

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A SHORT STUDY OF THE LIFE AND WORKS
OF ARTHUR RACKHAM

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THEN COURAGE FRIENDS, SHOW'EM

THE MASTER-HAND

LET FANCY FLY, WITH ALL HER LOFTY

GRACES

PACK WISDOM IN, WITH TENDERNESS

AND PASSION,

BUT NEVER PUT GOOD FOOLING OUT

OF FASHION.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis discusses the life and work of the Victorian illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867 - 1939). The work is divided into four main chapters, followed by a brief conclusion.

It includes a general summary of his life, referring to his art education, and making the significant point that in his field he was almost entirely responsible for his own tuition. Also, there are notes on his work procedure, mentioning the development of print reproduction contemporaneous with his maturing as an artist. Samples and analysis of his work are contained in a brief history of his illustrations in the final chapter.

Throughout the thesis, reference is made to some of his works which are provided and numbered.

Chapter 1.

Arthur Rackham --Brief History.

On the 19th. September 1867, at 210, South Lambeth Rd., Anne Rackham, wife of Alfred Thomas Rackham, gave birth to her fourth child, in a line of twelve. She called him Arthur.

Arthur Rackham was born into a Dickensian - type world, with growing signs of disquiet and social unrest. Yet, despite the social conscience that found expression in the works of Charles Dickens, the early Victorian period was suffused with great optimism, even with complacency, generated by the unprecedented prosperity which had followed in the wake of industrialisation.

Derek Hudson, his earliest biographer (1), tells us that Rackham was born into a typically middle-class Victorian family, and Gettings(2) "that in essence heart and style Rackham remained a Victorian throughout his life, refusing to witness the fragmentation and decay of the world around him."

As a child at Lambeth Road, Rackham developed an early talent for drawing. He often smuggled pencil and paper to bed with him, and on one occasion when paper was not at hand, he drew on his pillowcase.

In the nursery too, he was healthily mischievous. With his discovery of a small hole under the saddle of their large dappled rocking-horse, successive nurses lost their thimbles, and when the children rode the horse, a mysterious rattle sounded from its interior.

Rackham entered the City of London School in September 1879. He was not a great scholar, but worked hard, and did manage to win several prizes, including one for maths. in his final year. He was popular at school, with both teachers and pupils, for his good-humoured character and talent with pencil. Many of his drawings at

this time included caricatures of school staff. It seems though, that these went down well with all, for occasionally, he was asked to reproduce some of them on the blackboard for the benefit of all present.

When Rackham left City of London School he firmly intended to be an artist, yet he was by temperament too careful to throw himself into the freelance mailstram, without some kind of security.

Despite all his spirit, Rackham was delicate, and in 1884, to improve his health, he was taken on a trip to Australia. He was more than three months away, and spent much of his time drawing and painting in watercolours. This long voyage strengthened his artistic intentions and so, on his return to London in September 1884, he enrolled at the Lambeth School of Art. Though only seventeen, he enrolled as an evening student, (a matter of economics, the Rackham's though not poor, had a large family to support), intending to earn his living during the day.

To this end, in 1885, he took a clerical job in the Westminster Fire Office, and remained there for seven years, displaying the methodical application and accurate accountancy which he showed in business affairs for the rest of his life.

During those years with the Fire Office, besides attending evening classes, he contributed to various illustrated newspapers and magazines, and slowly he developed his reputation as a versatile artist. Success through book illustration rather than magazines and periodicals belongs to later on.

In 1892, he considered it possible to become a full time artist on the staff of the newly formed Westminster Budget.

In 1903, he married Edyth Starkie, an artist, whom he had met in Hamstead two years earlier. In 1908, he was elected to full membership of the Royal Water Colour Society,. This year also saw the birth of his daughter Barbara. In 1909, he became a member of the Art Workers Guild, and in 1919, he became Master of the same Guild.

During these years spent partly in East End of London, partly in Hamstead, with frequent trips to an old country farmhouse in Houghton, Sussex, then later to a new country house in Limpsfield, punctuated with trips abroad on holidays to Denmark and the United States, (for business and acclamation), Rackham remained secure in the rich world of his imagination, quite apart, if not actually isolated from the dissolution of world order.

There are many instances where people have likened Rackham (fig.1) to one of his gnomes, his "elfish grin", and later his "wrinkled ripe walnut" face, gave body to such notions. Rackham, with his genial good humour fosters this belief, picking himself out in precisely such a role in several of his pictures, i.e. it is he who peeks so delightfully around the tulips in Kensington Gardens.(fig.2).he is the bristle - legged "newmaster" scrubbing so hard to right the wrong(fig.3), and little wonder that while he reads the paper, he frowns to himself(fig.4) as he romps around the beach.

His behaviour, however was not that of a frolicsome gnome, but that of a responsible adult. As Gettings (3) puts it,"Rackham's character proves something of an embarrassment to the biographer in its very perfection". He was a loyal friend, a fine husband, a good father, and his ability to plan, along with his methodical attention to detail, leave no flaws in his behaviour. For all his incredible imagination, he is no neurotic artist isolated in his own fairy-land

dream. His external life is at once reliable, conforming and secure.

He was in the words of Hudson(4)... "a quiet man with simple tastes and an abstemious almost austere attitude to life".

Whatever his attitude to life, his personal feelings on the Great War are neatly summed up in his ink drawing at the foot of a letter written in that period.(fig5). And it was in much the same way as the war went by without disturbing Rackham, that the great floodtide of the twentieth century passed him by, without it seems, his finding the time, or the interest, to look up from his drawing board.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1

1. Derek Hudson, Arthur Rackham--his life and work.1960.
2. Fred Gettings, Arthur Rackham, (Studio Vista;Macmillan Publishing Ltd., London,1975.)
3. *ibid.*
4. Hudson.

Chapter 2.

Early Influences and Real Source of Art Education.

From 1885, when he took the clerical post with the Westminster Fire Office, until 1892, when he became a full time artist with the Westminster Budget Rackham plodded through clerical work in the day time, and in the evening doing what he called "much distasteful (freelance) back work", for various journals. He had not yet found even that quality of line which was to make him famous towards the end of the century.

Rackham was a slow developer, and this clearly stemmed from his own cautiousness in choosing to take a steady job, rather than committing himself to a full time art-school training. Being a night-student, it is unlikely that he had much contact with full time students or had much time and attention from the better known teachers.

