The Art Institute of Chicago

Catalogue of

A Collection

Of Designs by

Walter Crane

A.R.W.S.

Including

Original Drawings for Books,

Decorations; & Pictorial Work;

With Prefatory & Explanatory Notes by

The Artist.

Chicago 1892

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The Artist.

Chicago 1892
The collection of my works which, at the suggestion of the Museum of Fine Arts, are now here exhibited, although with no pretension to completeness, is—with the exception of my landscape work—on the whole, fairly, and, in the department of book designs at least, fully representative.

The following notes upon what may be called the natural history of my own work may prove, I hope, not impertinent to those interested in it.

The present collection may be divided into three classes, namely:

I. Book designs (in colour and black and white.)
II. Decoration.
III. Pictorial work (in oil and water-colour).

Taking book designs first as those by which I believe I am widest known, I may say that in point of time, and dating from the earliest specimens, the present collection may be said to cover a period of five-and-twenty years.
As long ago as 1865, in association with Mr. Edmund Evans, the well-known engraver and colour printer, I commenced designing children's toy-books, although it was not until about 1869, when "The Fairy Ship" was launched, that they had anything like a definite distinctive style.

I cannot say that the ordinary facile, sketchy, and rather vicious style of book illustration then prevalent was a very good preparation for the strong, definite outlines, with brush or pen, and flat bright colours I afterward adopted, from the time when "This Little Pig went to Market" (in 1870) onwards, through various modifications and changes of treatment.

Such as they were, however, picture-books had long existed as a class; shillings and sixpences were paid for them; they were duly tattered and torn, like the hero in "The House that Jack Built"—and I suppose it was good for trade, if bad for babies.

At no time, however, could the sixpenny toy-books be regarded as a lucrative resource for their designer. Like the cheap tradesman, one might say, "There was a loss on every article; it was only the quantity that made them pay!"

The interest and fun of the thing made up what was lacking, and, a method of expression evolved and responded to, it became a pleasure to embody in new form the old rhymes and tales.

As I have said, "The Fairy Ship" marked a new departure. As a sample of the earlier style before this, the sketches made for "The Song of Sixpence" (about 1865–66) give an idea of how the series of sixpenny toy-books, published by Messrs. George Routledge & Sons, began. This was really the first, I think, in that size. It was printed in three colours only—black, red, and blue. There was no back-
ground to complicate matters. But we did not stop there. The books went on at the rate of two or three a year, increasing in elaboration until 1876, when the series was closed with "The Sleeping Beauty."

Long before this, however—before my toy-books were known on the publishers’ list as a distinct series (which was not till 1873 or 1874), of which "The Three Bears" appearing in a special cover was the first specimen)—I well remember certain murmurings or complaints reaching me from "the trade" to the effect that my (and Mr. Evans’s) colours were not what they had been accustomed to—not bright enough. It was a generation seeking magenta and emerald green, and finding none.

However, we persevered until the tide turned—and now, I am afraid, our early toy-books are, possibly, too frank and barbaric for those educated through a long course of the refinements of my friends, Randolph Caldecott and Miss Kate Greenaway.

What I should call the Italianizing influence comes in in the later books, in such as "Bluebeard" and "Jack and the Beanstalk;" but still more noticeably in the larger series of shilling picture-books I designed about 1875. There was a set of eight done, with a wrapper for the series (the original sketch for which is exhibited). The tales were "Aladdin," "Goody Two Shoes," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Frog Prince," "The Yellow Dwarf," "The Hind in the Wood," "Princess Belle Etoile," and the "Alphabet of Old Friends." These were more elaborately printed than the smaller designs.

The type of costume, armour, and ornate details of the more romantic ones are akin to those adopted
in the allegorical picture painted about the same time, "Amor Vincit Omnia," which represents a supposed Amazonian city (full of Italian reminiscences) beleaguered by General Cupid and his forces. The Queen of the Amazons is seen giving up the keys of the city, which is not regarded as altogether a calamity by her followers. It is a purely fanciful picture; and is a good example of one's work in oil at that period.

At the close of the toy and picture-book series, in 1876, we made another departure in children's books in "The Baby's Opera," perhaps even more widely known than all the rest. Published in 1877, it became, and indeed still remains, a great favourite, having got into its fortieth thousand (which sounds rather grown-up for a baby).

