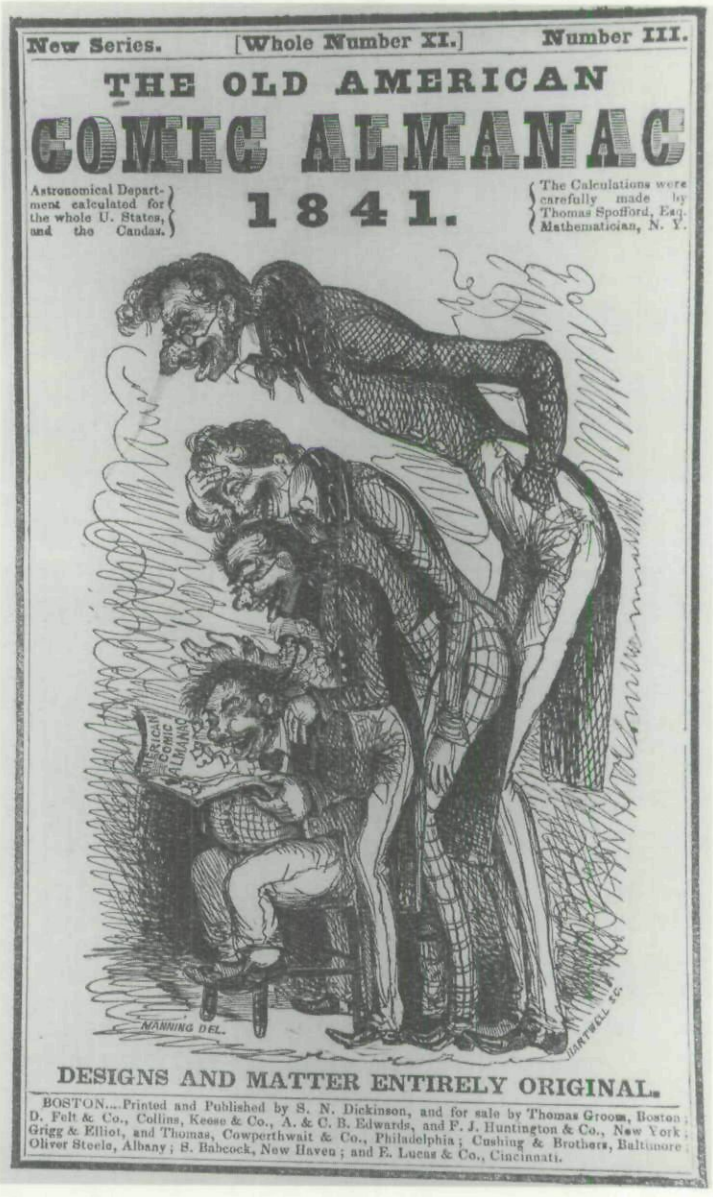


Fig. 5. Cover illustration by John H. Manning. *The Old American Comic Almanac, 1841* (Boston: S. N. Dickinson, 1840), 1. American Antiquarian Society.

which four grotesque men are looking at the issue and laughing (fig. 5). Inside is a ridiculous universe that may have been entirely drawn by Manning, filled with grinning faces and odd akimbo postures. Manning's generic humans may have animal features, such as a man with donkey ears. Many of the jokes are puns, giving visual plays on words, reminiscent of a rebus. For example, 'dancing a hornpipe' evokes a dancing man with one leg looking like a ram's horn, the other, a smoking pipe. The ideology of this particular almanac is mischief. It opposes ministerial oversight of morals and snooping of any kind. A devil suggests not threats of the fires of Hell but a figure of fun.[34]

In the 1840s Manning did a lot of work for Elton, often designing the covers of his almanacs. Here Manning's comic style is broad, as befits these almanacs, at least in the illustrations that he signed or initialed. Elton's humorous almanacs convey something of a circus element. Manning gave them wonderful, grotesque figures—round moon faces with freckles, enormous elongated noses, or hugely fat lips. His cover figures looking at the almanacs tell us that the images and words were meant to produce deep belly laughs and broad toothy grins.

Elton's comic almanacs have a range broader than those published by his Boston competitors, and there is more accompanying text. The view of the world in Elton's almanacs encompasses politics as well as weather, nature, and human relations. Manning's drawings offer a satiric look at the follies of the human condition as might be seen through the eyes of readers, many of whom were workingmen. To the degree that Manning uses caricature, it is not of known historical figures. In his work he expresses the harsh racial and gender conventions dominant in American culture in the 1840s.

