2

A Pretty Place
1776–1840

We abroad to Marrowbone and there walked in the garden, the first time I ever there, and a pretty place it is.
—Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, 7 May 1668

As well as I can remember—my chief "youthful aspiration" was to be a clown in a Circus.
—Tenniel, to the editor of the *Captain*, 11 February 1899

Noel Tenniel

Let us take Tenniel's story back to a time preceding his own—to a marriage in Marylebone Village when the boundary of London was still almost a mile away. Imagine that it is an autumn day in 1776 and we are on the north side of Oxford Street, or Tyburn Road as its western half was then called. A half mile to the west is the turnpike, where a gallows is still raised from time to time. Some three-quarters of a mile in the opposite direction another tollgate marks where Tottenham Court Road meets the east end of Oxford Street. From our starting point we turn northward onto Marylebone Lane, passing the row of buildings that line the main road and following the meandering course of the Tyburn River through open fields where cattle graze and, in spring, honeysuckle blooms.

Soon the lane jogs left and widens into the high street. Less than a quarter mile off on our right is the Basin (or "Bason," as it is called in old maps and prints), a large circular pond that holds the district's water supply. In an eighteenth-century engraving well-dressed families promenade its edge, swimmers paddle nearby, and in the distance among Gainsborough trees one can see the manors and country houses of affluent Marylebone.[1]

Continuing up the high street we soon see buildings backed by gardens and then fields. On our left we pass Paddington Street where, a short distance westward, lie two burial grounds, one dating from 1731, the other new, their monumental inscriptions bearing many French names.[2] North of that is a workhouse and an infirmary.

On the opposite side of the Marylebone high street are the old Rose of Normandy Tavern and small French chapel, testifying further to Marylebone's Huguenot community. Immediately north of that lies Marylebone (or Mary-

bone) Gardens, a large and popular pleasure ground with handsome pavilions and great tree-lined avenues where one can enjoy fireworks, theatricals, and other entertainments.[3] Should we choose to go further we would pass the Manor House school, a great Tudor pile that was originally a country palace for Henry VIII, and come to the still-unfinished New Road—the Marylebone Road of today.

Instead, we shall stop before the northern boundary of Marylebone Gardens where, looking to the west side of the high street, we see the parish church of St. Mary le Bone, its modest flat front continued by high churchyard walls. An earlier church had occupied the site from 1400 to 1740, its interior known to us from the *Rake's Marriage* in Hogarth's 1735 series. The church that we now approach is a "little dingy building, with its high-backed pews and gallery running round three sides." Here, on 31 October 1776, the thirty-one-year-old Noel Tenniel marries Margaret Parker, spinster of the same parish. Present at the ceremony is Louis Tenniel, possibly Noel's brother as he would name his second son Noé and Noel's youngest daughter would be named Louisa.[4]

Fig. 3. *Noel Tenniel,* miniature

Noel and Margaret Tenniel soon settle in Westminster, a "center of French fashion, cuisine, and high society." There, five more daughters will be born to them (a first daughter was born in the previous March), their baptisms recorded at St. James, Westminster. Then, on 25 August 1792, the parish clerk would record the baptism of a son, John Baptist, the future father of John Tenniel.[5]

Fig. 4. Tenniel's tankard

A miniature of Noel Tenniel shows him at, perhaps, forty—a slender man with the worldly look one often finds in eighteenth-century portraits (fig. 3). His hair (lightly powdered?) is tied back with a small ribbon. It is a clever face—the nose aquiline, the lips hinting of humor. He was probably in the arts—perhaps a dancing master, as this seems to have been a frequent family occupation; Noel's daughter Victoire would marry James Calkin, whose largely musical family included several dancing masters, and his grandson John Tenniel would one day marry a dancing master's daughter. In France

the family may have belonged to the lesser nobility, for on Tenniel's pewter tankard there appears a crest—a pair of wings surmounting a torse or crest wreath, which one doubts he would have adopted had he not credited it with some legitimacy (fig. 4).[6]

John Baptist and Eliza Maria

We next locate John Baptist in the Marylebone of 1816. Even before the turn of the century this was no longer a separate village, for a grid of Georgian houses and squares had spread from Oxford Street to the New Road and as far west as Baker Street and beyond. Gone are the pleasure grounds, the French chapel, the Rose of Normandy Tavern, and the Manor House. And where the wealthy once lingered beside the picturesque Bason they now take their evening walks in exclusive Portland Place.

