

A STUDY ON BEATRIX POTTER :
WRITER AND ILLUSTRATOR OF CHILDRENS BOOKS

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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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INTRODUCTION

"Children's books and so-called children's books hold a peculiar position. They are attractive to designers of an imaginative tendency, for in a sober and matter-of-fact age they afford perhaps the only outlet for unrestricted flights of fancy open to the modern illustrator, who likes to revolt against the despotism of facts."

Walter Crane, 1861.

The art of illustrating children's books is one which requires a talent and understanding that is unique. The artist must capture the imagination of the child. Of course detail seems to intrigue younger children. Animals have long been a favourite subject with children, as well as nursery rhymes and fairytales.

A long search through the works of artists such as Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane. Kay Nielsen, Arthur Rackham, and many others, most of whom have attracted and excited me - all for different reasons, finally led me to Beatrix Potter.

Books are a most important aspect of the child's formation and education. Beatrix Potter is ideal for very young children, even under four years of age. With the help of parents they can get to know all the Beatrix Potter stories and enter the enchanted world of the imagination seeing the beauty of everyday things. They realise that there is a relationship between characters on the opposite pages and soon begin to identify words. The books are the perfect size for the children's little hands.

There is a belief so prevalent nowadays that books for small children must be comical, simple and with little text, or in other words, dull. The Beatrix Potter books are none of these things. "They are extremely dramatic, not blinking the facts of life and birth and death."

(1) Beatrix Potter is unique in that she had the rare gifts of being able to both write and draw. She had a deep affection for children, but had none of her own. All through her books runs the toughness of real life. This is what makes them so dramatic - Peter Rabbits tenseness and uneasiness in Mr. McGregor's garden is well founded - Peter knows about rabbit pie! However, she never goes too far and this balance is another of her outstanding qualities. She always knows when to stop.

Besides being a fine writer/illustrator, Beatrix Potter was an extremely intelligent and fascinating woman, with interests in politics, science, geology and botany. She was also a fine naturalist, landscape painter and farmer. Her landscapes are in the main stream of English watercolour printing and may be seen in the Tate Gallery. She disliked critics who compared her with the great names of English painting, but in fact that is where she belongs.

In this thesis I hope to reveal some of her feelings and study her life and works thoroughly.

References:- Decorative Illustration by Walter Crane.
The Tale of Beatrix Potter by M. Lane.
When we were Young. by W. Feaver.

(1) Quoted from a Criticism by Marcus Crouch.

the author's intention in writing the book is to provide a detailed account of the life of Beatrix Potter. The book is written in a clear and concise style, and it is well illustrated with many beautiful drawings. The author has done a great deal of research, and the book is a valuable source of information for anyone interested in the life of Beatrix Potter.

Beatrix Potter was a very talented artist and writer. She was born in 1867 in London, and she spent most of her life in the Lake District. She was very fond of nature, and she wrote many books about the animals and plants that she saw in the Lake District. Her books are very popular, and they have been translated into many different languages.

In this thesis I have tried to give a detailed account of Beatrix Potter's life and work. I have looked at her childhood, her education, her career as a writer and artist, and her death. I have also looked at the impact of her work on the world of children's literature.

References:-
The Life of Beatrix Potter
Beatrix Potter: A Biography

(1) Quotes from a Criticism by...

CHAPTER 1

BEATRIX POTTER'S LIFE STORY

Chapter 1.

BEATRIX POTTER'S LIFE STORY.

Helen Beatrix Potter was born in Kensington, London, July 28, 1866, the first child to a rich Victorian upperclass couple. Mr. Potter was a wealthy leisured and skilled photographer, and was acquainted with many important men of his day. Wealthy Victorian children were traditionally seen and not heard, and Beatrix never went to formal school and was very restricted by her parents. She was taught at home by governesses who guided her sympathetically and encouraged her to draw.

She had one brother, Bertram, who also became an artist. The two were very close and Beatrix was to be influenced by him later.

The family went away twice every year to the West Country and to Scotland and later to the Lake District where Beatrix was to make her home. Bertram and herself lived for these trips and spent most of the holidays doing detailed studies of flowers, country scenes and animals. She began drawing at an early age and her love of nature soon became apparent. Some of these very early drawings and watercolours may be seen in The Art of Beatrix Potter by Anne Carroll Moore.

Just before her fifteenth birthday she received an Art student's certificate from the Science and Arts Department of the Committee of Council on Education. This certified that "in freehand drawing perspective and practical geometry and model drawing, Helen Beatrix Potter was highly recommended". This spurred her on and she kept drawing everything that interested her, including detailed studies of flowers and animals. She developed a pronounced colour sense during these years and also a gift of giving texture and life to the inanimate. Her sense of colour is clearly seen in the Peter Rabbit books which will be discussed later.

She loved to draw interiors of old houses full of beautiful furniture. She spent many hours studying the interiors of the houses of her relatives and this is how she developed her clear sense of perspective.

From 1881 to 1897, i.e. between the ages of 15 and 30, Beatrix kept a journal rather like a diary. This is now in the possession of the National Trust in England. The journal is a remarkable document and reveals her whole way of thinking and changing attitudes.

"Written in a complicated code, they have clearly, from the evidence of the fluent calligraphy, been written down at high speed. The writer must indeed have thought in this private language". (1)

The writings reveal a quiet life, restricted by her circumstances, but full of interests for the intelligent girl. She loved science, geology and botany, and also reveals an unexpected liking for machinery;- "To my mind there is scarcely a more splendid beast in the world than a large locomotive." She was an eccentric, but not unexpectedly her deep love for nature shows in the journals, so too her gift for writing is apparent:-

"There is sometimes a solitary robin
haunting the drawfed thorns, and nearly
always an uncanny hare on the lone hearth
stone".

Beatrix spent long hours in the South Kensington Museum, which is now the Victoria and Albert Museum, which her grandfather, Edmund Potter, had helped to found. She was well looked after at the museum, and it is here that she copied the lovely embroidered 18th Century clothes that appear in *The Tailor of Cloucester*.

Between the years 1887 and 1901 during trips away from London, Beatrix made some magnificent fungi studies. Many of them are rare and some even extinct, but all are accurate and precise. However, she never had them published believing that a book of that nature would be

too boring. Instead she stored them away in a portfolio.

The fungi paintings were not seen again until 1967 when they were published. They were a direct inspiration to Dr. W.P.K. Findlay's Wayside and Woodland Fungi published by Warne and Co. In all sixty-one of Beatrix's fungi paintings appeared. They are subtle and clear.

When Beatrix was seventeen, a girl named Annie Carter came to Bolton Garden to teach her German and to be her companion. They became devoted to each other and when Annie became Mrs. Moore, they remained so. The Moore's had a large family.

Almost every year there was a new baby, and Beatrix would visit the children and always bring presents. Noel, the eldest child, and Beatrix became close friends and there was a perfect sharing of interests between them. When the little boy became ill, and was bedridden for many months, Beatrix began to write him letters. They had lots of news about herself and her pet rabbit, Peter, and were full of tiny illustrations. Sometimes, if she had no news she simply wrote him a story . . .

"My dear Noel,"

I don't know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits whose names were Floppy, Moppy, Cottontail and Peter . . .

These letters to the Moore children were the origins of the characters and stories which were to become classics. They were all illustrated in tiny pen and ink drawings and were received with great joy by the children:-

"My dear Eric,

Once upon a time there was a frog called Mr. Jeremy Fisher, and he lived in a little house on the bank of a river . . ."

They were so popular that she thought she might make a book out of one of the letters to Noel. And so The Tale of Peter Rabbit was born.

"It is much more satisfactory to address a real live child; I often think that there was the success of Peter Rabbit, it was written to a real live child - not made to order."

The Tale of Peter Rabbit was published by Frederick Warne and Co. of London. It was a huge success. The Tailor of Gloucester followed, then a whole series developed, and always the writings were inseparable from their illustrations.

Later Beatrix had the idea for her miniature letters to children. They were written to the Warne and Moore children and others, and are perfectly preserved to this day. Each letter was shaped and folded to represent an envelope. It was addressed and there was a tiny stamp drawn in red crayon. Some were posted in a miniature mail bag inscribed with the letters G.P.O. which Beatrix made herself, others were sent in a toy tin post box of bright red enamel.

