

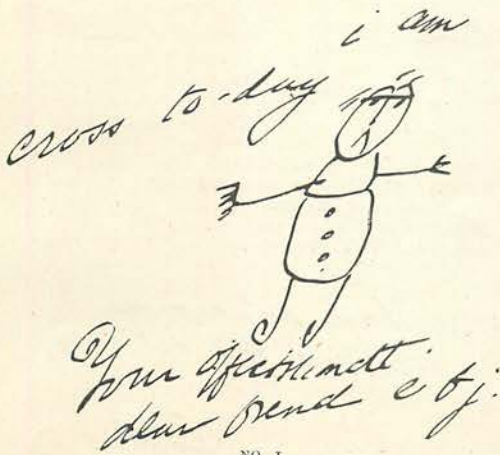
Letters of Burne-Jones to a Child.



STATELY, great men unbend before little children. Thackeray loved them, wrote to them, and drew pictures for them. Dickens played with the little ones as if he, too, were young; and the story of Lewis Carroll's

for rest and recuperation. They extended over a period of several years, and were written either in the style and spelling of youth, or in more stately diction and orthography, just as it suited his whim to write. None of them are dated, but one of them, we believe, was written shortly before he died.

The first letter which we select introduces us to one or two persons and places figuring throughout the correspondence. It is ornamented on the first page with a picture of a cat with twenty-two hairs on her body, and underneath is the inscription, "This is ole." Two other drawings in the letter are reproduced on this page. Here is the letter:—



NO. 1.

The Grange, West Kensington, W.

My dearest —,— here is the tikets i said i would send i enjoyed my vissit so much such a much may i come again i liked that book about you i want to see it again this is ole i want to play with ole I wish you lived in the next stret i am cross to-day (1)

Your effectxonett dear frend

e b j.

I thought your drawings was very nice in that book and the pefesser said so in his report this (2) is the grang i remain your lovig

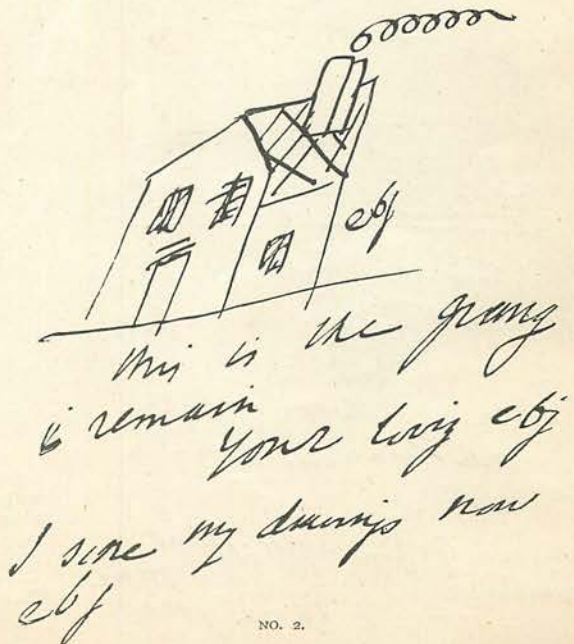
e b j.

I sine my drawings now e b j.

buoyant youthfulness and sympathy with the tots of the nursery was recently told in this Magazine, and showed a new phase of a beautiful life.

To-day we are able to print a few letters written by the late Sir Edward Burne-Jones to a child, in which the mind and the pen of the great artist, now still, were lavish in youthful tenderness and humour. Few will be surprised that the imaginative creator of "The Briar Rose" and "The Golden Stairs"—the quiet, earnest painter—possessed this sweet side to his nature, but many will now look upon the evidence of it for the first time.

The letters passed between him and a little girl who lived in London. Some of them were composed at The Grange, West Kensington, the old-fashioned brick house which Richardson, the novelist, once inhabited. Others were written at Rottingdean, whither the artist went



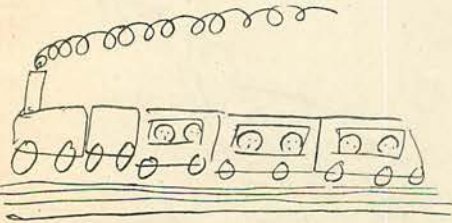
NO. 2.