Certainly, it was not from those people around him that he learned about drawing, but from the study of illustrations and reproductions by the masters, and from that most excellent of art teachers, the need for unremitting practice and execution in the face of deadlines, even with the awareness of what a casual observer of the time may well have regarded as only ordinary talent. Much of the work Rackham produced for such weeklies as Scraps, The Pall Mall Budget, and the Westminster Budget is typical of the type of graphic journalism of the day, gratifying nostalgia more than aestheticism, though some do have a distinctive quality of their own. Yet, all this journalism demanded the training of a rapid eye for detail, a feeling for variety, and a dexterity of line which would stand to Rackham at a later time.

Rackham's earliest published illustration which appears in Scraps 1884, (fig.6) is crude even for an eighteen year old artist, and shows (only with the anlightenment of the accompanying text) an equally crude device used by mothers in Ceylon to prevent their children eating too much. They tied a piece of string around the baby's middle before he began eating, and when the string broke, baby had had enough.

Perhaps surprisingly, only a few months later, another Rackham appears in the same paper, a delightful chapter-heading for The Munchausen Club Jan.1885 (fig 7), which for all its wood engraving style, reminds us more of Dicky Doyle than of any Arthur Rackham we shall learn to know in the future.

At that time all the "dailies" and "weeklies" had their small teams of artists as an equivalent of the gangs of journalistic photographers of modern newspapers. As such they were required to travel to various places - scenes of crime, courts, fires etc.- and prepare drawings to add visual life to columns of type. With such varied work as this, we may well understand why Rackham at this time looked with such gloom upon his future, for it was also obvious to all involved in journalism that before long the processes for enabling printers to reproduce from photographs would be perfected. With hindsight we see that this threat was to our gain, for had it not arisen Rackham might never have gone into book illustration.

The years of reportage left several interesting drawings of 19th.Century London life, but few merit real attention. Those following represent the highest level his work reached during this period.

The February of 1892 saw the streets of London covered in sleet, snow and slush, and Rackham provided drawings showing the consequences of such abominable streets, a cab horse has slipped and is perhaps downed forever, (fig.8). A runaway horse inspired the exciting little drawing entitled After a Runaway Horse (fig.9) in the Westminster Budget March 1893. A visit to England by the Chicago Ballet Co. in 1893, was reviewed by The Westminster Budget and again Rackham provided the illustration (fig.10).

By 1893, there are exciting full page drawings as that provided by Rackham for Richard le Gallienne's poem To Spring (fig 11). (Exciting at present because it can be recognised as a pointer). However unlyrical the setting, the drawing does reveal a different side to Rackham's style. His constant reportage repressing something else, striving to get out ?. Perhaps this bottling and pickling of his real inner self was the very preparation for those years of maturity, when circumstances permitted Rackham to dispense with reporting the outer reality, and concern himself more with the elaboration of a more convincing, certainly more exciting inner reality. It is to be wondered what the people of the time thought of his Influenza Fiend Westminster Budget Dec.1893, (fig.12) a drawing used to illustrate a severe dose of influenza which raced its way around London that Christmas. It is quite a brutal and coarse depiction of the plight of many that December., but again, it provides another pointer, and proves a first for further developments.

Of this period Rackham writes:

"work was hard to get and not well paid, and such efforts as

I made along the lines I have since followed received little

encouragement. And then came the Boer War. That really was a very thin time indeed for me, and may be considered the worst time I ever had. The kind of work that was in demand to the exclusion of almost all else, was such as I had no liking for and very little aptitude. It was also clear that the camera was going to supplant the artist in illustrated journalism, and my prospects were not encouraging. But my work was becoming less immature, and before long my special bent began to be recognised -by artists first. I was elected to membership of one or two exhibiting societies (Exhibited at Royal Academy from 1888, and Leicester Galleries from 1905), my work was welcomed, dealers & publishers became interested and the worst was passed."(1)

It is a little hard to credit that this man who was, only a few years later to be eulogised as a "painter of Fantasies" ("we have no one who can quite be compared with him, no one who uses his particular executive method with a tithe of his ability or approaches him in fanciful originality")(2), was still feeling insecure in his chosen career. Now, in retrospect, it all looks very different, for within a decade he was the most famous, and sought after illustrator of fantasy books, with exquisite control over line and design.

The changes which came over his ability and art in that decade, may be understood only by examining the real sources of his art education, the other books and magazine illustrations which were being produced by his most talented contemporaries. Rackham learned more from these other pictures than from any living person, or from any number of evening hours in Lambeth School of Art. Sturge Moore, in describing the art school scene in later years supports this argument when he mentions the collections of illustrations made by

his own group -the "Pre-Raphaelites, Boyd Houghton, Keene, alongside of Villette, Howard Pyle and Abbey....". Later he added the throwaway but important line "But there were others merely collected as cribs"(3) To study the influence of these "cribs," on Rackham (a further study in itself), it is worth looking at the work of Howard Pyle,(fig.13), and Charles Robinson(figs.14,15,16),to name but two. In fact, those who would largely trace Rackham to Dicky Doyle (figs.17-20) might well be surprised when a few of these other sources are examined.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 2

1. Arthur Rackham, The Worst time in my Life, The Bookman, October 1925.
2. A. L. Baldry, Arthur Rackham: A Painter of Fantasies. (The Studio) May 1905.
3. Gwynn, Sturge Moore and the Life of Art. London 1952.

Chapter 3.

Technique and Style.

Rackham slowly developed into what a modern advertising agency would call "a good line man". Most of his work with a few exceptions are coloured drawings rather than painterly illustrations. Of course Rackham's best plates so combine drawing with colour, that such a pitch is reached in which one cannot be separated from the other without detriment to both, but with colour he is, as Julian Garner puts it frequently "more interested in tone relationship than in variety of hue"(1).

Indeed, his first colour picture to appear was significantly enough a coloured version of a line drawing which he had done in 1896, his thirtieth year, the frontpiece for the delightful Two Old Ladies, Two Foolish Fairies and a Tom Cat(fig.21), which appeared in 1897. However, his fame as a colourist did not come until 1905 with Rip Van Winkle, but for a decade before that he was highly regarded as a serious illustrator.

Rackham's training and temperament -even his actual technique used in producing the coloured plates- drove him to conceive the world around him in terms of line and of illustrations as coloured line drawings.

This linearist attitude, which perhaps explains his inclination to trees, roots, wrinkled faces and all such things which may be represented in fluid line developed a strong confidence of line on paper and relegated colour to something additional, which though it might improve a drawing, could never itself complement a weak one.