Beyond the New Road the farms of Marylebone Park stretch northward to Primrose Hill, where the occasional duel is still fought. In 1808 the six-year-old future animal painter Edwin Landseer walked among its streams and osier beds sketching sheep, goats, and donkeys. Others whose childhood fell in the 1820s would recall the area's charms.[7] But as this formerly leased land had reverted to the crown in 1811, time was fast running out for its pasturelands and fields of wheat.

It is in this partially rural Marylebone that John Baptist Tenniel has settled. He has given an engagement ring of mixed stones to the Scottish-born beauty Eliza Maria Foster, currently of the parish of Portsea, and he now journeys to Southampton to wed her and bring her home.[8]

Fig. 5. *(Left)* Robinson, *Eliza Maria Tenniel,* watercolor, 1819. Fig. 6. *(Right)* Robinson, *John Baptist Tenniel,* watercolor, 1819

They will have twelve children.[9] The first two are Bernard and Eliza Margaret. Twin watercolor portraits show Eliza Maria and John Baptist in 1819, the year before their second son, John, was born (fig. 5 and fig. 6). The portraitist, a Robinson of Suffolk Street, has included, beyond the conventional draperies and columns, some attractive countryside suggestive of landed status. There is the misty softness of youth, the assurance of affluence about the pair. Eliza Maria wears a high-waisted riding habit of deep blue with a collar of ruffled lawn. Her face is a sweet oval, fine featured, and her hair, combed flat from the center part, spreads into bouffant curls intruding charmingly on each side of the smooth forehead and accenting the dark eyes. Her gloved hands, resting in her lap, lightly hold a black top hat. John Baptist seems younger than his twenty-seven years. Above the high collar and stock, soft curls frame a smooth face.

At Allsop's Buildings

The area where they live is prosperous and peaceful, far removed from the marches, riots, and machine wrecking of the midlands and northern counties that had punctuated the years since Waterloo. Still, even in Marylebone, the hard times in trade and agriculture have their repercussions. On 23 February 1820 revolutionaries, allegedly plotting to kill the Tory ministers, are apprehended in a loft in Cato Street (subsequently renamed Horace Street) within the district's western boundary.[10] Five days later Tenniel is born—probably not a half mile distant.

In January of Tenniel's birth year George III had died at Windsor. Contrasting with the still-uncrowned George IV's libertinism, the country is in the midst of an evangelical revival, prelude to the reign of the future queen (at this time still an infant.) In 1818 Thomas Bowdler had published his expurgated family Shakespeare, and while Corinthians (the dandies of the time) might affect elaborate neckwear, wasp waists, and flowered vests, dress for most is increasingly sober.

Those who grew up in this period would recall such premodern vestiges as tinder boxes, "brimstone matches," and folded letters sealed with wax or wafers, the writing crossed and recrossed to cut down on the high postage rates. They would remember when Kensington was a villagelike suburb; Belgravia, a stretch of lonely fields; Russell Square, the site of a gravel pit; and Green Park, a place where cows grazed. Even in the heart of London ruddy-faced farmers might still haggle over the price of hay in the Haymarket or exchange wives at the Smithfield cattle market.[11]

North of the New Road the work of creating a landscaped park ringed by expensive terraces has begun. By 1817 the project was sufficiently underway for the Regent's Park, at least its southern boundary, to be enclosed by a handsome iron railing, as was the Park Crescent Gardens. A painting

Fig. 7. Allsop's Buildings. (City of Westminster Archives Centre)

of the period shows the prospect looking south from the York Gate, with "a party of haymakers sketched from life" and "only three houses dotted about the new parish church of St. Marylebone."[12]

This church, designed by Thomas Hardwick, has replaced the old parish church to the south and dominates the New Road. Its multiply staged tower is as tall again as the nave, its dome held by brilliantly gilded caryatids. The interior, said to accommodate three to four thousand parishioners, is equally lavish. The altarpiece, an eight-by-seventeen-foot annunciation, is by Royal Academy president Benjamin West, a long-time householder in Newman Street in the district's older section, and around double galleries are molded swags of fruit hung from winged cherub heads.[13] Years later, Tenniel may have recalled these cherubim when designing his House of Lords fresco and when depicting "a great many boy's heads" taking "their flight" in a scene for *The Ingoldsby Legends*.