In the summer of 1905, Norman Warne proposed to Beatrix. They had developed a close friendship during the last four years while working on the Peter Rabbit books. Beatrix accepted, but her parents strongly objected, even though by now Beatrix was almost forty years old. This caused her much pain as she did not like to go against her parents' wishes. However, she felt her life's happiness was at stake and so she quietly proclaimed herself engaged and openly wore a ring. She was received with affection at Bedford Square by old Mrs. Warne and the family, especially Norman's nephews and nieces who were instructed to call her Aunt Bee. It was here, at 40 Bedford Square that she became deeply involved in a happy family lifestyle.

Sadly, Norman Warne fell ill rather suddenly and died a few days before Christmas of 1905. It was a terrible blow to Beatrix who really had nobody to turn to. Instead, she took a break to her favourite haven in the North Country.

During that long stay at the Lakes, Beatrix took an unexpected step of buying a farm. Her earnings,

together with a little legacy from an aunt, had accumulated into quite a considerable sum, which seemed wise to invest.

The farm was situated in the beautiful village of Sawrey, in the Lake District. It was so wild and unspoiled and simple, it was exhilarating:-

"My brother and I were born in London, but our descent, our interest, and our joy, were in the North Country."

The buying of Hill Top Farm was very significant in her life, and was more than just an investment. It was a symbol which stood for important decisions and independence. It was a breakaway from the life she had lived for forty years. She was also choosing to be a farmer as her brother, Bertram, had done. He encouraged her in this. However mature freedom was beyond the reach of unmarried daughters in those days and so there was no question of her making it her permanent home. The plan was that she put a farm servant in charge, and manage it herself from a distance, visiting it occasionally.

She did this for eight years and there is no doubt that these are her "lyric years". All her best books were written and illustrated during this time, and of the thirteen written during this period no fewer than six of the books are directly concerned with Hill Top Farm and the people of Sawrey.

Beatrix had engaged a local solicitor, Mr. William Heelis to look after the affairs of purchasing the property. His advice was invaluable as he knew all the local farmers and landowners. He continued to help her when she expanded her properties.

Mr. Heelis was a quiet man about the same age as Beatrix. It was his friendly letters which kept her in touch with Sawrey and the farm, and helped her over her loneliness and depression. They married in October 1913 and Beatrix Potter became Mrs. William Heelis.

They moved into a bungalow, Castle Farm, beside Hill Top Farm. Beatrix had felt Hill Top Farm to be too

primitive for her husband to live in. She also wanted to preserve it as it was, full of little nooks and crannys with its tiled floors and wooden furniture.

Hill Top Farm became almost like a zoo. Beatrix had cats to keep the rats away, pet mice and pigs, her rabbits of course (her favourite two being Peter and Bouncy). dogs. ducks and hens, a family of snails, all of them distinct and named "which died by sad accident". Most amazingly of all, there was a pet green frog called Punch which lived and travelled with her for more than five years!

Beatrix was now approaching fifty and the best of her creative work was done. However, she did design Christmas cards every year for her favourite charity - Invalid Children's Aid Association. They are fine examples of her sense of colour and feeling for the season. They are timeless. (ill.1) (ill.2)

William and Beatrix had thirty happy years together, and their main interest was in sheep farming. Beatrix herself was elected president of the Herdwick Association, and became one of the best and most respected sheep farmers in the district.

When she died on December 22, 1943, she left Hill Top Farm and all her land and properties to the National Trust of the United Kingdom, with the explicit directions for its arrangement and perpetual care. Beatrix's ashes were scattered in Jemina Puddle Ducks Wood beside Hill Top Farm.

"Sorrows of yesterday and today and
tomorrow - the vastness of the fells
covers all with a mantle of peace."

- References:-
- The Tale of Beatrix Potter by Margaret Lane.
 - The Art of Beatrix Potter by A. Carroll Moore.
 - A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter by L. Linder

(1) Quoted from A History of Beatrix Potter by L. Linder

BEATRIX POTTER, NATURALIST

CHAPTER 11

Beatrix Potter.

BEATRIX POTTER, NATURALIST

Beatrix Potter was a very dedicated naturalist who spent much of her life studying the habits of small animals in the Lake District. She began to study birds and insects at a very early age, and her interest in natural history grew as she became more involved in the study of the natural world. She was particularly interested in the habits of small animals, and she spent many hours observing them in their natural habitats. Her work was based on a deep knowledge of the natural world, and she was able to produce a series of illustrations that were both accurate and charming. Her most famous work, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, was published in 1902, and it was a great success. It was followed by a series of other books, including *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*, *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, and *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Pan*. These books were all very popular, and they helped to establish Beatrix Potter as one of the most famous children's authors of the early 20th century. Her work was not only a great success in the popular imagination, but it was also a valuable contribution to the study of natural history. Her illustrations were based on a deep knowledge of the natural world, and they were able to capture the essence of the animals she was studying. This made her work a valuable resource for both children and adults alike.

(1) Quoted from A History of Beatrix Potter by A. G. Sutherland. The Tale of Peter Rabbit, The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse, The Tale of Tom Kitten, The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Pan. Beatrix Potter was a very dedicated naturalist who spent much of her life studying the habits of small animals in the Lake District. She began to study birds and insects at a very early age, and her interest in natural history grew as she became more involved in the study of the natural world. She was particularly interested in the habits of small animals, and she spent many hours observing them in their natural habitats. Her work was based on a deep knowledge of the natural world, and she was able to produce a series of illustrations that were both accurate and charming. Her most famous work, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, was published in 1902, and it was a great success. It was followed by a series of other books, including *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*, *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, and *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty Pan*. These books were all very popular, and they helped to establish Beatrix Potter as one of the most famous children's authors of the early 20th century. Her work was not only a great success in the popular imagination, but it was also a valuable contribution to the study of natural history. Her illustrations were based on a deep knowledge of the natural world, and they were able to capture the essence of the animals she was studying. This made her work a valuable resource for both children and adults alike.

Chapter 11.

BEATRIX POTTER, NATURALIST.

"I do not remember a time when I did not try to invent pictures . . . amongst the wild flowers, the animals, trees and mosses and fungi . . . "

Beatrix Potter.

As a young girl Beatrix Potter was very dedicated to her work and spent long hours doing fine detailed studies of plants and mosses under microscope:-
"the fabric of a mouse's nest, the eye of a squirrel, no leaf too modest, no twig too small."

She spent many hours at Bertram's microscope and in the South Kensington Museum. studying fossils. She began to study fungi and became expert at spotting rare samples which she would seek out in Scotland and the North Country.

Beatrix began a volume of these fungi studies. Each illustration is perfectly executed with every colour and detail precise. Many are rare and some have since become extinct.

Beatrix wished to publish a book on fungi, and hoped that some micologist would welcome her as his chosen illustrator. However, the Keeper of Botany at the Kensington Museum pointed out that her paintings lacked from the point of view of scientific usefulness, a diagrammatic extension of detail which she had not realised would be necessary. She could have rectified this, but instead she changed her mind completely and felt that a book of that nature would be a total bre. So. she gave up on them.

The fungi studies were published however, but not until 1967, twenty four years after her death. Sixty-one of the paintings are used to illustrate a book by Dr.W.P.K. Findlay - Wayside and Woodland Fungi. It was published by Frederick Warne and Co. who own all the copyrights to her work.

References:-

The Art of Beatrix Potter by

A. C. Moore

A. History of the Writings of

Beatrix Potter by L. Linder

CHAPTER 111

THE PETER RABBIT BOOKS

Fitting words to pictures is perhaps an unusual way to create children's books. This is how Beatrix Potter worked. She began by drawing the animals and insects she had always wanted to learn about. Her research was prodigious - every single creature has been drawn with the features uncharicatured. They are, in spite of their velvet waistcoats and lacy dresses, anatomically correct.

"It is perhaps true to say that every artist who has clothed his animal characters in fancy dress, however unwittingly, followed Beatrix Potter's lead." (1)

The endpapers of the Peter Rabbit books illustrated with small pictures of animal characters are a delightful part of Beatrix Potter's books charm. They appeared for the first time in Squirrel Nutkin in 1903 (ill.3). The design was slightly changed for Benjamin Bunny (ill.4) in 1904, and each subsequent one changes slightly as different characters are introduced.