One important event which enabled Rackham exploit his personal

line during the last decade of the nineteenth century, is bound up with the development in mechanical means of reproduction, which had developed in that period during which Rackham was beginning to find his feet as an artist. In the previous decade, an illustrator would have to submit his line drawing to a wood engraver, who transferred the work to his rosewood block. It was so that the artist was at the mercy of craftsmen engravers, and tempers frequently ran high - the engravers often having his own interpretation of a drawing. The liberation of individual linear style which occurs during the last decade of the nineteenth century ousted the engraver as interpreter. This photo-zinc process; the transference of a linedrawing to a zinc-faced block, to be etched mechanically with acids, interfered little with the quality of the artist's line, and it was this mechanical invention more than any other single factor which permitted the flowering of so many highly individual illustrators at the close of the nineteenth century.

This chapter began with a rather banal advertising agency description of Rackham as a "good line man". However, he was much more than this, as a brief study of some of the techniques he used in producing his illustrations will show. Rackham would begin his pictures by sketching with soft pencil the broad outlines of the composition, either working on card, or on good quality slightly textured paper mounted on card. It appears he worked "two-up" i.e. his original illustrations were about twice the size intended for reproduction. As his fame grew, he found it was possible to sell these originals for considerable sums, with the result that he tended to work a little larger, sometimes reaching "three up". If the picture

was intended for colour reproduction, he might at this stage, give a light wash of colour to the entire drawing area - either to help pull the colours together or to achieve an "antique" effect from the plate. Opinions differ on this, however the idea favoured that the wash was to achieve a unification of colour. A wash tone over a whole drawing certainly helps to pull the colour together and although it mutes down the range of tone and hue contrasts, it adds a delicacy of tone, and helps at the same time, to integrate the black line-work with the colour. This would seem an excellent device for any artist who regards the production of colour illustrations as largely a matter of colouring line drawings.

Watercolours require great directness in application to retain their freshness and spontaneity. This was probably one of the contributory factors which lead Rackham to adopt a fairly restricted palette, and persuaded him to work towards a varied but monochromatic effect, relieved only by subtle contrasts of translucent brighter hues i.e. (fig.22) With such exacting subtleties Rackham is able, with great mastery to set delicate moods and nuances to his pictures.

Rackham's sense of composition is almost as personal as his use of line. He at all times exhibits a tendency to be the artist of the vignette, rather than the artist of the compositional picture. His neo-gothic spirit, driving him to the free, rough-edged vignette, while was required by many factors - technical, aesthetic, and commercial - to compose within a frame.

With Rackham we are reminded of a type of celtic nature, a gothic turbulence too energetic to be contained. The floriated scrolls of medievalists are not cramped into frames, horses and

knights break the page borders, jutting out onto the raw vellum-like pages. It was this feeling for vignette and border, for chaos of life as opposed to stillness, which Rackham inherited and took to heart. Perhaps here it is worth while to quote Tolkien,

"It was an irresistible development of modern illustration that borders should be abandoned and the "picture" end only with the paper. This method is altogether inappropriate for the pictures that illustrate or are inspired by fairy-stories. An enchanted forest requires a margin even an elaborate border. To print it conterminous with the page..... is folly and an abuse.(2)

Personally I beleive that this type of presentation; vignette or frame, is either the companion or the bane of the particular artist in question. Choosing two Rackham's I like very much,(fig23) A band of workmen.....and (fig.24) The old man.... , and viewing both together, the former being the framed variety and the latter the vignette, in both, frames (boundries), appear and disappear, both seem contained in their tiny nutshell universe, and then both seem to expand to the very extremeties of it's walls. It seems that ease of construction is the point argued about and Rackham was more at home when unconfined rather than when given the classical rectangle. Rackham took well to the interlacing and fantasy of the neo-gothic, and almost without exception his best early line drawings avoid the use of a frame; they are vignettes or they integrated into the text. (figs.25 26). The attraction of many of his illustrations for children lies not merely in the competence and charm of line, or even in the rough texture and bizarre imagery,

but in the way in which the drawings fill the space and frequently crop into the type area of the columns. The exuberant movement of The Dream Picture , (fig.27) of 1896 is a good example of this.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 3.

1. Julian Garner, The Wizardry of Arthur Rackham. International Studio London. July 1923.
2. Tolkien, Tree and Leaf, Smith of Wotton Major, The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth., Unwin Books, London. 1975, pg.78.

Chapter 4.

A Brief History of Rackham's Illustrations.

In comparison with the later heavy de luxe investments, some of Rackham's earlier books are a joy to handle, especially those which are re-prints of stories and illustrations from magazines. In this category comes The Two Old Ladies and The Zankiwank, and it is hard to say which of these may be regarded as the first genuine "Rackham". In some respects the Two Old Ladies, Two Foolish Fairies and a Tom Cat of 1897, may be taken as the earliest book in a style which we would recognise as being Rackham's. The frontpiece (fig.21), we have already noted as the earliest example in full colour and the quality of line within the book shows his work maturing, both in sense of style and feeling for composition. The farmer picking the flower-fairies (fig.28) is an especially fine Rackham with a lovely variety of line treatment.

However, it is with the illustrations for The Zankiwank and the Bletherwitch (1890) that true Rackham fantasy begins to emerge consistently, and this might be called the first good Rackham. Even the subtitle of this book argues well for Rackham, as it is described as "The Original Fantastic Fairy Extravaganza", -and as the Rackham title page demonstrates, there is no limit to how extravagant the illustrator might be (fig.29). There is no colour in this book, but its forty line illustrations reveal a new Rackham to the world. At the gates of Shadow (fig.30) is another lively illustration from this book. It is in this book that we find the first clear intimations that trees are really human-beings, and the lovely picture showing the Zankiwank sticking together the folks of the Secret Cavern and Topsy Turvy Land (and sticking the wrong bits to the wrong people (fig.31)).

Some of the drawings produced in Little Folks between 1896, and 1905, rank among the best of Rackham's work, for the finest of them have a freshness of vision, and a feeling for humour and fantasy which was in some respects lost under the self-awareness of the recognised official "Rackham style" which tended to become something of a weight on Rackham in later years. It would be quite accurate to say that it was through his dealings with Little Folks that Rackham found himself, discovered his real metier to be line, his realm fairy-land, his incentive force to be fantasy and his love to be moved by humour. The importance of Little Folks to Rackham's career and reputation may only be fully grasped when we understand that it was the reprinting of these stories and pictures which first announced to the general public the existence of a good quality illustrator of fantasy, and paved the way for those books such as Rip Van Winkle, which brought fame. For illustration from Little Folks see (figs.32 and 33).