Blacks are invariably portrayed as characters in minstrel entertainment. Just as these shows played on stereotyped appearances and gestures and delighted in exaggeration and ridicule, so, too, did Manning's images. As drawn, the black characters have solid

34. *The Old American Comic Almanac, 1841* (Boston: S. N. Dickinson, 1840), 1, 5.

black faces, rather than those engraved as freckled or darkened by shading lines. The most prominent features on many faces are grossly exaggerated lips. Certain known blackface character types are prominent, particularly the urban dandy or the educated black who has overreached himself. For example, holding 'The Liberator,' a black customer, speaking high-faluting language, refuses to accept shoes from a white shoemaker: he cannot think of matters of the feet 'when he's taken understandin into de head.'[35]

These almanacs have a clear, male-centered take on women. Men are the presumed readers, for the typical mature woman portrayed in these almanacs is stubborn or disapproving, bone thin or matronly fat. Accompanying the image of a crone-like woman, armed with a whip, riding on the back of a man, is a diatribe against the evils of 'petticoat government.'[36] Under an image of a man driving two pigs veering in two directions is the self-promoting text: 'Pigs and ladies are contrary by nature, and will no more *stand* driving,' than will the public be deprived of Elton's almanac.[37] In this almanac universe, women—white and black—have a robust interest in sex. The answer to the question, 'Why isn't a widow like a spoilt child?' is 'Because she don't get what she cries for.'[38] Joyce Heth, the black woman reputed to be 160 years old exhibited by Barnum in his museum, when asked the age that a woman stops loving men, answered: 'When de fair sec leabe off lubbin de he nigga? Go way, you ole fool! You mus ax dat of somebody *older* dan dis child!'[39] Manning's signed images in the almanacs are typically of men and boys, not women and girls, but one containing a female deals with sex (fig. 6). A pregnant woman, suggested by the text to be Irish, surrounded by many children, opens the door to a proper lady. Behind the door is the figure of a man. Accompanying this cut is this dialogue:

35. *Turner's Comic Almanac, 1846* (New York: Turner & Fisher, 1845), 25.
36. *Turner's Comic Almanac, 1845* (New York: Turner & Fisher, 1844), 18.
37. *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844*, 14. This image was reused with a different text in *Boy's Own Book of Fun, with Two Hundred Engravings, by Old Comic Elton* (New York: T. W. Strong, 1847), 51.
38. *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844*, 8.
39. *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1844*, 9.

Fig. 6. John H. Manning, whose work typically featured male characters, signed this illustration of an Irish family that accompanies a dialogue involving women and sex. *Elton's Comic Almynack, 1851* (New York: Elton, 1850), 5. American Antiquarian Society.

> [Lady]—'Why my good woman how is it that you have so many round-faced and hearty-looking children, and living in so small and ill-contrived habitation, whilst I live in a fine house and live on every luxury the heart can desire, and have not a single child. Pray, what kind of food do you live on?'
>
> Judy.—'Praties, mam.'
>
> [Lady]—'Then, pray send me up some immediately.'
>
> Judy.—'Yes mam, but do'nt you think I had better send my *old man, Pat, along with them*?'[40]

In Manning's comic illustrations, no one comes off well. In a double image lampooning political parties in Elton's 1846 almanac,

40. *Elton's Comic Almynack, 1851* (New York: Elton, 1850), 5.

moonfaced, freckled 'gentlemen' at a dinner party rejoice in a toast as they learn that their party wins, only to become downcast as the returns come in of a loss.[41] The almanac reused what had appeared in 1842 to a different purpose. There the double image offered the 'The Lord Ashburton Dinner—Illustrated.' In this case, it was a comment on the lack of patriotism of the American men attending the dinner—as the men join in a toast offered to Queen Victoria, but sit glumly through the one to President Jackson.[42] Such multiple use gives us a warning about wood engravings in almanacs. They were the printer's property, not that of the artist. Thus when Manning became a special illustrator to the sporting press, there is no certainty that he accepted this calling.