Some of her later books bore different styles of endpapers - a pictorial design containing a list of titles in the Peter Rabbit series and most of the animal characters. She was clearly influenced here by Randolph Caldecott.

A feature of the Peter Rabbit books is that all the illustrations have been set in a much larger space so that there is a lot of unused space surrounding them.

The story of Peter Rabbit like so many of the tales originated from letters to children.

THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT - 1900

The tale of Peter Rabbit was the first of Beatrix's books to be published. The idea for it came from one of her letters to Noel Moore. Initially she had it published privately in black and white. She presented the little book to Frederick Warne and Co. 40 Bedford Square, London. They were pleased with the design but asked if she could do coloured illustrations instead of black and white. Beatrix quickly agreed, she loved to work in colour. Her natural flare for it may be seen in all the Peter Rabbit books, especially this first one.

However, no matter how hard she tried Beatrix could never draw humans with the same feeling as animals. She could not get the farmer in the story, Mr. McGregor, to come out right. Warne's asked if she could change him. Beatrix was aware of this weakness in her drawing and was eager to improve, but she has never really succeeded - the tailor in The Tailor of Gloucester gave her the same trouble:-

"I have never learnt to draw figures . . . the rabbits will be no difficulty!" It is indeed interesting to see that one so gifted is capable of a significant failing.

Another feature of The Tale of Peter Rabbit is her use of shades of green (ill.5) which although lost in most the recent reprints are rich and vibrant in the original. They have a purity and freshness and the soft touches of orange in the geraniums and clay flower pots blend perfectly with the shades of green. Interestingly, the simplified backgrounds of Peter Rabbit are far less developed than those of later books. (ill.6.)

Beatrix's perfection of perspective drawing may be seen in Peter Rabbit. Rather cleverly she brings the reader right down to the scale of the animals. Children, especially, can relate to this.

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THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - 1902

"I do not remember a time when I did not try to invent pictures and make fairytales - amongst the wild flowers, the animals, trees and mosses and fungi - all the thousand common objects of the country-side; that pleasant unchanging world of realism and romance, which for us in our northern clime is stiffened by hard weather, a tough ancestry, and the strength that comes from the hills."

Beatrix Potter.

The Tailor of Gloucester is the best loved of the Peter Rabbit books. Certainly, it was one of Beatrix's favourites. It is a strange story about a tailor who left a waistcoat in his shop one Saturday which was cut out but not made up. When he returned the following Monday he found it finished except for one button-hole, with a little scrap of paper pinned to the waistcoat bearing the words - "no more twist!" (ill. 6)

Beatrix heard the story during one of her visits to her cousin Caroline Hutton of Harescombe Grange, Gloucester. Her cousin was told it by a friend, who had it first-hand from the tailor. (Secretly, his two assistants had finished it for him, but he could not figure it out. He put the waistcoat in his window with a sign: "Come to Prichard where the waistcoats are made at night by the fairies." The story intrigued Beatrix and she immediately decided to make a book about it, but she would change the fairies to mice.

She went to Gloucester to sketch the streets and buildings with the Cathedral in the background. She also studied interiors for the book and posed a little boy in a crosslegged position of a tailor, and slumping in a chair in front of a fire. She spent many hours in the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert) copying the beautifully embroidered 18th century clothes which appear in the book. Every stitch may be identified in her illustrations, and the textures too are perfect. (ill.7)

Beatrix also got some first-hand information about the inside of a tailor's workshop. One day she pulled a button off her coat outside a tailor's shop in Chelsea, and went inside. While he was repairing she sketched the surroundings, his odds and ends and tools.

The illustrations in The Tailor of Gloucester are exceptional. They are all bright and gay especially the scenes of the mice working by candlelight (ill. 8). Again we are brought down to the scale of a mouse, who, beside a delicate bone china cup (ill. 9) is equally tiny and frail. It is so detailed that one may identify the willow-pattern on the china. (ill. 10)

Beatrix finished the book by December, 1901. She presented it in manuscript form to Freda Moore for Christmas with an inscription on the front. (ill. 11)

Peter Rabbit had just been published by Warne and Co. and so she felt that they wouldn't want to print another so soon. She decided to print her own private edition. It was printed by Strangeways and Sons - and the colour blocks were made by Hentschel. Warnes eventually published it in 1903.

Mr. Prichard died in 1934 and his tombstone bears the inscription: "The Tailor of Gloucester" which was a tribute from the people of Gloucester and an honour to Beatrix Potter

THE TALE OF SQUIRREL NUTKIN - 1903

In 1897, Beatrix wrote to Noel Moore, a picture letter telling him: "There is an American story that squirrels go down the rivers on little rafts using their tails for sails . . . "

The story is about red squirrels which are rare nowadays. The squirrel's visit old Mister Brown Owl's Island every autumn to build up their food supply for the long winter.

Beatrix bought a squirrel, called him Nutkin, and spent the summer of 1901 sketching him. (ill.12). She also spent many hours studying the woods and lakes at St. Herbert's. (ill. 13) Old Brown Owl was drawn at London Zoo. Somehow though, Beatrix could not get him right. Finally, she turned to her brother, Bertram, for help. In early days he had a pet owl of which Beatrix once said: "The owl hoots all night. If he has a dead mouse, he bites his head off, then shouts as loud as he can." (ill. 14) Owl Island is in reality St. Herbert's. Throughout the book there is a deep feeling for season - "without the conventional russet leaves, it is clearly autumn." - Marcus Crouch. (ill.15)

Shades of green which are very refreshing are extensively used - grey-greens of firecones are contrasted with dark greens of nettles and dock leaves. (ill.16)

The book was dedicated to Nora Moore. Beatrix had The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin, "a story for Nora", inscribed inside the cover. Once again she had a private edition published before Warne's publication began. It was on sale in June 1903 and was an immediate success. By the September the same year Beatrix was beginning to receive letters of admiration from children.

THE TALE OF BENJAMIN BUNNY - 1904

This is a continuation of the adventures of Peter Rabbit, now joined by his cousin Benjamin. The two set out to recover Peter's clothes from Mr. McGregor's garden having many adventures on the way.

The backgrounds were done in Fawe Park near Keswick, including the detailed studies of lettuces, broad beans and others which appear in the book - like Peter, Benjamin was in reality one of Beatrix's pets known affectionately as "Bounce".

This particular book contains some very fine pen and ink and watercolours. The story also is very witty and humorous. Children, like this story because they can identify Peter and so they are already familiar with the story.

The Tale of Benjamin Bunny and the Tale of Two Bad Mice were published simultaneously in 1904 by Frederick Warne and Co.

THE TALE OF MRS. TWIGGY-WINKLE - 1905

There are two principal weaknesses in this story - the plot is too thin and Lucie the little girl, is not well enough drawn. The mountain setting is beautifully portrayed, with splendid views above Littleton.

Mrs. Twiggy-Winkle is a hedgehog. Her kitchen illustrates Beatrix Potter's skill in creating atmosphere by a multitude of detail.

A feature of the book, that children love is a link with previous books. When Mrs. Twiggy-Winkle complains that Mrs. Rabbit's red Handkerchief smells of onion, everyone who has read Benjamin Bunny knows why.

THE TALE OF MR. JEREMY FISHER - 1906

Mr. Jeremy Fisher, the frog, is a character with lots of charm, and is portrayed very vividly in the illustrations. (ill.17) In this story above all the others, Beatrix fantastically shows the scale of the world of small creatures. Mr. Jeremy Fisher inhabits his own world, with his own charming waterlogged house, (ill. 18) his friends, his appetite. (ill. 19) Everything is in scale. (ill. 20) Then comes disaster. He is swallowed by a trout! (ill. 21) All ends well however and Mr. Fisher's fishing adventure ends at home with a tea party for his friends - Sir Isaac Newton and Mr. Alderman Ptolemy Fortoise! (ill.22)

The drawing is very fine and although the predominating tone is pale green it is no way boring, on the contrary, it is full of surprises and enchantment. (ill. 23) And the clothes! - Beatrix Potter had instinct when it came to clothing her characters. Mr. Jeremy Fisher is dressed as the perfect gentleman. (ill. 24)

Beatrix herself liked this book very much " . . . it was a nice change from all those mice and rabbits, it was a total new world of beauty and humour and very different creatures". It is very much on the style of "The Wind in the Willows" and is one of my personal favourites.