It is noticeable that one of the principal personages in the correspondence is not mentioned in the first letter. We refer to the nightmare, or "nitemare," variously spelled but always potent. We get his picture in a letter soon to follow. The present epistle shows the artist to have been a man of exquisite skill in the pictorial representation of the British railway system, while his knowledge of the topography of Kew Gardens is beyond reproach. He writes:—
My darling —

i can wright without ruling lines butt i am older than you i liked your letter very much i am quit well i hope you are quit well and ole and all of you is quit well i am drawing to day i had nitemare in the nite an was fritened but i wos very brave and didnt mind becorse i am a man, it may come agen if it likes but i hope it won't now i dont know what to say but i hope you are quit well i mean to come and see you some day very soon

(3) that is Kew gardns i shall come by railway —if you havent seen a railway it is like this (4) and a tunel is like this (4) and is horrerble but it doesnt friten me because I am a man

Your affeectnet frend
e burne jones



and a tunnel is like this  and is horrerble

but it doesnt friten me because i am a man

Your affeectnet frend
e burne jones

NO. 4.

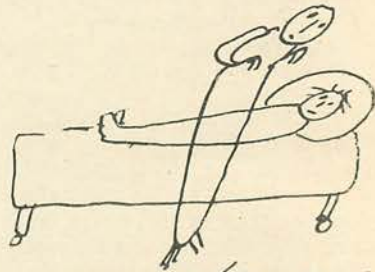
About this time it appears the artist was tired of his surroundings and decided to make a "foreign" trip. Possibly it was a recurrent visit of our old friend the nightmare, whom we see in the following letter standing in spectre-like fulness of might over the artist's couch. He announced his intentions as follows:—

The Grange,
West Kensington, W.
my darling —

i am going away abroad to rotting dean which is near brigten i am going on Fridy i dont want to go —i like playing with

paints in lundon best perhaps I shall not see you byfour I go will you write to me when i am there and amuse me and say how you are i will draw you a picture of rottindene when i am there i can't do it away nobody can draw things away

i had nitemayse last nite and the nite before



i hav not been quit well



a blackbird

NO. 5.

i shall probly be away a long time i like the hot wether i had nitemayer last nite and the nite before (5)

i hav not been quit well (5) a blakbird

now i must conclude i send you my love i hope you are quit well and your ma ma is better

Your affently
e burne jones

At last he got away from the gloominess of London, and lost no time in detailing to his little correspondent the stirring events of a perilous trip from London to Brighton.

I got here quite safe—after a dangerous crossing—the Thames was very rough at Grosvenor road but in about two minutes our train had crossed & we came into Clapham Junction not much the worse for the journey—there we stayed about a minute, and entered the Redhill Tunnel punctually at 11.45.

Redhill has a pop. of 15,000 souls, mostly Non-conformist—it boasts a chapel of yellow brick with a slate roof and a stucco front and is remarkable for the vigour of its political opinions.

It was about one o'clock when we neared Rottingdean—as we drove into the village as many as four of the inhabitants rushed to the doors to witness the event. For the last fourteen hundred years social life has stagnated in Rottingdean—and the customs of the folk are interesting to the antiquarian and repay his investigation to a remarkable degree—I myself have contributed some unusual customs.

O but I wish you would both—you and your mama—take train tomorrow & come here & be made much of—I do.

Perhaps it will rain tomorrow & then you wont go on the river—of course I dont want you disappointed—but if it were to rain—and rain is very seasonable now & good for turnips & seeds generally—you would not go.

Farewell—and the softest & sweetest of times for you both—I am likely to be away for a long period—but its no use coming so far unless I am prepared to rest & take advantage of the change—at the earliest I am not likely to be back before about the middle of Tuesday—and may possibly be delayed till towards the end of the afternoon

Yours aff e b j

Alas! The outing was evidently not a happy one. Crowing cocks and bad weather played havoc with a sensitive nature, yet could not entirely kill a dainty humour. Thus the artist wrote to his little correspondent:—

Rottingdean
Nr Brighton.