It is a misconception to believe that Rackham begins in 1905 with Rip Van Winkle. However, it is with this book that Rackham blossomed into fame. In the text Washington Irving gives fairly specific description of the strange men Rip Van Winkle meets in the Catskill Mountains; they are "odd looking personages" dressed in "quaint outlandish fashion", they have peculiar faces "the face of one seemed to consist entirely of nose", and so on. whilst all the company sported beards, the entire group reminding Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting. When the Victorian artist Gordon Brown illustrated this text in 1887, he took Irving at his word, and he presented them as ordinary, if outlandish, persons wearing costumes of a bygone Flemish age.

Rackham was scarcely held to such matters as nuances of text and he flung himself onto a lively frolic of imagination, which fortunately end to our advantage. As in his imposing presentation of the commander, who remains true to the announced details of the text, yet is accompanied by this most peculiar bevy of anthropomorphic birds(fig.34) a gathering that Washington Irving certainly never mentioned. It seems they serve to hint at the commander's smallness and help fill the composition of the frame for Rackham. And again, when Rackham vigorously enslaves the line "The Kaatsberg or Catskill Mountains have always been a region of fable", we see him people his frame with strange grotesqueries almost derivative of the bark and branches of the trees in which they live(fig.35)., and yet never given life by Irving. This is typical of the manner in which Rackham paced through his book, summoning a kind of draughtsmans licence with a courage and ability which later he rarely emulated.

His illustrations it seems, though frequently close to the text are commentaries rather than illustrations in the ordinary sense of the term. A good example of this is in the illustration of Rip's uncomfortable marital bed(fig.36), which shows in attendance a horde of jubilant polywogs,(for want of a more descriptive word) and a small company of riotous mice, though there is no mention of these in the literary version of the story. The text simply tells that Rip is in "the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation" Rackham ignores that the couple so far as the story is neatly concerned, are living in abject poverty, due to Rip's aversion to profitable labour. Yet the bed is richly curtained, and though a poor home

might be expected to have mice, it is surely unlikely to shelter such a motley collection of goblins as this, a crew never mentioned in the text. Perhaps Rackham wished to remind us that as often with mice, goblins and their like are frequently "around" if not actually visible. A straight-forward picture of a nagging wife in bed, it appears, would not offer much by way of visual amusement. It would be interesting to know who the goblin in Rip's slippers laughs at, or why the two mice must support each other in merriment, and whether the two directions of the slippers has any significant meaning. Such marginalia abound in Rackham, and form half the delight of his work. For example, who is the be-wigged 18th.Century gent listening to the intimately conversational Catskill creature in the region of fable(fig.35) Already the imagination begins to weave a story around his curious and unexpected presence in these mountains. Why in the same picture, does the disconsolate gnome sit so glum?, and why has he hung his shoe on the tree?. Perhaps there are no answers to such questions - certainly none can be found in the text, and such marginalia are merely opportunities for imagination to take free ride with Rackham handing us the reins again.

Rip was the first of Rackham's most famous works, and it is well worth observing that there is a feeling for unity running throughout the whole series of illustrations, a unity which is only too frequently absent in some of his other large picture books.

This delicate unity was preserved in the next book however, thus serving to confirm the beginning of a decade which was to be the most important period of Rackham's life so far as production of his illustrated books was concerned. This book was J.M.Barries -

Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, which appeared in 1906. Two of the most outstanding colour plates in this volume are subtle combinations of portrait from real life, merging into a convincing world of fairyland. One of these is the picture of King Edward(fig.37) outside the Garden railings, much admired, watched and saluted by a whole fairy gathering. The other is a self portrait of Rackham convincingly presented in the guise of a loose -stockinged gnome, peering around a tulip within the Gardens (fig.2). Here, the elements of humanity are surrounded by this strange world of fairy, and some trespassers are even taunted and tussled by its mischievous inhabitants (fig.38).

Often regarded as the finest plate in Peter Pan is that which depicts Solomon Crow examining the five pound note(fig.39). A brief study of the illustration places it with some of the most excellent results Rackham ever produced. In this clever plate, the human element is reduced to a piece of paper, and it is hardly surprising that these strange beings should be astonished and puzzled by it.

Peter Pan was the second of Rackham's books to be published in a trade and de luxe edition. With Rip Van Winkle the venture had been something of a gamble, with Peter Pan it was a certainty. Its publication and quality was a sure sign that Rackham had arrived and was now to remain as one of the leading illustrators in a wide range of book titles.

The de-luxe era was upon Rackham, and its immediate effect was that of making life easier from an economic point of view;-after 1906, he was no longer worried about money or status, and by 1920 he was comparatively rich. Not only were the royalties on his books satisfactory and fairly constant, but Rackham had established the practice

of selling the artwork originals, from which reproduction had been made, mainly through the Leicester Galleries in London.

One of the long-term effects of the de-luxe market was that his books took on a rarified feeling, a special quality of style, which required that he continue to produce work with this pronounced Rackham look about it. The Market demanded henceforth that he should retain in his pictures the quality and outlook which he had so convincingly and successfully announced to the world through Rip Van Winkle and Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, with deviations from these only sufficient to exhibit some fidelity to the text and author. From now on, he was able to dictate to publishers which books he would illustrate, and which books he would not. It is no accident that after 1906, save for reprints of previous works, and the odd commission he executed for friends, the titles he worked on were generally suited to his particular pen.

In 1907 he established further proof of his distinctive vision with his fascinating series of illustrations for Alice in Wonderland. It seemed an invasion of Tenniel's territory. One group shouted that this invasion was doomed to fail, while his supporters welcomed this new and delightful Alice.(figs.40 -42).

During the two years following the success of Alice, Rackham had a wide choice of titles to choose from; publishers being aware that anything he touched with his pen, turned to gold overnight. Within a year appeared Shakespeares A Midsummer Night's Dream and De la Motte Fouques Undine, both of extremely high quality.

The Dream was, of course, an almost perfect setting for Rackham's imagination, and the plates produced are some of his finest achievements. The illustration of Bottom with his ass-head (fig.22) is exquisite,

and I look on it as the finest(colour) plate in the book, while without doubt it is one of the finest of Rackham's drawings. Other plates from this book,(fig.43-46), enforce the magic of this illustrator.