The designs for "The Baby's Opera," as most of those for the toy and picture-book series, were drawn upon the wood-blocks themselves, and, as a general rule, but slight and rough sketches were made for them, to begin with, so that I have no originals to show, either of this work or of "The Baby's Bouquet," a companion volume to "The Baby's Opera," which followed it in 1879. In the interval, it may be noted that both Mr. Caldecott and Miss Greenaway commenced publishing their coloured children's books with Messrs. Routledge.

Absence from England was the occasion for some of the sets being drawn upon card for the sake of portability, but by degrees the photographic plan was adopted in all cases, and the result is that complete sets of my original drawings are exhibited for the later books, the next in order being "Pan-pipes," a book of old songs, with the tunes arranged by Theo. Marzials.
The drawings were in this case all made in outline with a pen. These were then photographed and engraved. I then tinted the outlines, and the colour-blocks were prepared.

The next book (and the last from the house of Routledge) was "The Baby's Own Æsop," 1886, uniform in size with "The Baby's Opera." In this case, as in that of "The Baby's Bouquet," I made a complete sketch-model of the book in colours, though I have not been able to include it in the present exhibit.

Messrs. Cassell & Company have brought out my later coloured books, namely, "Legends for Lionel," 1887, and "Flora's Feast," 1888. Of this last, complete sets both of the original pen outlines and of the original outline proofs which I tinted for the reproductions are here shown.

Another book in colours just issued by Messrs. Cassell, "Queen Summer; or, the Tourney of the Lily and the Rose," and some of the original designs for the pages are exhibited. As in the case of "Flora's Feast," the verses are my own. The treatment of the design differs considerably from "Flora's Feast," being more filled, more use made of black, and the tinting slight and on a different principle.
WORK IN BLACK AND WHITE.

Along with the coloured picture-books, both illustration and decoration in black and white was carried on, and has formed a large part of my work from the first: frontispieces, designs for magazine wrappers, novels, and newspapers, scattered illustrations of all kinds are to be found. I was even once a contributor to "Punch."

The first book of any completeness (at least it was completely my own as to text and design) was "Mrs. Mundi at Home," Marcus Ward & Co., 1875, a quasi-allegorical-politico-satiric-fantastic medley; which at least gave opportunities for fancy unrestricted by any considerations of ordinary realism.

As a more serious endeavour in the way of book decoration in black and white may be noted the designs to Miss De Morgan's "Necklace of Princess Fiorimonde," which gave me plenty of romantic material.

The general plan of this book in full-page figure designs, title headings, initial letters, and tail pieces, and followed in the designs to "Grimm's Household Stories," commenced about the same time, though not published until 1882. This was the next work of importance as a piece of book decoration and story illustration combined. The tales were translated for this edition (which is called the "Crane edition") by my late sister, and the work was pub-
lished by Messrs. Macmillan. The original drawings for this work are here shown, consisting of full-page pictures, headings, and initials to each story, and tail devices also.

Of a different type, but an important and elaborate work of illustration and decoration as applied to a book, was "The First of May," a fairy masque, published in 1881, by Messrs. Sotheran, for the author, my late friend, Mr. John R. Wise (whose well-known book on the New Forest contained some of my earliest attempts in book illustration).

"The Sirens Three," which originally appeared in instalments in the pages of "The English Illustrated Magazine" (as did also "A Herald of Spring," and "Thoughts in a Hammock"), was my next important work in order of time; and, as a whole, I should place it above the other two in importance as a series of designs, and in these, in endeavouring to embody my own thoughts, I have addressed myself to more serious problems and aims.

A set of twenty-four full-page pen designs done for a book, first published by Messrs. Scribner & Son, New York, under the title of "Bric-a-Brac

The First of May, 1881.
The Sirens Three, 1885.
A Herald of Spring.
Thoughts in a Hammock.
Bric-a-Brac Stories, 1885.
Stories,” by Mrs. Burton Harrison, may be noted next. The English edition was brought out by Messrs. Ward & Downey, as “Folk and Fairy Tales.”

As examples of more purely illustrative work, the sets of designs to the long series of Mrs. Molesworth’s Stories may be mentioned, one of which has appeared every Christmas since 1875, when, with “Tell Me a Story,” commenced the series.

On the other hand, as book-work of purely ornamental purpose, the sets of printer’s headings, designed for Messrs. R. & R. Clark, of Edinburgh, may be instanced.

The original drawings made to illustrate a series of three short articles written at the request of the editor of the Magazine of Art, entitled “The Language of Line,” are to be seen here, and deal with the subject under the three heads, (1) of outline; (2) of design; (3) of relief.