By 24 March 1820, when Tenniel is baptized under the gaze of these many boys' heads, the five Tenniels and their two female servants are, in all probability, already ensconced at Allsop's Buildings on the north side of the New Road where the next year's census will find them. Allsop's Buildings is a row of some forty-three homes divided midway by Baker Street's course northward to the park. The Tenniels are at number 25—the third house west of the Baker Street corner.[14]

Further west by five doors is the family of the painter John Martin. Around 1817 Martin (a rising artist of about twenty-eight), advised by friends that he must make "a little show in the world," had borrowed the money to pay the first year's rent on number 30. His son Leopold would later describe it as an address of "considerable consequence," the buildings opposite (the York Buildings to the south) being "chiefly occupied by persons of some mark. . . . Leigh Hunt, Lord Erskine, William Beckford." This "superior house," as John Martin calls it, rents for seventy pounds whereas number 25 goes for sixty.[15]

A photograph shows the homes shortly before their demolition in the 1920s (fig. 7). Their brickwork, height, and surmounting parapet are late eighteenth century, but the stone facing of the lower stories and graceful

wrought-iron work may be regency additions. While the 1756 act that created the New Road had required that all buildings be set back by at least fifty feet, this would be set aside during the later widening of the road. But in the Tenniels' and Martins' time the lots are deep—about seven times their width. Martin is able to build in his back garden "a substantial private painting establishment and convenient painting room, attached to the house by a long gallery." At the back of the Tenniels' house, which originally opened onto the unenclosed fields of the Portman estate and later onto Allsop's Mews, is their stable.[16]

Artistic Families

Was the affluence suggested by this and subsequent Tenniel homes derived solely from John Baptist's teaching? This was possible. Masters' earnings varied considerably. The *Boarding-School and London Masters' Directory* for 1828 speaks of rates as high as a guinea for every forty minutes of instruction. While some, like Prince Turveydrop in Dickens's *Bleak House,* might work desperately hard for much less, John Baptist probably charged fees equivalent to those of drawing master Daniel Valentine Riviere, later to be related by marriage. Riviere, head of a large household near fashionable Fitzroy Square to the east, taught at a ladies' school in Kensington. Recalling the dearness of drawing materials at this school, his daughter Fanny observed, "His remuneration must have been 'dear' also, I suspect, as he earned *all* the money to keep and educate us."[17]

By all indications, the Tenniels were tonish. Entries for John Baptist surface regularly in such fashionable directories as the *Royal Blue Book* and *Boyle's Court Guide*.[18] In 1859, the wedding of his fifth son, Adolphus, would appear in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* long a source for "Marriages of Remarkable Persons."

Fig. 8. John Baptist Tenniel's kit

John Baptist's occupation is less clear, changing from decade to decade, as did that of his third son, William Rickards, who seems to have assisted his father in all his pursuits. Pigot's 1832 London directory lists John Baptist as a professor of drawing. In successive censuses from 1841 to 1871 John Baptist described himself as "artist," "teacher of personal exercise," "teacher of drawing," and "teacher of dancing." Since his pupils would recall him as a "first rate" and "celebrated" dancing master, an "indefatigable teacher," this was probably his prime calling. Concurrently, he taught deportment, fencing, and calisthenics.[19] John Baptist's dancing-master's fiddle (or kit, as it was called),

measuring fourteen and a half inches in its entirety, remains in family possession (fig. 8).

John Baptist's incursion into drawing seems consistent with the broad involvement in the arts that characterized certain Marylebone families. For example, his sister Victoire's 1808 marriage to the musician and composer James Calkin produced several prominent instrumentalists, singers, and composers. Eventually Victoire's son George would marry a granddaughter of Daniel Valentine Riviere. Riviere, who after his day's labors in Kensington liked to relax by playing the flute, had fathered several painters, a celebrated soprano, and a binder of fine books. Close by the Rivieres, in Norton Street (now Bolsover Street), lived the dancing master Julius Giani, father of Tenniel's future bride. Related to Julius (perhaps his father, as they had the same address in 1821) is Lorenzo Giani, artist, whose daughter Georgiana would be a professor of music. Lastly, the 1844 marriage of Tenniel's sister Eliza Margaret to Leopold Martin would also create distant ties with the Corbould dynasty of artists as well as with Tenniel's friend the artist Charles Keene.[20] One suspects that this pattern was one of long standing.