There is, however, strong evidence that Manning was a willing contributor. He drew the image on the masthead of the *Whip*, and it weekly bore his name as delineator. Moreover, his self-presentation as an artistic man on the town, imbibing at Palmo's, suggests that he was or aspired to be part of the world of the young sporting men who formed the principal audience of the *Whip*. One final statement in the *Weekly Rake*, filled with allusions to the titillating reading of the French novelist Charles Paul de Kock that the age called 'racy' or 'rich,' makes this close association: 'Something rich will soon appear—a deal better than Paul de Kock's (Jehu! what a name,) novel, published by John M. Moore! Those who don't believe us can ask Manning; but he must not say a word about it.'[43]

Among the notable comic delineations by Manning in the *Whip* or in other sporting weeklies, in addition to 'The Lord Ashburton Dinner—Illustrated,' is 'Grand Trial Dance between Nance Holmes and Suse Bryant, on Long Wharf, Boston' (fig. 7), which appeared in the series 'Sketches of Characters' in the June 25, 1842, issue (and also in the *Libertine* of June 15). It is a comic scene of two buxom women dancing energetically for an audience

41. *Elton's Funny Almanack, 1846* (New York: Elton, 1845), 33.

42. *Whip* 2, no. 12 (Sept. 24, 1842): 1.

43. *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 24 (November 26, 1842): 2; John M. Moore, *The Adventures of Tom Stapleton* (New York: Wilson and Company, 1843), is illustrated by D[avid] C[laypool] Johnston, with the exception of a single image, p. 78, likely by Manning.


Fig. 7. Two buxom women dance energetically to music played by a black fiddler with a grotesque face in this image by John H. Manning that has the brio of his comic almanac woodcuts. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 27: Grand Trial Dance between Nance Holmes and Suse Bryant, on Long Wharf, Boston,' *Whip and Satirist* 1, no. 27 (June 25, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

of men and women. A black fiddler with a grotesque face plays in the background. The image has the brio of Manning's comic almanac woodcuts. Its central characters have oversized heads, big smiles, a comic ugliness, and elbows akimbo. They are robust country figures, quite unlike those in Elton's engravings taken from the *Town*.[44]

44. 'Sketches of Characters—No. 27: Grand Trial Dance between Nance Holmes and Suse Bryant, on Long Wharf, Boston,' *Whip and Satirist* 1, no. 27 (June 25, 1842): 1. A third image, though attributed to Manning, was probably not drawn by him: 'Sketches of Characters—No. 41: The Great Charity Supper Given to Mrs. Phoebe Doty' (*Whip* 2, no. 16 [October 22, 1842]: 1). The cut and its accompanying text were intended as a comic

'Ripon and Americus,' a wood engraving of a horse race in the October 1, 1842, issue of the *Whip* does not carry Manning's name or initials, but the text states that it was drawn by him. Manning had an interest in demonstrating the class ladder. As he portrays the men attending the race, they include gentlemen with top hats and well-dressed boys, as well as black and white men in the garb of the poor. In this rendering, as in other Manning drawings from this period, the wearing of a top hat was no guarantee of dignity or beauty. Several of the gentlemen are portrayed comically, with wild-eyed faces and odd postures.[45]

'The Pewter Mug, On a Saturday Night,' October 22, 1842, discussed above (see fig. 4), also named Manning as the delineator in the text. The men in this saloon adjacent to Tammany Hall are quite similar to the racetrack spectators, only here they are engaged in convivial activities over tables in a drinking establishment. One man holding a copy of the *Rake* talks to another. Smoke is in the air as men sip and read and converse. The faces are grotesque on the whole, as befit Manning's style in these woodcuts. In a manner reminiscent of almanac drawings, the heavy man with the cane is sharply contrasted to the thin newspaper reader, their bodies offering convex and concave curves.[46]

Manning's forte in the sporting press was farce. This can be seen in several woodcuts in the other sporting weeklies that carry Manning's distinctive style, if not his name. In the *Flash*, July 3, 1842, the 'Gallery of Comicalities' on page one has 'Balsam

---

insult to an older brothel madam, for it presumably illustrated an event to raise money to keep Doty out of the almshouse. On what was otherwise a conventional, crudely drawn scene of women seated around a table—and one awkwardly on the floor—were identifications that gave to each figure the name of a well-known prostitute, mentioned repeatedly in the preceding issues of the weekly. The image clearly came from engravers' stock. One clear indication is that although the prostitute Hal Grandy was reported to wear men's clothing and to fight in the streets, here she is presented as conventionally feminine. Moreover, the image has an archaic quality, with stiff figures and crude drawing, unlike other Manning creations.