The largest and most important single design of mine in wood-cut yet published is “Triumph of Labour,” which appeared to commemorate the Labour Day this year, the original drawing from which is now exhibited. It has been excellently engraved on wood in fac-simile by Mr. Henry Scheu, of College Terrace, Harrow, as I think a comparison of the original with the proofs and prints published by him will show. In a wood-cut of this nature everything of course depends upon the quality and expressiveness of the line.

Another set of designs here of the decorative order are those for “The Book of Wedding Days” (Longmans & Co.), intentionally of a lighter and more playful kind. Being printed in one tint of red throughout, they belong almost to a class by them-
selves, between the fully-tinted books and the black-and-white.

Another work rather by itself as regards treatment are the designs to "Echoes of Hellas" (Marcus Ward & Co.), printed in black and red. The set of the original sketches are shown, but in this case the finished drawings were all done upon zinc lithographic plates, so that the designs are only complete in the book itself.

As latest examples of black-and-white design, the drawings made for my book of poems, recently published, may be noted.
DECORATION.

As I have said, decorative design, chiefly as applied to interiors, including stained glass, mosaic, and needlework, occupied me all along, and this work and my painting reacted upon the book designs, which, in their turn, affected my painting and design generally; in fact, I rather think the coloured picture-books brought me work in decoration in the first instance. Certainly it led to others taking leaves out of them; and I remember once an enterprising but somewhat unscrupulous manufacturer gave me a little surprise in issuing, quite unauthorized, "The Baby’s Opera" as a nursery wall-paper. Naturally, I had to take to designing nursery wall-papers in self-defence, and, in association with Mr. Metford Warner (Messrs. Jeffrey & Co.), have designed many. For the same firm, too, much more elaborate schemes of decoration in wall-paper—friezes, fields, dados, and ceilings—block-printed or stamped and gilded, were undertaken, and some of the principal and more elaborate and recent designs are here shown, both in cartoon and finished result.

The cartoons for “The Golden Age,” “The Peacock Garden,” “Wood-notes,” “Corona Vitæ,” will be noted, as well as (for the nursery) “Briar Rose,” and “House that Jack Built,” and “The Fairy Garden.” My first wall-paper dates, I believe, from 1875—“The Margarete,” with a frieze of allegorical fig.
ures, and a text from “Chaucer”—and the series has been continued ever since.Specimens of the more recent papers are given at the end of the catalogue.

The gilded and coloured reliefs, modeled in gesso, for the “frieze panels for a library,” models for finger-plates, and various panels in the same material, are a sample of a kind of decoration of which I am very fond, of which I have produced not a little from time to time. There is also a small scale sketch for a ceiling in gesso.

The cartoons for portions of the frieze in Sir F. Leighton’s “Arab Hall,” and others designed for Mr. Stuart Hodgson’s house, represent my work in that direction; but it has not been possible to arrange any specimens of designs for stained glass, or needlework, or furniture.
PICTORIAL WORK.

Of work in this kind, either in oil or water-colour, a period of not more than fourteen years is covered by the examples exhibited. I say pictorial work, though I do not draw any hard and fast line between pictorial work and other work in kind or principal.

The earliest picture, to which I have already alluded, is "Amor Omnia Vincit," painted in 1875, which has at least the distinction of having been rejected at the Academy. I have perhaps already sufficiently indicated its meaning and its relation to other work.

To 1881 belongs "Europa," showing the influence of the same quasi-classical sentiment in technical aim, the same light fair colouring which characterized the book work of the same time. I mean the designs to "Pan-pipes," though, of course, in the oil picture more elaborate treatment was possible.

Keats's beautiful ballad, so full of romantic suggestions, suggested this picture, in which the naturalistic aim is controlled by a more distinctly ornamental intention than the last. On each side hangs a figure and costume study, showing much the same influences, and belonging to the same year.

"The Bridge of Life" shows a revival of the more classical or renascence influence in its design and
conception. This was another picture first designed in Rome and worked out in England some time afterwards.
The legend is perhaps not difficult to read, though it is an age that loves not allegory: The thread of life from the staff of Clotho, woven into its mystic and complex web by Lachesis, and severed at last by Atropos; the boats of life and of death meeting under the frail bridge. From the one, young Life disembarking, and climbing the stairs, fostered by Father and Mother, led and guided and taught by Eld, following its child-like play, till made the sport of Love in the heyday of youth, till the trumpet of Ambition is heard and "the middle of life's onward way" is reached.