Did the Martin friendship predate the Allsop's period? We learn from Leopold that in the years of Tenniel's childhood "the families were one." There were, indeed, some affinities between the neighbors. Like John Baptist, Martin was a fencer, his father Fenwick Martin having taught sword and singlestick in their native Northumberland. Furthermore, the diminutive Martin—somewhat of a dandy with his tight pantaloons and pumps, his curled and oiled hair—may have struck a responsive chord in the elegant John Baptist.[21]

By the New Road

Around them the district changed rapidly. On the park's northern boundary the Regent's Canal opened in 1820 with a procession of gaily decorated boats, their passengers raising wine-filled glasses to toast the occasion. In the same year, Martin exhibited at the Royal Academy two watercolor views of a proposed triumphal arch, in commemoration of Waterloo, bridging the New Road from Portland Place to Regent's Park. One, taken from inside the railing, shows the park at this time—barren with great excavations, evoking the sort of romantic desolation that Martin was partial to.[22]

What a rich succession of sounds, rising from the various menders, carriers, buskers, and traders who came and went from breakfast until dusk, must have reached the youngest Tenniel from his nursery windows. Then, once the lamplighter had departed with his ladder, the night sounds would begin: the watchmen with their wooden rattles calling the hour and half hour, the solemn tolling of the Marylebone parish church clock, and the clatter of the night coaches. Finally came the morning carts, the "dust-ho!" of the dustman, and it would all start over again.[23]

Along the New Road there would pass within the next few years the funeral cortege of Queen Caroline to mixed jeers and signs of mourning and, to greater mourning, that of Byron. Benjamin West died, and Sir Thomas Lawrence headed the Royal Academy in his place. The third census was taken, and the regent, wearing star-studded robes and a great plume of ostrich feathers in his hat, went to Westminster Abbey to be crowned George IV.[24] As the decade progressed, cheap literature was made more available to the working classes, Catholic emancipation passed, and London gained its first police force. This period of relative calm would close in 1829 with the agricultural riots of "Captain Swing."

A boy growing up at Allsop's Buildings in those years would have found life sufficiently entertaining. In the time before he was "breeched," or put into trousers (for little boys wore petticoats up to school age), the number of young Tenniels would grow to five, William Rickards coming along in late 1821 and Lydia Victoire two years after. When the children were old enough they might have been walked along the New Road, past the Park Crescent Gardens ("tastefully laid out as a shrubbery") with its bronze statue of the Duke of Kent, to Daguerre and Bouton's Diorama. There, from an auditorium that revolved "like a snap table with all its spectators," bright day turned to moonlight, and calm followed storm in painted scenes that merged before one's startled eyes.[25]

Work on the Regent's Park and its ring of stately terraces advanced rapidly, the first buildings composing Cornwall Terrace directly north of Allsop's. Close by, the York Gate opened onto an idyllic landscape of "groves, gardens, sheets of water . . . lodges, airy bridges." Passing the lake on the left, and Jenkins Nursery in the inner circle, and traversing a large stretch of ground to the north, one came to the zoological gardens (opened in 1828). There, one might watch the sleek otter chase round his pool, peer into the dens of the great cats, see the brown bear climb a post to reach for the buns that visitors extended to him on long sticks, admire the gaily colored parrots, laugh at the lumbering birds of prey and the agile monkeys, and feed ginger nuts to the elephant. Here Tenniel's British Lion, Bengal Tiger, Russian Bear, and Imperial Eagles performed long years before we meet them again in his *Punch* cartoons. In the year following there opened, not far from the Diorama, Decimus Burton's 112–foot-high Colosseum. From within its dome visitors might look down on Thomas Horner's panorama of London as seen from the top of St. Paul's or climb further to see the real panorama of London from the building's crowning parapet.[26]

Besides these wonders there was the constant sideshow of the district's streets. The milk women making their rounds with pails suspended from the wooden yokes across their shoulders, crossing sweepers, dustmen with leather flaps at the back of their caps, the barrel-organ man, the muffin man, the peep show man, the Punch-and-Judy man, and the man wheeling

a "happy family" cage of small animals. On May Day one might see a Jack-in-the-Green in his bower of green leaves and flowers coming slowly down Baker Street, accompanied by mummers and sweeps just as he appears in Benjamin Haydon's painting. And in the Marylebone high street one might spot the charity school girls in their eighteenth-century dress and mushroom-shaped caps much as Tenniel would depict them when they visited the Crystal Palace in 1851.[27]

Childhood

It is probable, as his older brother Bernard attended the school near Kensington Gravel Pits where John Baptist taught dance and fencing, that Tenniel went there too; future colleagues would place his first tuition in Kensington. In all likelihood he studied under the reputed headmaster, Edward Slater, had his early games on the school's elm-bordered playground, and enjoyed the beefsteak pies that made the Friday dinners memorable. He would now have advanced to trousers, perhaps buttoned to the close-fitting jacket of a shell or skeleton suit such as he gave Tweedledum and Tweedledee.[28]