45. 'Ripon and Americus,' *Whip* 2, no. 13 (October 1, 1842): 1. Two weeks later, the *Whip* carried a related wood engraving in the same style with Manning's characteristic faces and lines. 'A Scene at Tattersall's' illustrates a horse auction frequented largely by the wealthy men bidding on the horses (*Whip* 2, no. 15 [October 15, 1842]: 1).

46. 'The Pewter Mug, On a Saturday Night,' *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 19 (October 22, 1842): 1.

Prigit,' an image of a low-life fellow stealing a ham from a butcher. In the text we learn of a noted London pickpocket transplanted to New York City, who used a promised ascension of a balloon over the Bowery to distract his butcher friend Dubbs in order to purloin a 'fine Ham which he took a fancy to.' In this scene the comedic effect comes from the expressions on the two men's faces, as well as from the dog in the background stealing sausages on his own.[47] Two images in the *Weekly Rake*, likely by Manning, illustrate amusing stories of embarrassment. 'Samuel Durboif and His Wig,' has a bald man jumping out of bed as rats assemble around his wig. His animated form and crazed face dramatize his shock.[48] In 'The Dandy and the Soap-Fat Man' (fig. 8), a brutish fellow, dressed in patched clothing, dumps an elegantly dressed, top-hatted man (with his hair and face a fright) in a pail, as a crowd grins approvingly. The narrative tells us that the dandy took insult when the Irishman collecting soap fat brushed his clothing as he passed him in the street. It sides with 'Pat,' who returned his slurs and light blow by the dunking. Here Manning excels in his portrayal of urban types, the upper-class male spectators, the ridiculous dandy, and the rough, animalistic Irishman. He plays his sense of class and ethnicity as farce, exaggerating characteristics of different economic and social groups for comedic purposes.[49]

Two woodcuts have overtly sexual content. On July 31, 1842, the *Flash* carried another image that has elements of Manning's style in its 'Gallery of Comicalities.' With a caption reading, 'I hope no person can see us,' three beauties take a dip in the water, one gesturing that she is removing her drapery. In the background a top-hatted man looks over the rock of the grotto concealing them, a smile on his face and a leer in his eye. The text tells of a West Point cadet who stole the clothes of three New Jersey sisters and ultimately married one of them. It is a clear repre-

47. 'Gallery of Comicalities: Balsam Prigit,' *Flash* 1, no. 3 (July 3, 1842): 1. This image also appears in *Elton's Comic All-My-Nack, 1843* (New York: Elton, 1842), 7.

48. 'Samuel Durboif and His Wig,' *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 16 (September 24, 1842): 1.

49. 'The Dandy and the Soap-Fat Man,' *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 16 [*sic*] (October 1, 1842): 1.

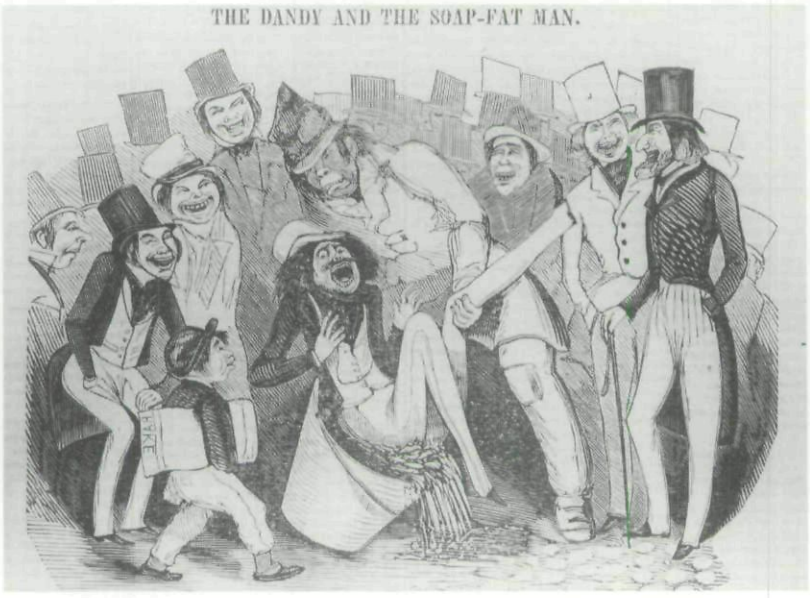


Fig. 8. 'The Dandy and the Soap-Fat Man,' *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 16 [*sic*] (October 1, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