"We look before and after,
And sigh for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught."

Fortune and Fame pursued and ever eluding the grasp, till the crown perhaps is gained, but the burden of the intolerable world has to be borne. Lot's wife looks wistfully back. Tottering Eld is led by Youth; the eyes of the old man resting on the boat with its dark freight, while the boy is intent upon tasting life's apple. Hope holds her little lamp, led by Love, even on the descending steps of life; when farther down the frail glass of existence is shattered, and the mourners weep, and strew the memorial flowers over the silent dead.

Alpha and Omega, figures of Morn and Night, hang each side of "Pandora," which, in the same allegorical vein, is intended to further emphasize the fateful tragedy of existence, as she weeps over the mysterious box, which I have ventured to represent as a kind of marriage coffer, while nothing but the stormy light of sunset and the cypresses shuddering
in the wind suggest what has happened. But Hope, we are told, was found in the box after all.

A later picture is "The Riddle of the Sphinx," dealing with another ancient classical story, capable, as most of them are, of most modern application.

Have we not our sphinx-like riddle? More than one, perhaps. Sits not the creature overshadowing all our cities? Are not her claws fixed in the hearts of nations? And what of Ædipus? Will he not guess the riddle?—has he not guessed it already? Well, the old answer to the older riddle may be found in the "Bridge of Life." But I am afraid our modern Sphinx is not so easily disposed of. "The Triumph of Labour" is, perhaps, nearer the mark.

If we are in no mood for riddles, let "Flora" call us away to pleasanter places with her procession of flowers.
Other pictures of mine are represented here only by small preparatory sketches, some in colour, such as those made for "The Renascence of Venus," and "The Fate of Persephone." Others are in white and brown, such as the sketch of "The Chariots of the Hours," and the design for "A Torch Race," a picture not yet carried out.

Flora, 1889.

My latest work in water color is No. 4, "Masque of the Senses," now exhibited for the first time,
The two mezzotints—"Diana and the Shepherd," "Truth and the Traveller"—shown, are first proofs of the plates by Frederick F. Foottit from the original pictures. Proofs and prints can be obtained from the engraver, Re Laurels, 2 Dridgehay Street, Derby, England.

My thanks are due to Messrs. Macmillan and Mr. Henry Blackburn for the use of some of the blocks which illustrate these notes.

WALTER CRANE.

October, 1891.
The copyright of all the works exhibited is reserved.
CATALOGUE.

The works are for sale. Prices can be learned on application to the Custodian.

FIRST PRINT ROOM.

No.
2. Design for Cover of “The Sirens Three.”
3. Cover, Graphic, Christmas Number—Original Sketch.
5. Pen Sketch Design for Same.
7. Original Drawings for “The Book of Wedding Days.” (Two frames.)
8. Original Drawings for “The Language of Line.” (Eight frames.)
10. Design for Invitation Card for a Fancy Ball.
11. Invitation Card—Royal Institute Ball—Original Drawing.
12. Valentine and Orson—Set of Twelve Original Drawings for the Toy Book.
13. Original Sketches for “My Mother.” (Seven frames.)
14. Seven Original Sketches, with Set of Original Proofs before Colour, for “Bluebeard.”
17. Four Designs for Base of Silver Cup.
18. Design for Plaster Frieze.
19. Original Drawings for "Panpipes." (Six frames.)
20. Original Drawings in Outline for "Flora’s Feast."
21. Original Hand-Tinted Proofs of "Flora’s Feast."
22. "Folk and Fairy Tales"—Original Drawings.
24. Original Drawings for "Four Winds Farm." (Seven frames.)
26. Original Drawings for "King Luckieboy’s Party."
27. Original Sketches for "Mother Hubbard."
29. Original Drawings for "Us." (Five frames.)
30. Six Original Designs for "Christmas Tree Land."
31. Original Drawings for "Folk and Fairy Tales." (Three frames.)
32. Original Drawings for "The Children of the Castle."
33. Original Sketches for "The Children of the Castle." (Seven frames.)
34. Original Drawings for "Princess Fiorimonde." (Seven frames.)
37. "Rosy"—Eight Original Drawings.
38. "Thoughts in a Hammock"—Original Drawings.
39. Frame of Miscellaneous Designs, viz.:—
The Old English Fayre—Cover.
The True Union.
The Library—Frontispiece.
The Pioneer Cover.
Certificate Card.
No.
41. Original Drawings for "A Christmas Posy." (Seven frames.)
42. "Christmas Child"—Eight Original Drawings.
43. Ministering Children's League—Original Drawing.
44. Sketch for a Plaster Frieze. (Five frames.)
45. Printer's Headings—Original Drawings.
46. "Chants of Labour"—Original Drawings for Frontispiece and Title. (Two frames.)
47. The Chariots of the Hours—Sketch for the Picture.
48. Study for the Bridge of Life.
49. Study for the Bridge of Life.
50. Passing the Torch.