The school had both regular and day boarders, and since John Baptist traveled there daily he would have taken his sons with him as day boarders. While Prince Turveydrop might "put his little kit in his pocket" and walk to "his school at Kensington," one imagines that John Baptist, whose homes were always backed by his own stables, arrived in a gig like Dickens's own dancing master, or with a child sharing his saddle.[29]

Outside of school hours there was no lack of companionship. The Martins had six children; the second son Leopold was about two years older than Tenniel, and Charles was his own age. The painter delighted in games of skill, and days when the light was poor for painting he and his boys might be found kneeling on the studio floor engrossed in a game of "knuckle down." Was Tenniel there with his own favorite marble? Or did he throw the "javelin" at the target chalked on a tree, perhaps to be rewarded with a lollipop, brandy ball, or bull's eye by the sweets-loving Martin?[30]

On other days he might visit his Aunt Victoire and his eight Calkin cousins at Edwards Street east of the Regent's Park. He was probably closest with Joseph, four years older than he, for he would maintain lifelong ties with this cousin's children. This member of the musical Calkins would later, as a tenor, adopt the professional name of Tennielli, testifying to the popularity of Italian singers in this period.[31]

In the early thirties a new reign, a change of government in France, agitation for parliamentary reform, would probably be far less momentous to the future rider and huntsman than the opening of the Horse Bazaar in King Street, just four streets south of Allsop's. Formerly a life-guard barracks, this complex within a spacious block off Baker Street housed stabling and

galleries for some three hundred horses, five hundred carriages, and a large riding school. It also had a ladies' bazaar and handsomely arranged rooms for the sale and display of furniture, jewelry, and works of art.[32] One imagines the scene—the color and excitement, the air filled with stable dust, and, stepping between stalls of saddlery and fancy articles, the ringletted ladies in the immense bonnets and balloon sleeves of the period, with their silk-hatted escorts. Soon the site would house Madame Tussaud's large collection of life-size wax effigies, a bazaar feature for fifty years before their final move to Marylebone Road.

Leopold Martin's reminiscences seem to suggest this period, or one earlier, for the accident that blinded Tenniel's right eye rather than the age of twenty that is sometimes given. In Leopold's account of the practice session in question, Tenniel "when quite young" was touched on the right eye when the button came off John Baptist's foil, both fencers being maskless. One wonders, masks being then in use, why this precaution was not taken. In two of Robert Cruikshank's etchings to Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821) fencers are shown protecting themselves with small wire masks, and in 1827 the noted fencing master P. G. Hamon prescribed the mask as an "indispensable" part of the fencer's dress. The story has it that John Baptist never learned of his son's impairment, something that seems incomprehensible today and may be a reflection of the formal relations that often prevailed between fathers and their children in those times.[33]

Early Pencilings

We learn from Leopold Martin's recollections that Tenniel, when "little more than a child," had joined the Martin children in their art studies at the "the Print Room, Reading Room, or Townley Gallery of the British Museum . . . receiving all the advantages of joint instruction and suggestions." This would have begun after 16 November 1832 when Martin, who wanted his sons to study the museum's works on costumes of various times and countries, wrote to keeper of prints and drawings John Thomas Smith to ask his assistance. Eventually this would result in Charles and Leopold Martin's two volumes on English costume. Although Smith, an antiquarian and an able draftsman, would have been an excellent guide, he was dead in less than four months after Martin's letter. At some point Sir Frederic Madden of the Manuscripts Department, no poor artist himself, reportedly became Tenniel's mentor.[34]

By 1832 work was in progress to expand the museum's original home, the old Montague House. At this time, the Townley Galleries housed the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian antiquities, and two rooms in the recently constructed east wing temporarily served as the fifth set of reading rooms since the museum's opening in 1759. To reach them, readers ascended the steep and narrow exterior stone steps, left their umbrellas and walking sticks in the small

and chilly lobby, and entered the first of the two rooms, which had high windows over grated bookshelves. It was best to come early as the tables, with chairs for 112 readers, were quite insufficient. Perhaps our young researchers were too engrossed in their copying to note the smell when the badly ventilated rooms became full, or to suffer from "museum headache" or the infamous "museum flea." We picture them—Leopold and Tenniel assiduously at work, and Charles sketching desultorily when not distracted by the entrance of a fashionable patron.[35]