JEMIMA PUDDLE DUCK - 1908

Jemima Puddle Duck was a real inhabitant of Hill Top Farm. This is a typical Red-Riding-Hood-like adventure story.

Artistically many of the drawings are not satisfactory and this includes the collie "Kep". He, and the other farm dogs stand aside from other characters. It is significant that except for John Joiner and Pickles, none of the dogs wear clothing. They are workers on the farm and nothing more.

This is an open air story, and the landscape drawing is of Beatrix's best, particularly the scenes when Jemima sets off over the hill to find a safe place for her nest. These parts of the farm land have come to be known as "Jemima Puddle Ducks Wood".

Another outstanding quality of this book are the flower studies which are beautifully observed. Blue-bells and foxgloves are just some of the flowers which appear.

Of course the other character, Mr. Fox has made his home among the foxgloves, where else!

Beatrix Potter's ashes were scattered in Jemima Puddle Ducks Wood:-

"Conveying truth by means of fantasy is one
of the highest functions of art"

Margaret Lane.

Only four books were published after Beatrix's marriage, but only one, Johnny Town-Mouse (1918) can be compared in style to her earlier work.

In 1927 an American publisher paid a flying visit to Sawrey, requesting Beatrix to write a new book. Beatrix accepted, however it was her wish that the book be confined to America. She felt after all, that it was disloyal to Warnes, her English publishers.

And so The Fairy Caravan came to being. Much of the Fairy Caravan had been written years previously and was stored away in drawers. The farm poultry play an important part in this book.

The Fairy Caravan is about a little troupe of animals who travel (invisible to human beings) in the neighbourhood of Sawrey, entertaining other animals in farmyards and fields. When they camp they spend hours storytelling.

The book is lengthy but children are able to read single complete stories into them. The children turn over the pages looking up the references to animal friends again and again. Children love the book, however Beatrix herself wrote:-

"Through many changing seasons, these tales have walked and talked with me. They were not meant for printing I send them on the insistence of friends beyond the sea."



(5) Peter Rabbit.



(1) Christmas Card Design (i).



(2) Christmas Card Design (ii)



Endpaper: Squirrel Nutkin.



4. Endpaper: Benjamin Bunny.

The Tailor of Gloucester

Never were seen such ruffles, or
such embroidered cuffs and lappets!
But his button-holes were the greatest
triumph of it all.

The stitches of those button-holes
were so neat—*so* neat—I wonder how
they could be stitched by an old man
in spectacles, with crooked old fingers,
and a tailor's thimble.

The stitches of those button-holes
were so small—*so* small—they looked
as if they had been made by little
mice!

THE END

THE-BRITISH MUSEUM

Flopsy Bunnies

Scale - Pg. 36

Flopsy Bunnies

Circus, Fresh, sublee.

*Page 71 Scale
62*

(9/16)

THE TALE OF THE FLOPSY BUNNIES, 1909
Beatrix Potter

Illustration for the cover; pen and ink; watercolour

75mm x 139mm.

1946-11-21-1

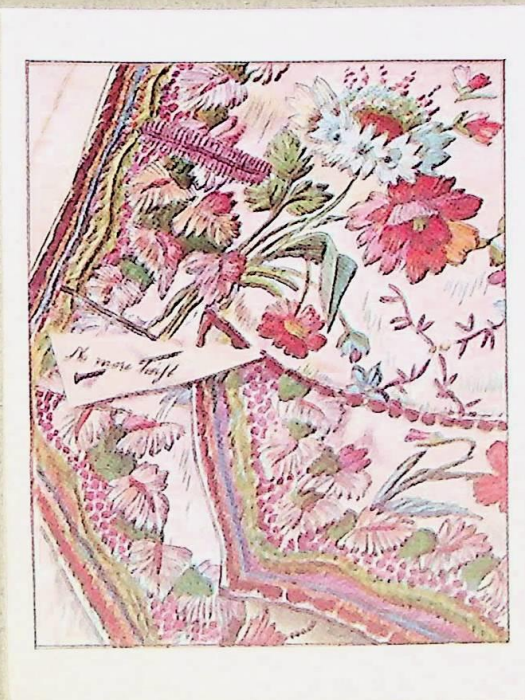
© 1975, The Trustees of the British Museum BM/C/PD/108

Reproduced by kind permission of
Frederick Warne and Co. Ltd.

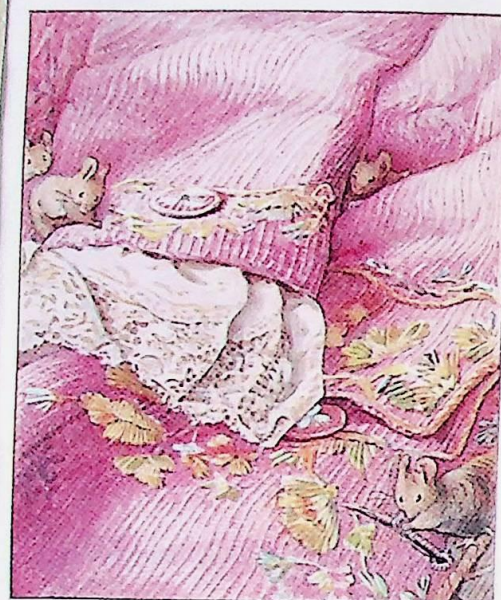
Printed by Henry Stone & Son (Printers) Ltd., Banbury, England



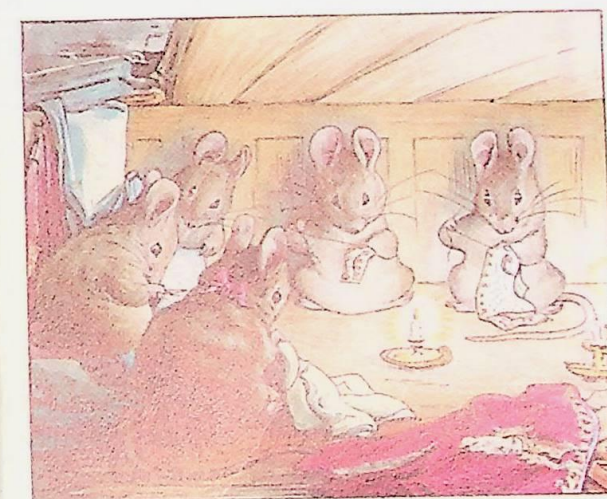
(5a) Simplified Backgrounds.



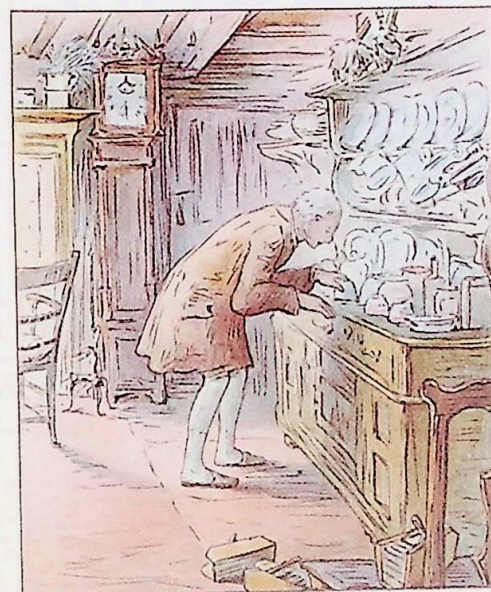
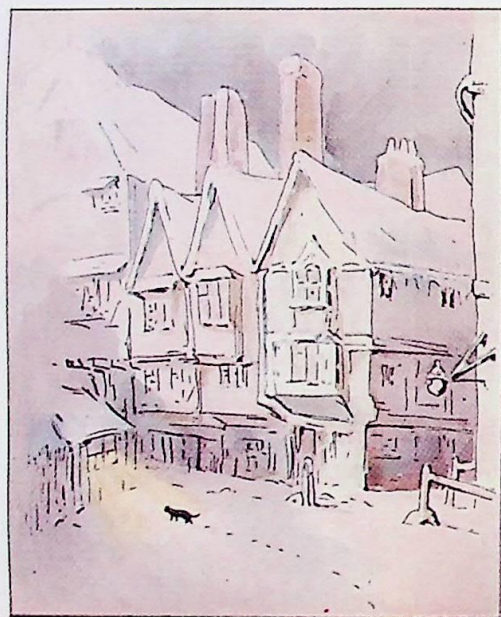
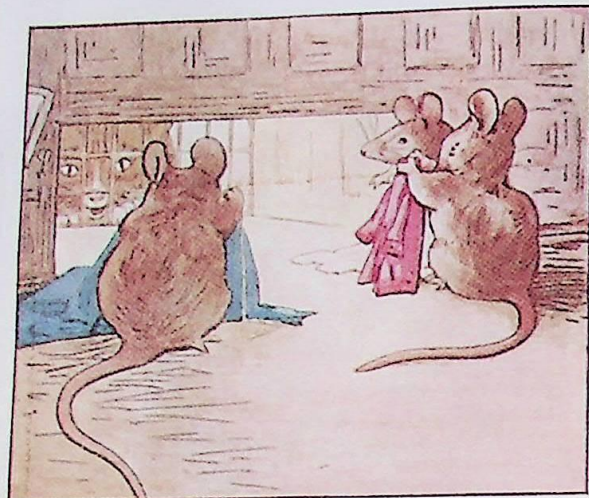
(6) 'No More Twist'.