Undine followed the Dream and (fig.47) is representative of the style of illustration which accompanied the book.

Rackham illustrated a great number and variety of books up to and beyond this date,(Undine 1909). But, as discussion or even mention of every book he illustrated would make heavy and dull reading, reference will be limited to those illustrations which are representative of Rackham now,-his de-luxe era - to the "Paintings" approaching the end of his life.

Aesop's Fables appeared in 1912, and in this book appeared so many excellent illustrations (necessarily of a wide variety),that it is difficult to choose any to represent the collection. However,(fig48) The Two Pots and (fig.49) The Shipwrecked Man and the Sea give some indication of the quality and imaginative vision found in these plates.

During the years of the First World War, the illustration market naturally fell off considerably, but Rackham was among those artists sufficiently well established to continue working through this period. It was inevitable that, during this patriotic era, the titles chosen by, or for, Rackham should have harked back to epic tales of English valour, or to the innocence of childhood i.e. Molory and his Romance of King Arthur 1917 (fig.50), F.A.Steel's English Fairy Tales 1918 (fig 53)

Rackham's two great books of the 20's are James Stephens Irish Fairy Tales of 1920 and Shakespear's Tempest in 1926. Yet, these books are of interest for more than the quality of their illustration.

The former hints at the softening of style, the latter exhibits it, and both display an obvious urge within Rackham to discover new forms of expression.

(Fig. 54) from The Tempest will help illustrate this new quality in Rackham's work. Here for the first time, the harmony between imaginary and real is established, not at the expense of the living beings, (as say in Peter Pan), so much as at the expense of the background and natural forms. Rackham is using decorative qualities; (the colour, the almost Art Nouveau tendril of the tree and foliage, the vine-like creepers, the similarity in edge of rock and leaf), and subtle mergings of landscape, land and sea, establishing an almost fluid relationship of forms, so creating the strangeness of the surrounding. Rackham took these innovations in regard to the decorative forms as an answer to a crisis which he faced in regard to his work. The Rackham formulas, so fresh and exciting in his youthful days (he is now 59), were not quite so filled with vigour. The problem was that his name was linked with a particular style, a particular mode of vision, which meant that he found it difficult to move into another mode of expression, no matter how much his creativity demanded it. He wished his style to continue to develop, but, unfortunately, there were distinct signs that the public, and presumably the publishers who seek to satisfy the public, did not want Rackham to change. They wanted the old Rackham, the one who would give them fairies, dragons, gnomes and living trees, (fig 55). It is interesting that a small marriage notice for his daughter should appear with Rackham in his old guise (fig.56).

It is of little wonder that, at this point some of Rackham's work seems to display boredom due to his confinement to the old style. The plate from Beauty and the Beast, which appeared in Arthur Rackham's Fairy Book 1933, supports this idea. Where is the vigorous Rackham of Rip Van Winkle who now presented with "a beast so frightful to look at that he was ready to faint with fear"? He simply presents us with the back, (almost the butt), of what remains a monster only in name (fig. 57). The Rackham of Rip Van Winkle and Peter Pan is certainly under pressure, and whether the pressure is that of age or over-work, (perhaps even visual or inspirational boredom, or a necessity for retention), it is difficult to say. Not so difficult to point out that it is a sad plight for the man who had given so much to so many.

The final book published during Rackham's lifetime was the Limited Editions Club's A Midsummer Night's Dream of 1939, which reproduced Rackham's work lithographically from watercolours. The colour plates are good, at this stage almost paintings, but the book in no way compares to his earlier illustrations for the same title, perhaps because it lacks line (fig. 58).

The Wind in the Willows was not published until 1940. It was a book that Rackham loved for a long time, and the plates, though softer than his earlier style have an almost tranquil feeling about them. Showing this softer handling (figs. 59 & 60) are typical of the artist's treatment of the illustrations, (fig. 60) being famous among Rackham lovers because it was the boat for which Rackham forgot to draw the oars, an omission which some see significant in view of the artist's imminent death.

Arthur Rackham died in 1939, on the eve of another great war and the papers that he had served so staunchly in his early years as an illustrator, afforded him only a brief mention, - world affairs being the news of the day.

CONCLUSION.

To conclude, I will try to make an answer to the question of what it is that makes Rackham's drawings different, or conversely, what is it that distinguishes his particular style.

Rackham, I believe, goes further than other illustrators in that he creates a world of his own. His drawings bring to life a new kind of reality - natural elements are keenly focused on, blown-up and presented as an unrealised almost mystical setting; and characteristic, weathered and exaggerated humanoid features are projected onto what become (and for this reason only) "real" creations.

His work though of a "fantastic" nature, has a convincing reality endowed by its having roots in the gathered elements of actuality, exploded or made diminutive and projected simultaneously giving images of a world slightly beyond the familiar world of experience.

Rackham's most powerful achievement is primarily an invisible and subtle contribution to us. For all the beautiful and exciting drawings he has left behind, his real value is to be sensed in the invisible world of the spirit. It is to be felt, not seen, and yet paradoxically, as behind all art, what is to be felt lies mainly in seeing.

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Fig. I.



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.



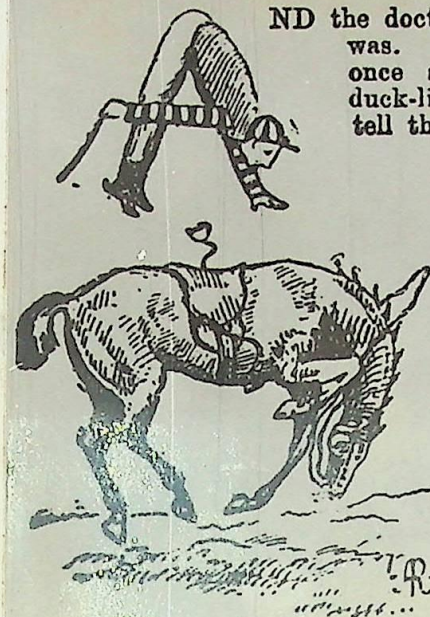
Fig. 6.

THE MUNCHAUSEN CLUB.

By the Editor of *Funny Folks*.

CHAPTER XLII.

"LODGINGS FOR TRAVELLERS."



ND the doctor, sure enough, it was. Nobody who had once seen his somewhat duck-like—for he had, to tell the truth, a most decided waddle—his habit of sticking his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and the peculiar elevation of his double chin in the air, could mistake him. Both Harry and Grumps would have known him a mile off.