In two great scrapbooks containing drawings from every phase of Tenniel's career, and probably dating from this time, are numerous tiny studies of costume, armor, saddlery, weaponry, and such miscellany as a thumbscrew, firedog, spanner, and touch box. Most are of exquisitely penciled figures, from one and one-half to four inches high, in costumes of various reigns and times. One or two have notes on sources: a Monsieur Chery's *Studies of Costumes and Theaters of All Nations* (1790) and Meyrick's *Ancient Arms and Armour* (1830). Superimposed on one Tenniel sketch (a head of a fourteenth-century lady in a wimple) and penciled in a childish hand, probably of a younger sibling, are the words "J Tenniel is an ass/oh Yes he is/ Very"—a delightful reminder that in any period youngsters are much the same.[36]

A smaller scrapbook, compiled by Tenniel himself, contains some 170 similarly tiny drawings. They are undated but range from 1835 to about 1847 or later and depict actors observed from the pits of various London theaters. These lively pencil studies of costume, expression, and gesture he subsequently finished with sparing watercolor touches. The "Pencillings in the Pit. 1835—," its title probably adopted from the name of a journal that ran briefly from 1838 to 1839, represents some thirty performances, with opera and Shakespeare predominating. These are interspersed with extravaganza, melodrama, comedy, burlesque, and equestrian spectacle.[37]

While preferable to the gallery, the pit could not have provided the happiest environment for the sketcher. Two or three shillings secured a place in this province of the lower middle classes. This was followed by a rush for front seats, often reached by climbing over the backless wooden benches accessible by no central aisle. Around half-past six or seven a rousing overture would begin the (usually) triple bill that might go for five hours or more before the final black curtain. The young artist would have had to handle carefully the badly printed programs that blackened one's fingers and to block from his consciousness the stomping, kicking, hissing, and shouting, so tumultuous that actors might resort to playing in dumb show. He would have had to put up with the inevitable second rush for seats when the half-price ticket holders came in at nine o'clock.[38]

But these years also held advantages for the artist in the pit. From start to finish the house was bathed in light—gaslight in most cases. And when

an actor met audience expectations by playing up to certain climactic "points" in a piece, the protracted pause during the applause that followed made it easier to observe players who might otherwise be in motion.

Some of the sketches can be traced to particular offerings of the thirties and forties. Of course, there was Shakespeare, with the tragic Mary Warner or the enchanting Pricilla Horton by William Macready's side. Tenniel would have seen the "metaphysical" actor cast himself "with a hoarse cry . . . on the ground like a maddened bull" before Banquo's ghost, or seen him turning up the whites of his eyes as the soliloquizing Hamlet.[39] Also treading the green carpet of tragedy were Samuel Phelps, James Wallack, George Vanderhoff, and the young Charles Kean, all portrayed in Tenniel's pencilings.

Shakespearean "travestie" was not excluded, and Tenniel saw a famous one: Maurice G. Dowling's *Othello, According to Act of Parliament*. It was described in 1837 by theatrical diarist Charles Rice as the "best burlesque that has ever appeared," which tells us something about the others. Othello's address to the senate—"Potent, grave and rev'rend sir, / Very noble massa"—recalled the black impersonations that Charles Mathews had introduced to Londoners in 1824 and tied in with the country's new craze for blackface minstrelsy.[40] Indeed, Tenniel's sketch of one Sweeny as an "Ethiopian delineator" forecast his depiction of these popular entertainers in several *Punch* cartoons.

From this period, too, comes Tenniel's sketch of Isaac Van Amburgh with one of his lions. In the late thirties the American lion tamer thrilled audiences at Astley's Amphitheatre and later at Drury Lane where the new queen saw his act six times.[41] Scarcely less intrigued was the future limner of the British Lion.

High Art

What art instruction was available to Tenniel in those years? There was most likely some from John Baptist and perhaps from Martin. But, as the first was a probable dabbler, the second a landscape painter and a weak figure draftsman, we can safely assume what is ultimately true of most artists—that he taught himself to draw.[42] Still, the groundwork that Martin encouraged in costume and armor was invaluable for Tenniel's future work.