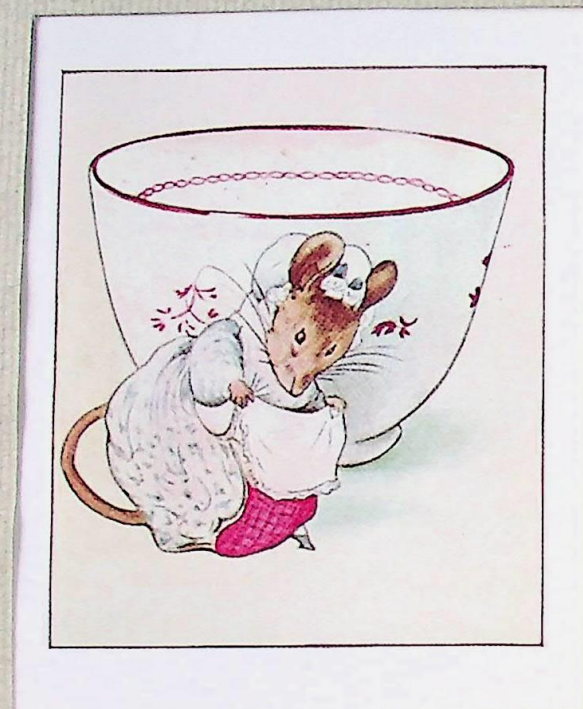


7. Embroidery.



8. Mice by Candlelight.

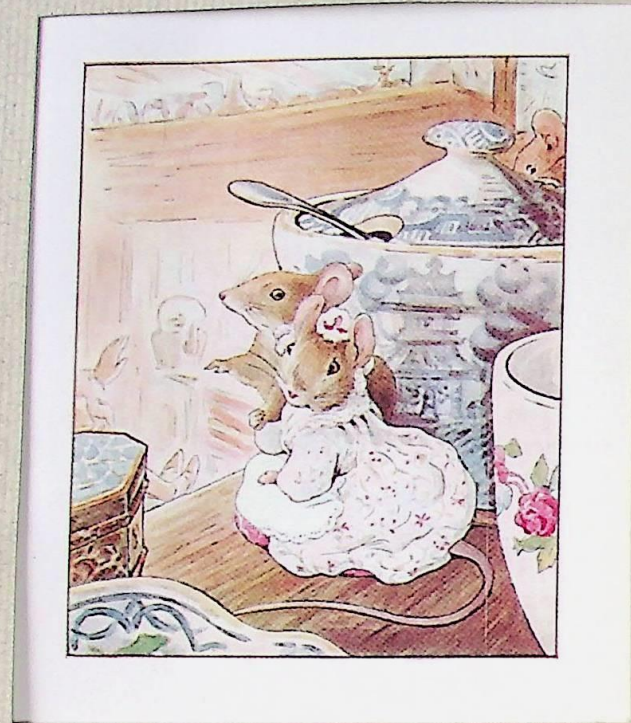




9. China Cups and Mice (i)



9. China Cups and Mice (ii)



MY DEAR FRED A,

Because you are fond of fairy-
tales, and have been ill, I have
made you a story all for yourself
—a new one that nobody has read
before.

And the queerest thing about it
is—that I heard it in Gloucester-
shire, and that it is true—at least
about the tailor, the waistcoat, and the

“No more twist!”

Christmas, 1901

10. Willow Pattern.

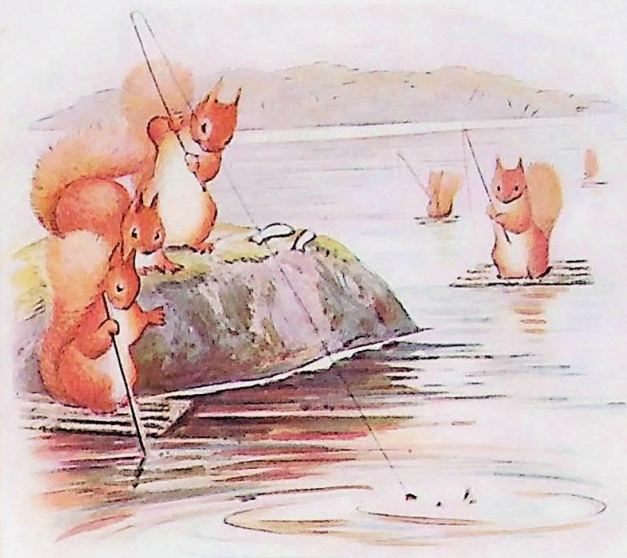
11. Inscription.

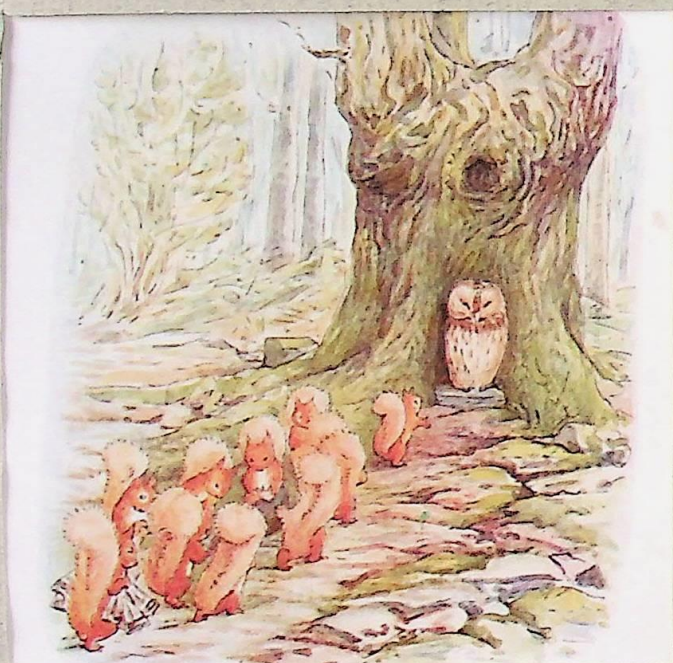
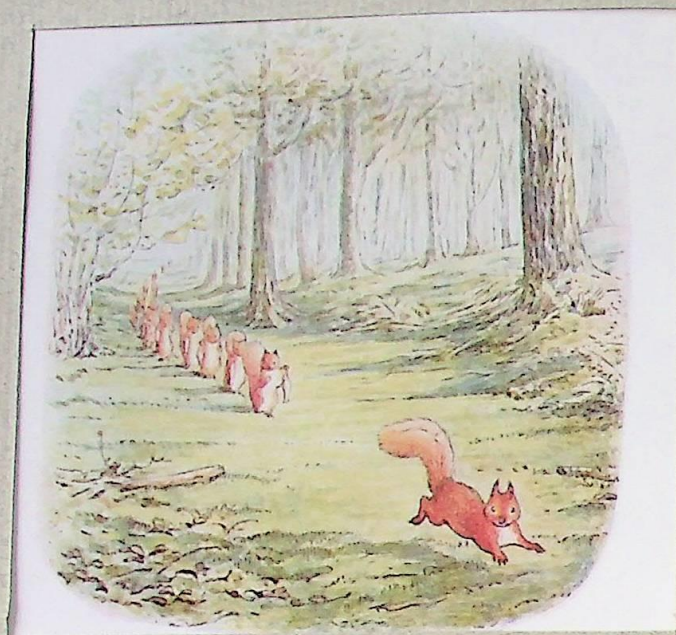