He was coming along at a smart trot, and in two or three minutes would be at the lodge gates.

Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.

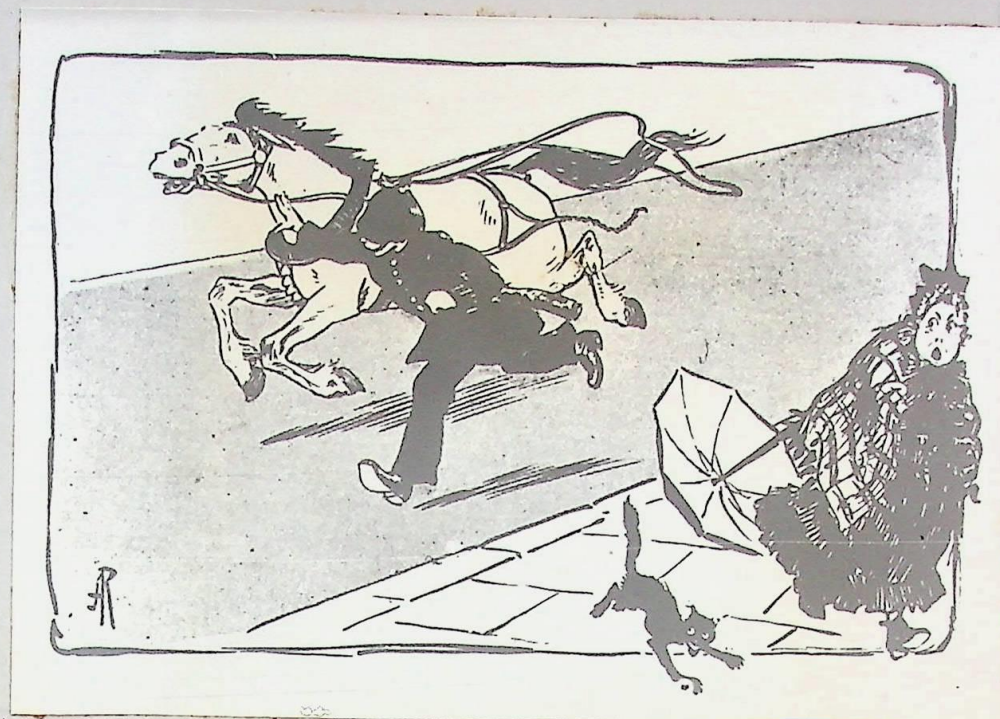


Fig.9.



Fig.10.

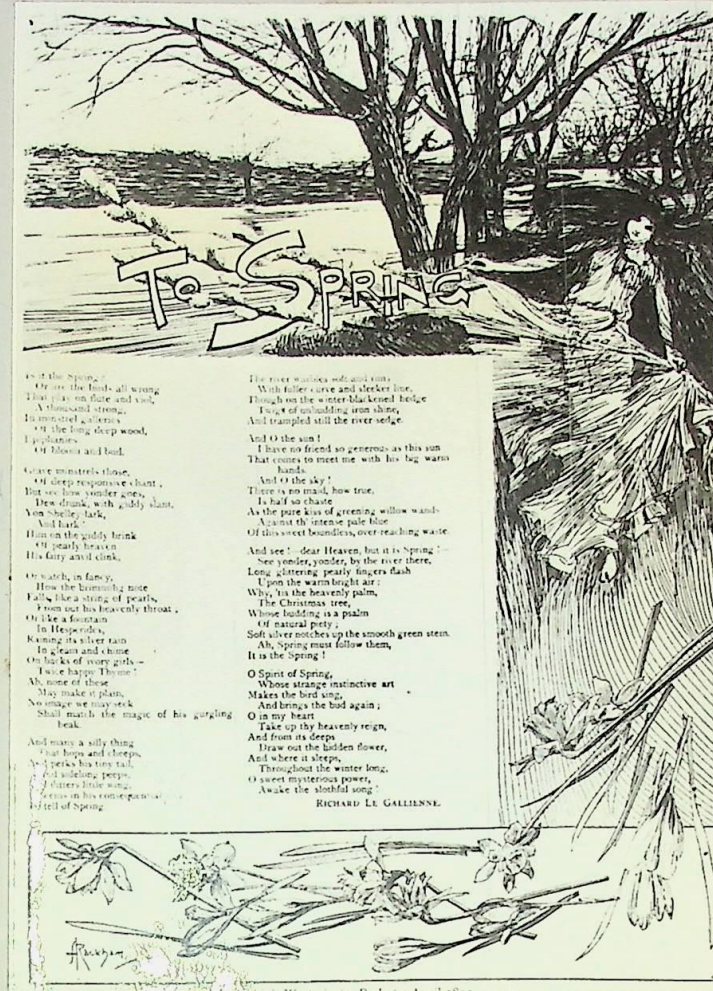


Fig.II.



Fig.I2.



Fig. I3.



Fig. I4.



WHERE THE BABY FLOWERS ARE BORN.

Fig.15.



Fig.16.



Fig. I7



Fig. I8.



Fig. 19.



Fig. 20.

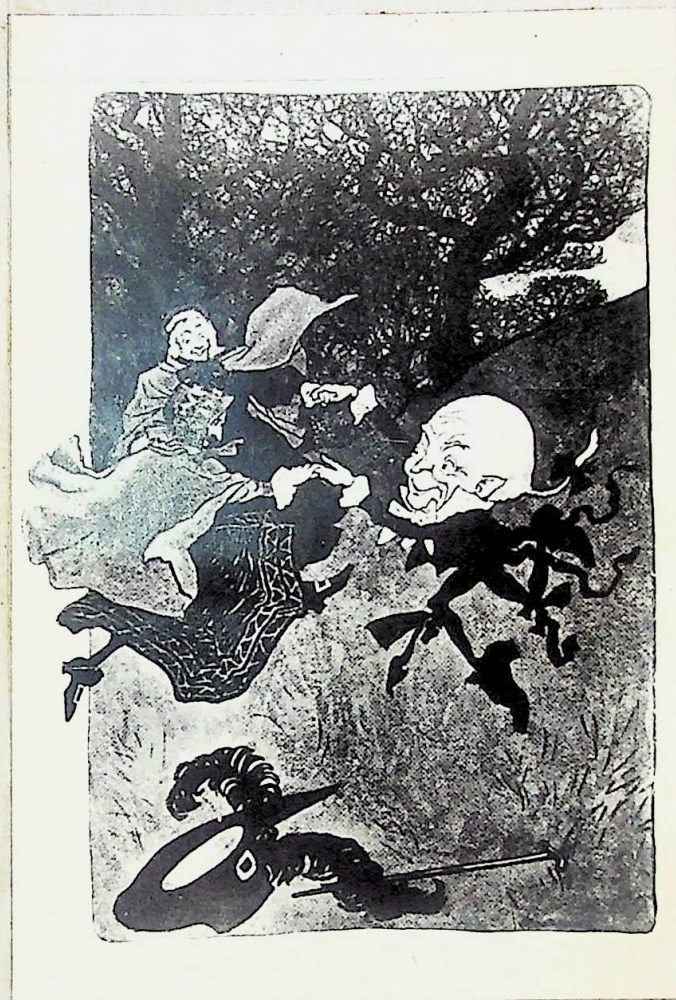


Fig. 21.