sentation of the male gaze given a local narrative probably made up to fit the sexually suggestive image.[50] In the *Flash*'s August 14 issue, 'A Cobbler Caught with His "Awl" Out!' tells the visual story (fig. 9), accompanied by text, of a straight-laced Methodist shoemaker on Mulberry Street who attempted to seduce the daughter of a friend of his from church. In the way of such narratives, the cobbler was disliked by the young in the neighborhood for regarding all recreation as sinful and breaking up their games. Here his wife, wearing sleeping clothes and nightcap, appears at his shop door, called by the boys who heard the intended victim's cries. The buxom wife is accompanied by a woman with a candle and a man carrying a broom. As the door is sprung open, the fair young victim attempts to cover her scantily clad body, while he

50. 'Gallery of Comicalities,' *Flash* no. 7 (July 31, 1842): 1. The leering eye was an important theme in the wood engravings by an unidentified artist who used the symbol of the rooster as his signature, such as in a July 9, 1842, image in the *Weekly Rake* 1, no. 4, of a man peering through a monocle under the skirts of a woman who has fallen (p. 1).


Fig. 9. A melodramatic seduction scene that includes elements of the madness and mayhem of John H. Manning's almanac images. 'Gallery of Comicalities: A Cobbler Caught with His "Awl" Out!,' *Flash* 1, no. 9 (August 14, 1842): 1. American Antiquarian Society.

seems to pray to a boot in the air, his breeches clearly unbuttoned. Although this image contains an element of the melodramatic seduction scene—the embarrassed, partially dressed young woman—other elements have the madness and mayhem of Manning's

almanac designs. The outraged expressions on the faces of the cobbler's visitors and his pathetic praying posture give a sense of the village charivari to the streets of New York.[51]

In Manning's work in the sporting weeklies, one can see the distinctive style that sets it apart from the Elton illustrations that first appeared in the *Town*. In the images in the *Whip* and other papers, Manning's work typically draws on the manic, low humor of the almanac with its love of mischief, its circus elements, its delight in the grotesque. Humans are funny because of their moon-shaped faces, freckles, enormous noses, fat lips, or animal features. Blacks behave as performers in blackface, and young women usually are comely and full-bosomed. The city is a mixture of types: overdressed dandies, top-hatted men at the track or in the saloon, Irish paddies, prostitutes kicking up their heels, African Americans fiddling. Above all, mayhem and madness rule. Although upper-class male spectators appear, there are no elegant 'swell coves' anywhere about. When a dandy enters, he is the subject of ridicule. What all of this suggests is that Manning's illustrations played against some of the stated aims of the sporting weeklies.

Wooldridge, Snelling, and the others may have sought to bring to New York some of the urban polish of the London *Town*, and even carried it out in some of their writing. It was likely their aim when they used the *Town*'s illustrations. Such a goal governed the *Whip*'s commission to Manning of its masthead, which he supplied with open-air sporting scenes, leisured entertainment, and the melodrama of courtship, all indicating elite recreations. Manning's delineations within the weeklies express a different spirit. Unlike Elton's borrowings from the *Town*, which capture the cosmopolitan delights of a privileged few, Manning's work is of a piece with the unsophisticated, comic pleasures of Elton's almanacs. His farcical drawings, encoding the prejudices of their age, reflect the popular culture of their moment. They were

51. 'Gallery of Comicalities: A Cobbler Caught with His "Awl" Out!' *Flash* 1, no. 9 (August 14, 1842): 1.

designed for the young men who hoped, perhaps like Manning himself, to become part of the sporting scene in New York. The comedy that this audience enjoyed was not that of urban sophisticates, but rather the rough humor of youthful journeymen and young clerks recently arrived from upstate or from New England.