12. Squirrel Nutkin (i+ii).

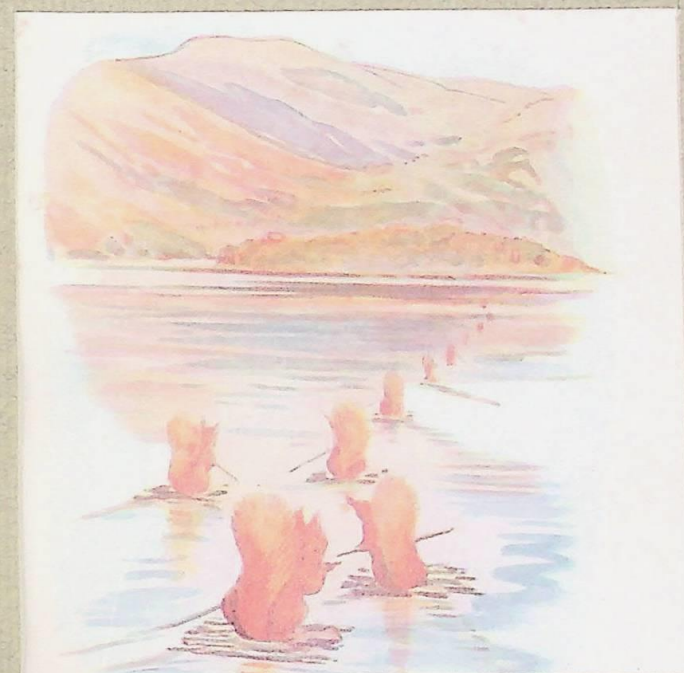
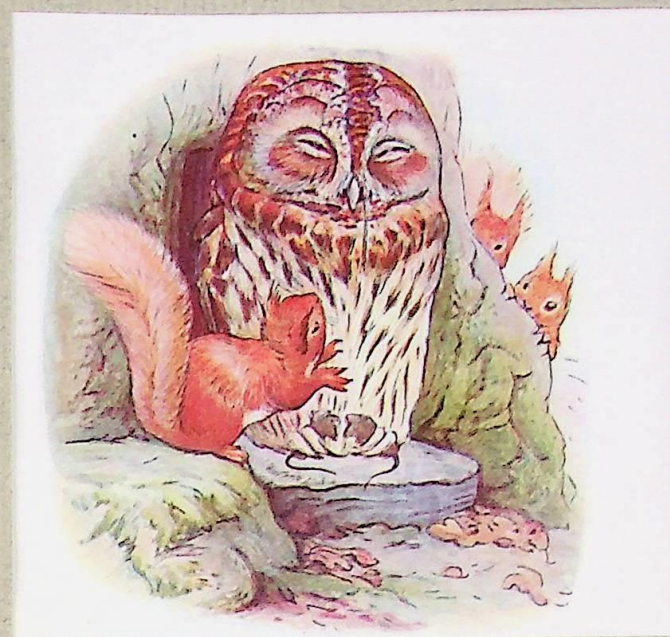