Fig. 22.

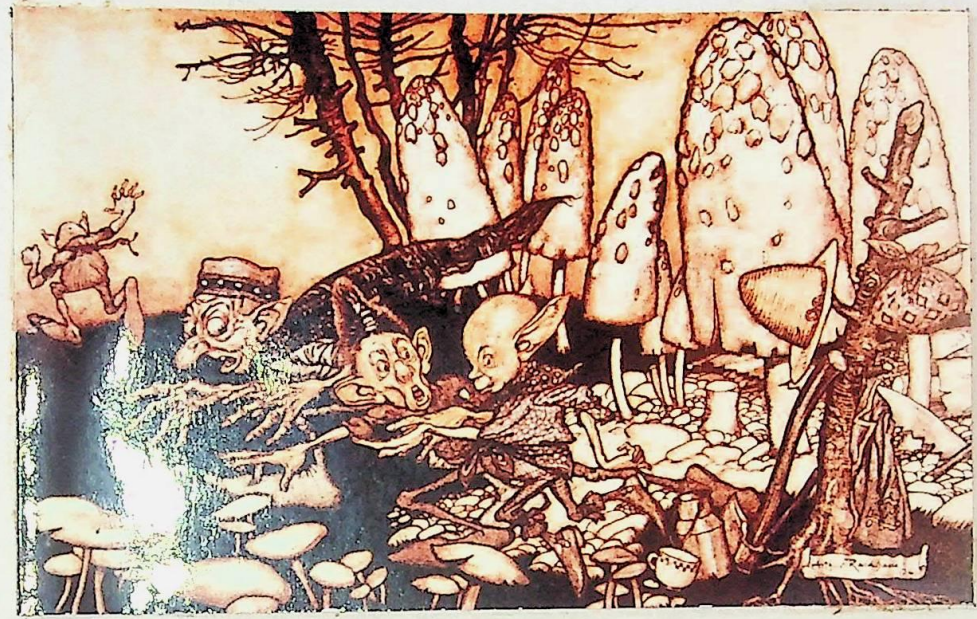


Fig.23.



Fig. 24.



Fig. 25.



Fig. 26.



Fig. 27.



Fig. 28.

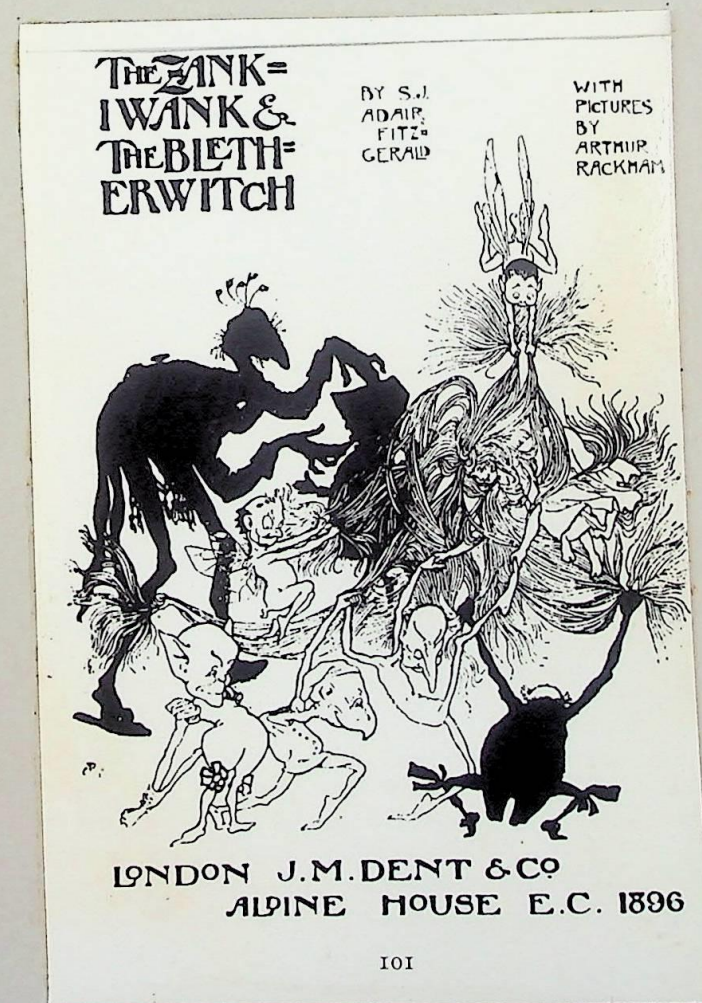


Fig. 29.



Fig. 30.



Fig. 31.



Fig. 32.



Fig. 33.



Fig. 34.



Fig. 35.



Fig. 36.



Fig. 37.



Fig. 38.



Fig. 39.



Fig.40.



Fig.41.



Fig.42.



Fig.43.



Fig.44.



Fig .45.



Fig.46.



Fig.47.