IV

In 1844, after the sporting weeklies folded, Manning dropped out of sight in New York and Boston: he is not listed in either city's directory. His work appeared in Elton's almanacs, beginning in 1844, although some of it is reused material rather than new work. It is possible that Manning went to California during the Gold Rush, for in 1854 there are some wonderful drawings by him in Elton's book of comic drawings and quips, *The Ball of Yarn*. Mose, the Bowery B'hoy, the symbol of the rough artisan in New York in the late 1840s, has transported himself to California, to make money so that he and his sweetheart Lize can marry. Delightful Mose images, one with Lize in New York before departing and several in California, are signed by Manning.[52] By 1850 Manning was probably in Boston: he is listed in the Boston City Directory in 1852 with an office at Gleason's Publication Hall.

His Boston work in this time moved in two quite different directions. In his work for *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, he produced drawings in a range of styles, but nothing that resembles his comic repertoire in almanacs and sporting weeklies. His grotesques are gone and in their place are correct landscapes, commercial interiors, respectable middle-class figures, and fictional foreign exotics. A playwright creates farces and tragedies: Manning seems to have been capable of their visual equivalents. The work he produced in Boston in the 1850s, when intended for a respectable audience, was limited to the realistic or the romantic. One image, though within the frame of an accurate rendering of an industrial interior, carries an element of his earlier drawing

52. *The Ball of Yarn, or Queer, Quaint and Quizzical Stories, Unraveled* (New York: Elton, 1854), 10, 12, 13.

of the horse race, his interest in social class. 'Interior View of our Press-room, where are printed the pictorial drawing-room companion, and the flag of our union,' by Manning, presents both industrial machinery and workers, male and female. Their animated figures pulling the fly or carrying heavy loads are in contrast with top-hatted middle-class visitors who are still and restrained.[53]

Manning had not lost touch with his earlier styles, however, or his impish humor. In 1850, with Fernando E. Worcester as his engraver, he drew the masthead for a sporting weekly, *Life in Boston and New England Police Gazette*, issued by William Berry, who published the works of George Thompson and other sensationalist authors. Largely written by Thompson, this weekly printed his fiction and served to promote Berry's publishing company and bookselling enterprise. This commission to Manning represents something of a return to his days in New York and his drawings in the *Whip*. In contrast to the pastoral illustration for the *Whip* masthead, however, this one is filled with dramatic scenes of male sporting life in the city. There are fast horses and buxom women. Two drunks sit in an open carriage, one waving a bottle, the other brandishing the whip. One man serves another a warrant. In one image, a man in an opera box looks at a woman through binoculars; she, in turn, looks out from her opera box, as does a man in the next box. Above them all a man in a top hat with the word 'Police' leans on a ledge. In another, a large man in the older Manning style reads a copy of *Life in Boston* as another picks his pocket. At the center, a gentleman is sitting on a sofa with two women in reclining postures, reading to them a book with the words on the cover, 'Paul de Kock,' the French novelist whose name served to signify erotic fiction.[54]

The most remarkable figure in this composition is a large well-drawn devil in the lower right, probably a depiction of Asmodeus,

53. *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* 2 (May 29, 1852): 352.

54. George Thompson or his publisher occasionally used de Kock's name for his own fiction.

a fictional devil with origins in the Apocrypha, who had been refashioned in the nineteenth century as a devil-dandy who could reveal urban secrets, taking off the roofs of houses and other structures to reveal the vices of city dwellers. Asmodeus appears in a number of American plays and books in this period that dealt with vice at the upper end of society, including *Asmodeus in New York*; *Asmodeus, or The Iniquities of New York*; and *Revelations of Asmodeus; or Mysteries of Upper Ten-Dom*. Immediately under this masthead *Life in Boston and the New England Police Gazette* published successive chapters of *Sharps and Flats; or, the Perils of City Life*, by Asmodeus, here a likely pseudonym for George Thompson. In the context of this masthead, Asmodeus represents the sporting weekly itself with its commitment to exposure and pleasure—and to the pleasure of exposure.[55]

Asmodeus thus augments Manning's repertoire for the sporting press. It adds this emblematic figure to his pastoral masthead for the *Whip* and his farcical drawings in its pages. The image of Asmodeus was published seven years after the courts had shut down the New York sporting press. However, it captured a lingering aspect of that earlier enterprise, the Asmodean spirit—the pleasure of exposure—that survived in many ephemeral sporting weeklies throughout the country, such as *Life in Boston*, and in the *National Police Gazette*, the long-lived creation of *Sunday Flash* proprietor George Wilkes.

55. *Life in Boston and the New England Police Gazette* 2, no. 28 (April 6, 1850): 1.