ADHESIVE
PEEL BACKIN
ADHESIVE
PEEL BACKIN
ADHESIVE





13. St. Herberts Wood (i+ii)



14. Mr. Brown Owl. 15. Autumn.

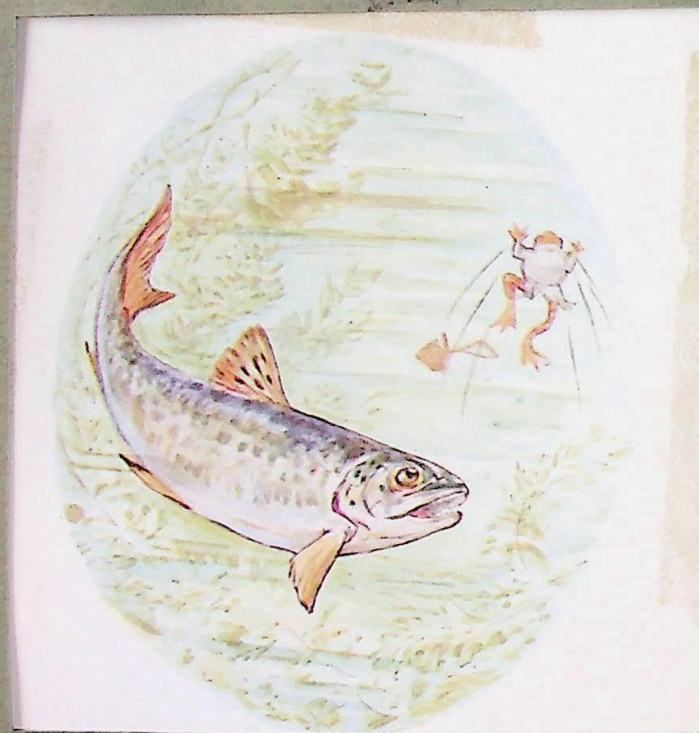


16. Firecones. 17. Mr. J. Fisher.

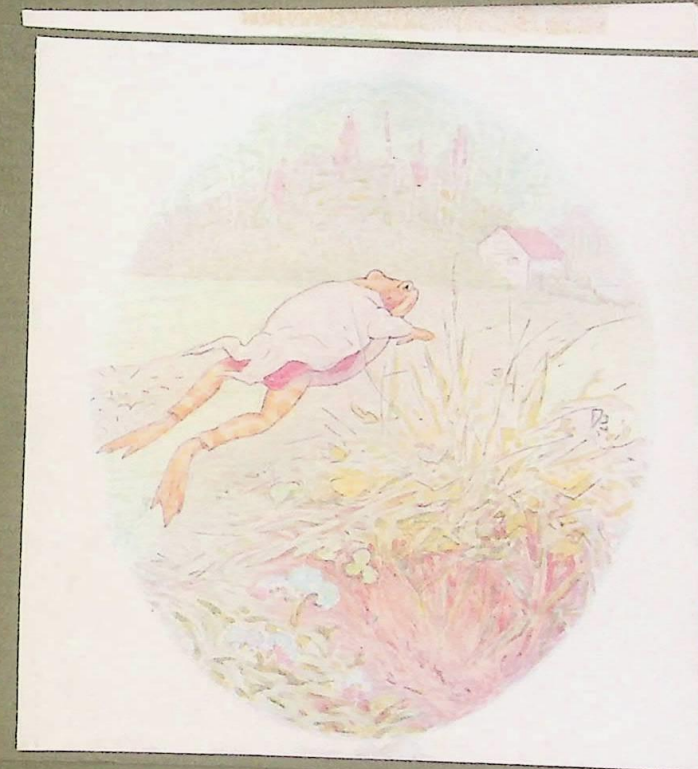


18. Mr. Fisher's House. 19. Lunching





20. Mr. Fishers World. 21. Disaster!



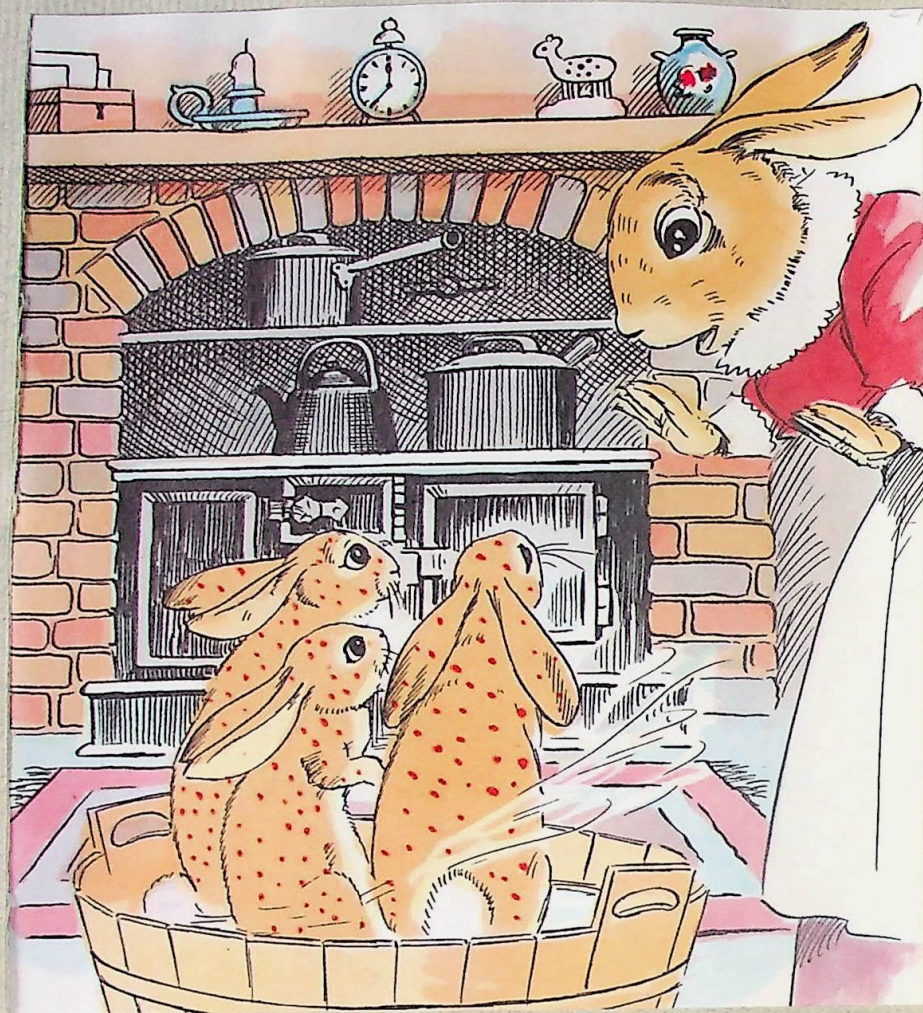
22. Tea-Party 23. Pale Tones 24. MR. Fishers Clothes.



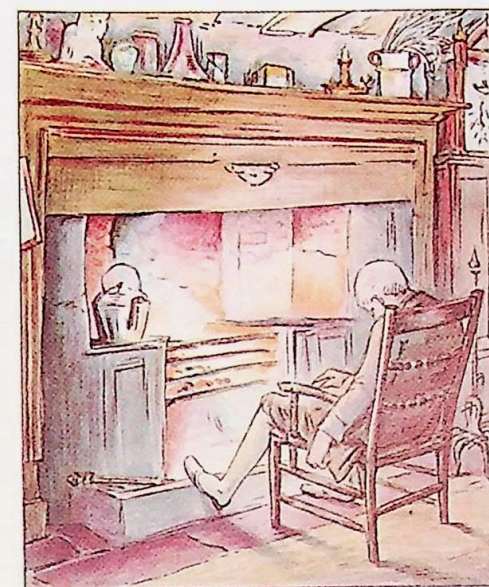
25. Ernest Owl .



26. Mr. Brown Owl .



27. Blackberry Farm Rabbits.



28. Mr. Prichard.

THE PRINTING OF THE PETER RABBIT SERIES.

Until about the end of the nineteenth century, a drawing intended for reproduction had to be engraved or etched by hand on the surface from which the print was to be made. The artist supplied the engraver with his drawing. In making the block the engraver then invariably tended to clarify or 'improve' on the original. This way substantial alterations on the originals were often made.

The impressions while wet were laid face down on plain blocks, then the press, so that the wet impression was "set off" on the plain blocks, and used one for a red printing, the other for a blue printing, the red being engraved in graduation to get lighter tints such as faces, hands, etc. the blue blocks being engraved to get the best result of texture, patterns or sky, crossing the blue over the red to get good effects of light and shade. There was generally only three paintings used - black, blue and red, or black, green and red. (1)

The first steps towards mechanical reproduction came in 1870 when it became possible to transfer the drawing onto the block photographically. This became known as "process". Artists responded immediately to "process" as it gave exact reproductions which were much more precise than engravings. Beatrix Potter's early black and white originals were printed in this fashion. Many other artists had used the same process because it gave them much more freedom of expression, people like Aubrey Beardsley, Will Heath Robinson, Caldecott and others.

The technicalities of colour half-tones printing were mastered in the 1890's. However, the technique did not become widely used until early in the twentieth century. Of course the introduction of photomechanical reproduction led to a boom in the production of illustrated books and magazines.

In the early twentieth century while Frederick Warne and Co. were trying to influence Beatrix Potter about colour etc. she was having her own private series printed the "new way" i. e. in the recently introduced three-colour



29. Tailor of Gloucester.

process, and Hentschel Printers Ltd. of 182 Fleet Street had made five hundred impressions.

Beatrix also had an avid interest in binding of the books. Most of her books were issued in two separate editions - in a normal binding and a de luxe binding. Warnes suggested the use of brocade for the de luxe edition. Her grandfather's firm, Edward Potter & Co. of Dinting Vale, Manchester, were one of the largest calico printers in Europe. Beatrix was sure they would have suitable patterns of brocade for her book covers. The books were eventually bound in a pretty flowered lavender, chintz which she chose after long consultation with Warnes.

(1) Taken from a note by Rodney Engen.

It was not practical to print directly onto the material so the title and author's name were printed in gold lettering on small panels of white vellum. There was no lettering on the spine of this deluxe edition. First editions carry the Warne imprint and are dated on their title pages as well as having a copyright inscription on the verse. The first privately printed issues fetch anything up to £120 while the rest of her titles vary from £5 - £25.

References: Fantasy by Brigid Peppin

A History of the Writings of
Beatrix Potter by L. Linder

Beatrix Potter by Marcus Crouch

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 of Dinning Lane, Manchester, were one of the largest
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 with Warner.

(1) Taken from a note by Rodney Croom.

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- References:
- Fantasy by Bridgid Leppin
 - A History of the Writings of
Beatrix Potter by L. Lindor
 - Beatrix Potter by Marcus Croom

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCING HER CONTEMPORARIES

By the late 1890s, Beatrix Potter was well known as a
 writer of children's books. Her first book, *The Tale of
 Peter Rabbit*, had been published in 1902 and was a
 great success. It was followed by *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse*
 in 1903, *The Tale of Tom Kitten* in 1904, and *The Tale of
 Jemima Puddle-duck* in 1905. These four books were
 all published by the same publisher, George Allen & Unwin,
 and they were all very successful. Beatrix Potter was
 now a well-known author and her books were being
 read by children all over the world.

INTRODUCING HER CONTEMPORARIES

Beatrix Potter was not alone in writing children's
 books. There were many other writers who were
 writing books for children at the same time. Some
 of these writers were well-known authors, and some
 were unknown. But all of them were writing books
 that were loved by children. Beatrix Potter was
 one of the best of these writers. Her books were
 simple and easy to read, and they were full of
 interesting stories. Children loved to read her
 books, and they still love to read them today.

Beatrix Potter was a very successful writer of
 children's books. Her books were loved by children
 all over the world. She was a very good writer,
 and her books were very interesting. Children
 loved to read her books, and they still love to
 read them today. Beatrix Potter was a very
 successful writer of children's books, and her
 books were loved by children all over the world.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCING HER CONTEMPORARIES

By the 1890's illustrative art had been established long enough so that there was a sound tradition built up. The illustrated journals and books which had begun in the early years of the Victorian period had multiplied in number tremendously. The book publishers had responded to this demand for illustrated literature, not least the Frederick Warne Book Publishing Company who published all Beatrix Potter's books.

Beatrix Potter was fortunate to come from a time when publishers were eager to accept her work. So too were her contemporaries - people like Kate Greenaway, notorious for her Nursery Rhymes and Gamesbooks, William and Charles Heath-Robinson, also famous for their nursery rhymes and fantasy illustrations. Edward Lear was another famous name to arise during this period. He was a draughtsman, illustrator and watercolourist as well as nonsense-writer. He is the author of such classics as The Owl and the Pussy-Cat and The Dong with a Luminous Nose. He also had a career of "topographical landscape painter". This resulted in his travelling all over the world, and some of his landscapes are spectacular. He had the same emphatic love for nature as Beatrix Potter and he too spent many hours painting flower and plant studies.

Randolph Caldecott who is perhaps the father of all these illustrators was without doubt Beatrix Potter's greatest influence. Working at the height of Victorian Aesthetism and Industrialisation, he too turned to nature for inspiration. He had a skill for drawing and a sense for colour which has rarely been surpassed. He was admired by people like Gauguin and Van Gogh.