"Still the race of hero spirits
Pass the torch from hand to hand."

51. The Triumph of Labour—Original Drawing.
52. A Diver—Sketch for the Picture.

CASE IN CENTRE OF ROOM.

“Skeleton in Armor”—Eight Drawings.
“My Mother”—Seven Sketches.
“Mrs. Mundi at Home”—Original Drawings.
Absurd A B C—Six Original Drawings.
SECOND PRINT ROOM.

53. A Water Lily.
54. The Riddle of the Sphinx.
55. Amor Omnia Vincit—An Allegory.
56. The Bridge of Life.
57. Europa.
58. La Belle Dame sans Merci.
59. Cartoon for a Mosaic Panel—Cockatoos and Vine.
60. Cartoon for a Mosaic Panel—Peacock.
62. Cartoon for a Mosaic—The Sphinx.
63. Sketch for a Theatrical Poster, “The Babes in the Wood.”
64. The Sleeping Beauty—Cartoon of the Wallpaper.
65. The Fairy Garden—Cartoon for the Wall-Paper.
66. The Legend of the Goose with the Golden Eggs—Fortune.
67. The Legend of the Goose with the Golden Eggs—Misfortune.
68. Figure Panel for a Fireplace.
69. Figure Panel for a Fireplace.
70. Gesso Models for Pair of Finger-Plates.
71. Gesso Panel for a Library Frieze—“The Sleeping Beauty.”
72. Gesso Panel for a Library Frieze—The Learned Commentator.
73. Laura.
74. Flora.
75. Fiametta.
76. Sketch for Ceiling in Gesso.
77. Sketches for Three Decorative Panels—Invention, Peace, and Labour.
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78. Sketch for a Panel in Wall Decoration—Agriculture.

     Noon.
     Night.
81. The House that Jack Built—Cartoon for the Wall-Paper.

82. Renascence of Venus—Sketch.

83. First Sketch for Persephone.

84. Sketch for Renascence of Venus.

85. Cartoons for Mosaic Panels—Stag Drinking—Satyr and Vine.

86. Spring—Cartoon for a Painted Panel.

87. Summer—Cartoon for a Painted Panel.

88. Autumn—Cartoon for a Painted Panel.

89. Winter—Cartoon for a Painted Panel.

90. Cartoon for Wall-Paper; Frieze—Corona Vitae.


92. Cartoon for Field of Wall-Paper—"Wood-notes."

93. A Dorsetshire Down.


95. Renascence of Venus—Sketch for the Picture.

96. Pandora.

97. Morning.

98. The Sacrifice of Iphigenia—Sketch for Tableaux-Vivant.

99. Fountain at the Villa Borghese, Rome.

100. Clytemnestra and the Furies—Sketch for Tableaux-Vivant.

101. Pussies in the Corner—Gesso Panel.

No.  
107. "Queen Summer; or, The Tourney of the Lily and the Rose"—Original Designs for a Forthcoming Work—Forty Drawings with Copy of the Work.
110. St. Valentine’s Day—Original Sketch for the Graphic.
111. The English Illustrated Magazine—Original Drawing.
112. Ornamental—Gesso Panel.
113. The Dance—Gesso Panel.
114. "Three Bears"—Eight Drawings and Cover.
115. "Puss in Boots"—One Original Drawing.
117. "Song of Sixpence"—Six Drawings.

SPECIMENS OF WALL-PAPER.

120. Corona Vitæ—Stamped.
121. Corona Vitæ—Stamped.
122. The Peacock Garden—Stamped.
123. Cartoon for Field of Wall-Paper—"The Golden Age."
124. Golden Age—Stamped.
125. The Golden Age—Stamped.
126. The Golden Age.
127. Dove and Olive Branch—Ceiling.
128. The Peacock Garden—Stamped.
129. Corona Vitæ Frieze.
130. Corona Vitæ.
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