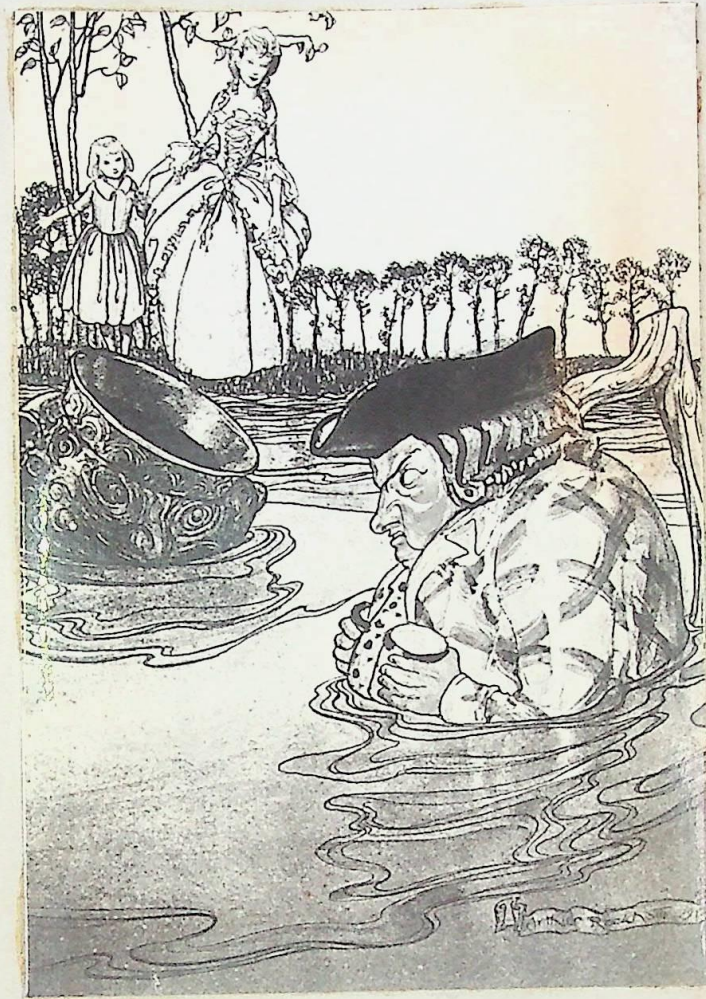


Fig.48.



Fig.49.



Fig. 50.



Fig. 51.



Fig.52.



Fig. 53.



Fig. 54.



Fig. 55.

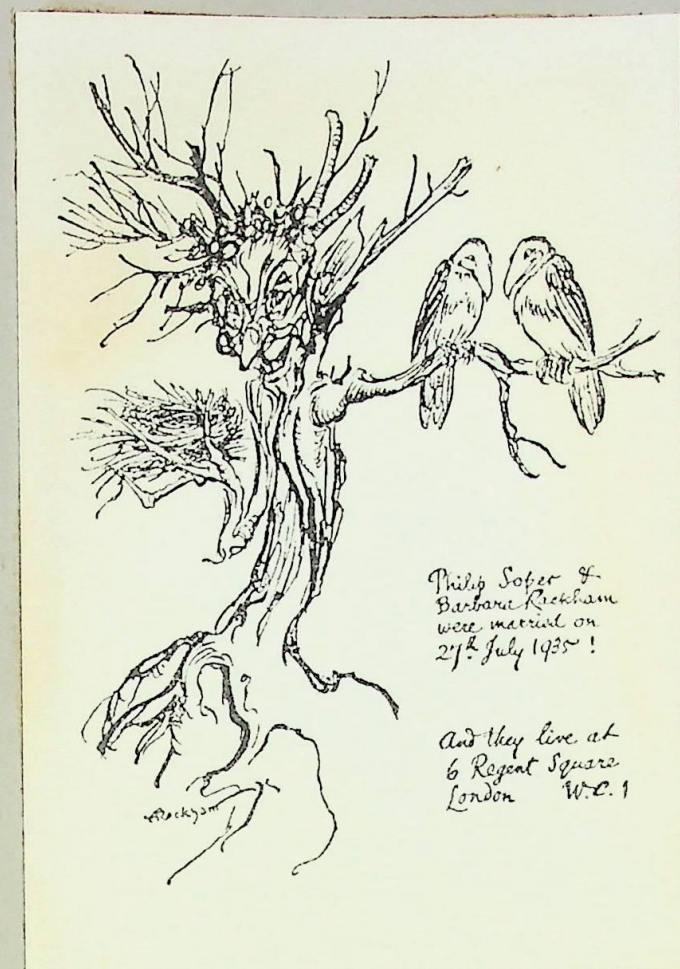


Fig. 56.



Fig. 57.



Fig. 58.



Fig. 59.

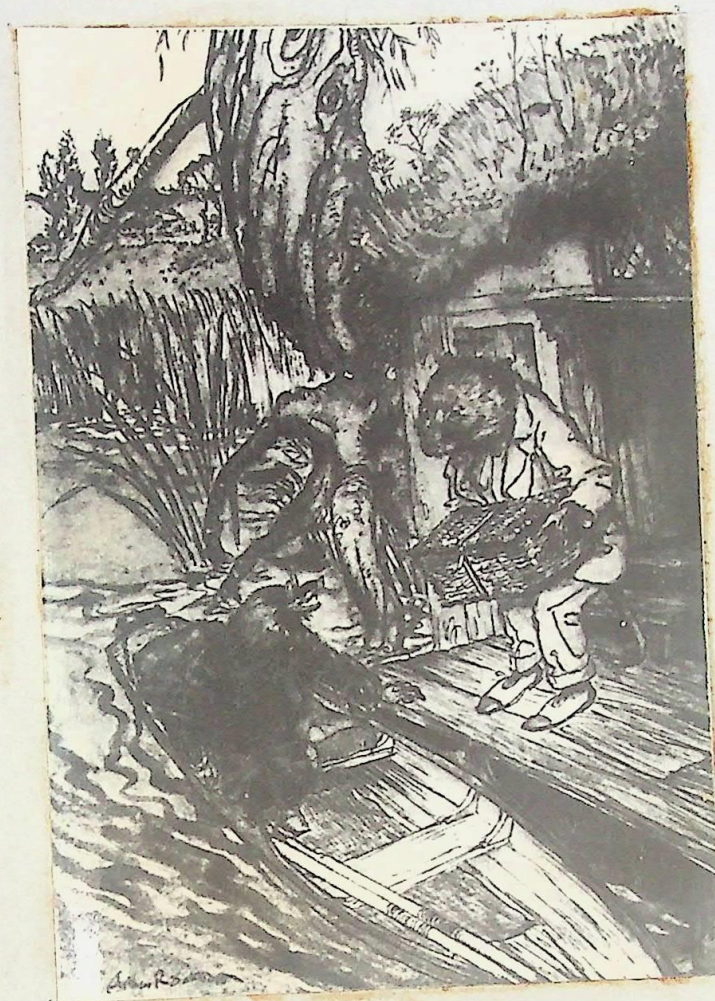


Fig. 60.