Since Martin was an instigator, subscriber, and regular exhibitor of the Society of British Artists, it was here, in the society's gallery in Suffolk Street, that Tenniel and Charles Martin began showing their work in 1835. Tenniel would exhibit here regularly through 1841, with sixteen pieces that showed a predilection for watercolor and for scenes from Scott's *Waverley Novels*. It was an oil, however, *The Stirrup Cup* of 1837, that marked his first known sale, its purchaser the popular stage Irishman Tyrone Power. The same year saw his first successful entry at the Royal Academy's summer exhibition where he would exhibit regularly through 1843 and later intermittently. Here,

Fig. 9. John Martin, *Coronation of Queen Victoria,* oil painting, 1839. (© Tate, London 2004)

too, he favored period subjects. His 1839 and 1840 entries at the society—designs based on the seventeenth-century song about the old English courtier who "kept a brave old house at a bountiful rate / And an old porter to relieve the poor at his gate"—might be taken as early indications of his Tory leanings.[43]

The Martin friendship may have been Tenniel's entry to the first of a succession of brilliant social circles. In his years of prosperity (1825 to 1835) John Martin brought together at his weekly "evenings at home" many leading personalities in literature, art, and the sciences, among them William Godwin, the Landseers (John and his sons Charles and Edwin), Sir Charles Wheatstone, Tom Moore, Samuel Lover, Tom Hood, Harrison Ainsworth, and Allan Cunningham. Tenniel may also have seen at Martin's several who would figure in his later life: George Cruikshank, Samuel Carter Hall, Douglas Jerrold, and Charles Dickens. Here, in Martin's drawing room, furnished in rosewood and crimson damask, coffee served in lilac and gold Sevres china accompanied the most stimulating conversation. Leopold Martin would recall one June night in 1832 when Tom Moore sat at Martin's grand piano and "warbled melody after melody," while present was "the lovely sister of . . . John Tenniel," later to become Leopold's wife.[44] As Eliza Margaret would have then been a bit short of her fourteenth birthday, it is probable that Tenniel, too, reached an age when he might be included before the "evenings" ended with Martin's change in fortunes.

By 1837 the painter was heavily in debt. His schemes for metropolitan improvements, his generous loans to friends such as the artist Benjamin R. Haydon, had drained his funds. In addition, his sales had dropped off and he lacked the advantages that academician status might have given. For fourteen years he had shown nothing at the Royal Academy, probably for the reasons that he and Haydon gave in 1836 when, before a select committee on the arts, they protested their treatment at that institution.[45] Then, in early 1838, he suffered a nervous collapse. Growing up in the heady atmosphere of "high art," Tenniel could thus witness the disparities between high aspirations (possibly megalomania in the case of Haydon) and the capricious art market and entrenched authority.

By August of 1838 Martin had recovered and was again painting. Queen

Victoria's coronation at Westminster earlier that summer had inspirited him with the notion of a coronation scene in which many of the most distinguished attendees would be painted from life.[46] Having been rebuffed in his application for the post of historical painter to the new monarch, he may have hoped to reverse that decision. In any case he proceeded with gusto, drawing at the abbey and inviting some one hundred persons of note to sit for portraits. The latter revived his fortunes, for they came—among them Prince Albert, Earl Grey, Lord Howick, and the Duke of Sutherland—and bought and commissioned paintings. Martin, with Charles assisting with the portraits, worked tirelessly through 1839 and finally the 73 × 93 inch canvas was submitted to Buckingham Palace, where it was not bought. It did, however, find a purchaser for the good sum of two thousand guineas. Martin's view of the abbey, caught after a burst of sunlight had illuminated the central dais, would find an ironic transmutation some twenty years later in one of Tenniel's designs for Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (fig. 9 and fig. 10).