As a child, Beatrix had possessed a number of books by Randolph Caldecott, which undoubtedly influenced her work. Her father, Rupert Potter was a keen collector of Caldecott's originals and apparently possessed about thirty.

"Randolph Caldecott had a rare humour which saw all the folly and vanity of man, yet portrayed them with frankness and love".

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCING NEW CONTEMPORARIES

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Randolph Caldecott who is perhaps the father of all these illustrators was without doubt Beatrix Potter's greatest influence. Working at the height of Victorian aestheticism and industrialism, he too turned to nature for inspiration. He had a skill for drawing and a sense for colour which has rarely been surpassed. He was admired by people like Gauguin and Van Gogh. As a child, Beatrix had possessed a number of books by Randolph Caldecott, which undoubtedly influenced her work. Her father, Rupert Potter was a keen collector of Caldecott's originals and apparently possessed about thirty.

"Randolph Caldecott had a rare humor which saw all
the folly and vanity of man, yet portrayed them with
tenderness and love."

CHAPTER V

BEATRIX POTTER TODAY

"My father has just bought a squirrel in the
Burlington Arcade. It was sold as 'Walter'.
It is prettier than the rabbits, but evidently
the same name. I wonder how soon we may expect
to see the book!"

However, today there are mice, plates and other nursery
crochery and a series of china figures (produced also
by John Doulton of London). The china figures are
the best of all interpretations of the characters in
three dimensions. There are also big new puzzles, Peter
Rabbit's racing game, painting books.

The most successful efforts at Beatrix Potter reproductions
are the wallpapers, fabrics and fabrics. Beatrix herself
said "The idea of these covers with only Peter
Rabbit is splendid."

Still one more to mention is the book of verse and life
which is by no means the original one
never intended.

CHAPTER V

BEATRIX POTTER TODAY

Beatrix Potter today is an industry. Her books have been translated into several languages. The first translation took place in 1911, Peter Rabbit was translated into French by a lady Mlle. Victorine Ballou. It has since been translated into Italian, German, Spanish, Welsh and brail.

However, by 1911 Peter Rabbit had made an appearance in a different medium. Beatrix made a Peter Rabbit doll for one of the Warne children. The doll gave so much pleasure that she thought of having it manufactured. She took her idea to a number of London factories but none could afford to start new schemes as the economic state was terrible. The British toy trade had been killed by the import of huge quantities of toys from Germany. The first to arrive were Peter Rabbit dolls followed by cheaply made but still recognisable Squirrel Nutkins. Beatrix wrote:

"My father has just bought a squirrel in the Burlington Arcade, it was sold as 'Nutkin'. It is prettier than the rabbits, but evidently the same make - I wonder how soon we may expect to see the mice!"

However, today there are mugs, plates and other nursery crockery and a series of china figures (produced since 1948 by John Beswick of London). The china figures are the best of all interpretations of the characters in three dimension. There are also jig-saw puzzles, Peter Rabbit racing games, painting books.

The most successful efforts at Beatrix Potter reproduction are the wallpapers, freizes and fabrics. Beatrix herself said "The idea of rooms covered with badly drawn Peter Rabbits is appalling."

Most of them lose all the delicacy of tones and life besides being enlarged for which the originals were never intended.

In 1935, Christopher Fleming published two books of Peter Rabbit music. They are specially written for young performers. There is some direct reference to the Peter Rabbit books, most successfully in the "pit-pat" paddle pat" of the Puddle Ducks goose-step and Mr. Jeremy Fisher is well interpreted. The music is prompted by rather than illustrative of the stories.

The books have also been adapted for the stage. In 1923 Beatrix Potter received a rough draft of a play. It was an adaptation for the stage of her book *The Tailor of Gloucester*. It was sent to her by Jean Sterling Mackinlay. She asked permission to publish it and use it for a children's performance which ran for Christmas. The play was a great success. A more recent enterprise was the recording by Vivien Leigh of the tales for a gramophone record company. Tales of Beatrix Potter.

Undoubtedly the highest tribute paid to Beatrix Potter is this remarkable E.M.I. film production of her tales. "Tales of Beatrix Potter has filled cinemas all over the world and will surely remain a classic for many years to come." - Rumer Goddin.

The film was a ballet which was produced by Richard Goodwin. One of the advantages they discovered was that Beatrix's Animals, truthful in their animal proportions also have the proportions of a child. The size of an adult's head goes seven times into the body, a child's only goes five and a half. This is true of the characters in the ballet which the Goodwins caught and is why children love them.

Reggie Mills, the Director, was in sympathy with Beatrix Potter's delicate colouring - often the palest pastels, completely new in films for children. This caused many problems during the film making as it was extremely difficult to light.

The next difficulty was in the mask-making which took three stages (i) the sculpting, (ii) the casting, (plaster-of-paris). "The head was put in a box with a thin sheet of unexpandable polystyrene stretched over it and warmed by overhead radiators." When softened enough by the heat the sheet was drawn down by vacuum pumps so that semi-melted,

it fitted every wrinkle and crease". When it had cooled and hardened it could be cut down the centre in two halves, which were rejoined by melting and sealing the edges. Breathing holes were then made. These had to be big enough for the dancer to see through as the masks were far above his head. But the holes had to be small enough not to be seen when the mask would be covered in hair, which was the next and most difficult stage. (iii) "The 'head' was smeared with glue, and placed on a magnetic rod, a gauze above it spread with short hair which plummeted down, magnetically drawn when the current was switched on. As every hair has positive as well as negative end, it dropped upright and adhered to the masks."

Eyes had to be lustrous - " . . . a dull surface would suggest defects or blindness." Some of the characters were very difficult to adapt. Mr. Jeremy Fisher was without doubt the easiest character to portray. It was as if he had been illustrated with ballet in mind. Beatrix Potter had given him dainty slippers similar to ballet shoes, and depicted him in ballet like-positions.

The film was a tremendous success. However, there are many imitators who have with varying degrees of lack of success followed the physical pattern of the Peter Rabbit books without capturing the spirit of the originals. One example of this is the Blackberry Farm books series, written by Jane Pilgrim and illustrated by F. Stocks May.

Blackberry Farm books are a series of animal adventure books like the Peter Rabbit series with titles such as Lucy Mouse Keeps a Secret, Mrs. Nibble, Mr. Mole Takes Charge etc. They too are small in size and have the same type lay-out as the Peter Rabbit books. However, they are produced far more cheaply and lack the subtlety of the Peter Rabbit series. The illustrations are very badly done and are virtually ugly in comparison with the delicate style of Beatrix Potter, e.g. Ernest Owl of the Blackberry Farms series (ill. 25) and Mr. Brown Owl in Squirrel Nutkin (ill. 26) are quite different. Mr. Brown Owl possesses a strong character, and the texture and

true colours of every tawny owl, but then he was studied from life. Ernest Owl on the other hand is caricatured - like most owls he wears spectacles and looks gruff!

The rabbits (ill.27) may also be compared with the rabbits in (ill.5). The Potter rabbits have a fine quality of line and are subtly painted in pastels, here the use of shades of one colour is very easily identified. The rabbits in the Blackberry Farm series on the other hand are flat and inanimate and painted in gaudy colours. There is also a lack of imaginative use of perspective drawing of interiors which Beatrix Potter always tried to use (ill.28, 29). The Head on view of the fireplace (ill.27) on which the ornaments are arranged rather dully are not at all interesting compared with the shelves full of personal objects found in the Potter interiors.

References: The Tale of Tales by Rumer Godden
The Tale of Beatrix Potter by Margaret Lane.
A History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter by Leslie Linder

it fitted every window and corner. When it had cooled and hardened it could be cut down the centre in two halves, which were re-joined by melting and sealing the edges. Breathing holes were then made. These had to be big enough for the dancer to see through as the masks were far above his head. But the holes had to be small enough not to be seen when the mask would be covered in hair, which was the next and most difficult stage. (iii) The 'head' was smeared with glue, and placed on a magnetic rod, a gauze above it spread with short hair which clung down, magnetically drawn when the current was switched on. As every hair has positive as well as negative end, it dropped upright and adhered to the mask.

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The reason Beatrix Potter books have retained their popularity through the years, like so many of the childrens' books written during the Victorian era is their special charm.

This unique appeal will make them all time classics.

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