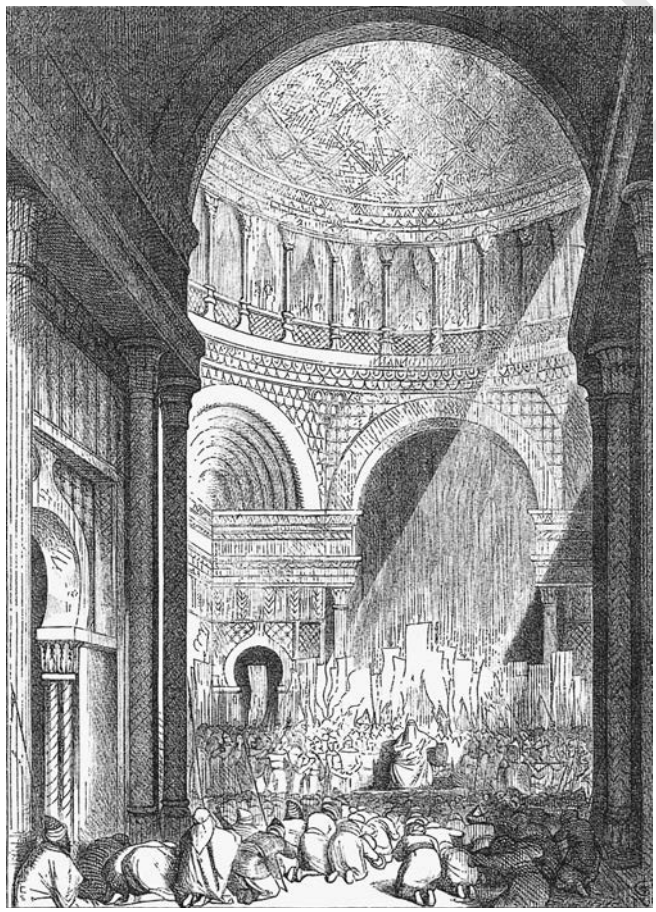

Fig. 10. Tenniel, "There on that throne," illustration for "The Veiled Prophet," Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh,* 1861

The Eglinton Rehearsals

While Martin was "going on in glory" with his *Coronation,* a little more than a mile away some thirty-five young aristocrats were rehearsing for the medieval revival event of the century.[47] By this time, Tenniel, through his study of costume and armor and his reading of Scott, was himself something of a medievalist. He had probably seen the tournaments staged at Astley's and may have seen Lord Burghersh's opera *The Tournament* in which the Queen of Beauty was sung by Anna (née Riviere) Bishop, a daughter of the drawing master Daniel Riviere.

The Eglinton Tournament grew out of Tory dissatisfaction with the economical excision of certain ancient ceremonies from the coronation festivities. The eagerness of certain noblemen to compensate for this and the story of how the thirteenth earl of Eglinton was swayed by press and public into staging a full-scale tournament at his castle in Ayrshire, Scotland, is well documented. In June and July of 1839 the "Eglinton Knights" practiced for the August event in the gardens behind the Eyre Arms Tavern in the St. John's Wood area of northern Marylebone. A popular location for athletic sports, the gardens of this handsome Georgian place of entertainment housed assembly rooms, a ballroom and theater, and offered band concerts and fireworks displays.[48]

Here the "knights" met twice weekly to practice tilting against mounted dummies in true medieval fashion. The sessions were touted in the press, and admission tickets, emblazoned with a device of crossed lances and a crown, were granted by the participants themselves—at least for the crowded final Saturdays. But it appears that on other days one might just walk in. One gentleman who happened to be passing the Eyre Arms that summer, "struck by the blast of trumpet and the clash of arms," simply entered and "beheld a sight . . . sufficient to cause the canonized bones of the author of *Ivanhoe* 'to burst their cerements.'" It is hard to believe that the young Tenniels and Martins did not take the short jog up the Park Road and then the Wellington Road, which led directly to the lists. Martin himself may have had some interest in the sessions, having painted the tournament from *Ivanhoe* some nine years before.[49]

Of some hundred thousand spectators at Eglinton Park in Ayrshire on 28 August, most are unrecorded. We cannot say if Tenniel joined the artists and reporters in their special stand. Several of the artists there may have been known to him through Martin. Edwin Landseer was an old friend of the painter; Edward Henry Corbould, who illustrated an 1840 volume on the tournament, would marry Martin's niece; and James Henry Nixon, illustrator of John Richardson's lavish *Eglinton Tournament* (1843), is believed to have studied with Martin.[50]

As to the downpour that turned the most extravagant spectacle of the

age into a rout, the only surprise is that anyone should have been surprised as Ayrshire summers are notoriously wet. Two weeks before the event the *Times* quoted a Cheltenham paper's prediction of a very splendid pageant, "if it happens to be fine weather," and its further comment: "but if it should rain, an enterprising spectator might realize something handsome by forwarding a good supply of umbrellas and mackintoshes, for the use of the knights and squires." Judging by the quantity of umbrellas that snapped into sight like "a growth of green mushrooms," or "the backsides of thousands of elephants," many came prepared. But who could foresee the flooding of the stands? One spectator, Miss Jeanie Boswell, wrote to her brother Patrick of the rain that "like a water spout . . . completely drenched the whole party, destroying the splendid equipments and making the feathers hang like cocks on a wet day."[51]

Satirists soon personified the event by a knight with an umbrella. The symbol—first seen in *Cleave's Penny Gazette*—appeared in drawings by Richard Doyle and "Alfred Crowquill" (Alfred Henry Forrester) and as late as the sixties in designs by Charles H. Bennett and "Bab" (William Schwenck Gilbert).[52] No one revived it more often than Tenniel.