O my dear —

I'm going back to pretty London tomorrow—having liked this time at all—cold—windy—gray—

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not nice watery gray but cross sulky even gray—havent like it a bit.

I have improved in drawing I think—here is a portrait of my chief enemy here—a fool of a cock, (6) really shaped like this who crows & crows & when doesn't he crow! at 11½ at night—at 2 in the morning—at 2 in the afternoon—at 7 in the evening—at any time he likes, but not when poets say he crows—no sunrise for him . . . him and . . . him and b . . . th . . . r him. And amongst his wives he's like Herod

the Great and Henry the Eighth—he's very wicked dear—he's like some men & I hate him.

The page now turns over, and at the top we are startled by the appearance of a great, sleepy porker (7) sprawling out in all his affluence of flesh on the seashore. Jubilantly the artist writes:—

But this is a friend of mine & does no harm—grunts a little when he's happy, but is very good & unpretending, & bears his fate cheerfully for pork pies he has to be. Fare-very-well dear

Your old friend

e b j.

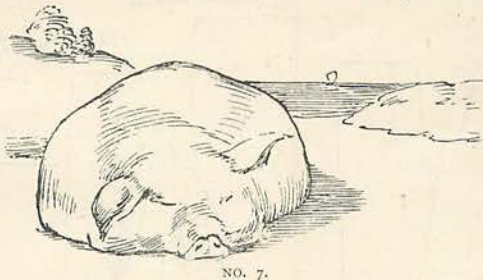
The childish spelling adds a wonderful interest to these remarkable letters. From The Grange he once wrote:—

i like your lettrs very much i like firworks i am to be taken to Sidnam to see them at the Cristal Pals i am quit well i wish you were in london nobody is in london except tradspeole and i am not to play with them because i am above them in rank so there is nobody to play with but i am aloud to paint all day with callers and i like that at rotting dean there is a cok with no tail he does look silly . . .

The letter ends with a small pen drawing of the silly cock, and an equestrian drawing of "the duke of Wellanton," in which the big nose of the

hero is prominently displayed. Evidently the "duke" was a favourite with both artist and child, for he figures in several letters.

We catch several glimpses in the letters of the artist in his grey moods. He has a horror of bad weather, and when business calls him back to London he longs for the



bright skies of Rottingdean. On a Sunday he writes from The Grange :—
dear —.

Back I am here & a nice day you have prepared for me—Oh do you expect me to endure such days—& I left bright sunshine and blue sky & green hills & myriads of rooks in the air—& tiled floors, & black oak & white walls, & log fires, to come back to this nasty black sooty damp filthy hole of a place.

So will you be very kind to me & spoil me, for all I endure? & a parcel of books & paint rags has come thank your ever blessed mammy for them. Mighty useful will the rags be—such a heap—just as many rags again & I would begin trying to rub London out with them. I have come back so fat & well & ever
Your affte. (8)

*I am not to go out for
a week or more and
this isnt a nice life
at all.*



NO. 9.

*I have come back so fat
& well.*

*& Ever
Yours
affte.*



NO. 8.

serve as signatures. We have several of them in these pages. One letter he writes on most gaudy paper, containing a startling red border nearly two inches wide, decorated with large white spots. The paper is even too startling for his sensitive eye, and he apologizes for it in the following words :—

Oh my dear — little —

I do think this paper is too horrible to send even as a joke — but as I promised—

He then asks her to come to see him, and says :—

I will give you two days notice, and this delissous time at Kensington is coming to an end and when you are back

Later, the fogs oppress him and he cries :—

Oh —. I am so bad — such a sore throat — all rags and tatters — and the fogs are fiendish and are killing
Your aff

EBJ.

That poor orphan — give him my love — and all of them — I am not to go out for a week or more and this (9) isnt a nice life at all.

Perhaps the most amusing of the pictures which he drew are those of himself which



NO. 10.

af—I shall never see you—because I could never find my way I know — & cant take railway tickets—and can do nothing but pictures—and there are some people, —, who say I cant do that—would you believe it?

Always your afft. (10)

Evidently the two friends were now for awhile parted, and the little girl had gone on a vacation. Her leisure was lightened by the following letter :—

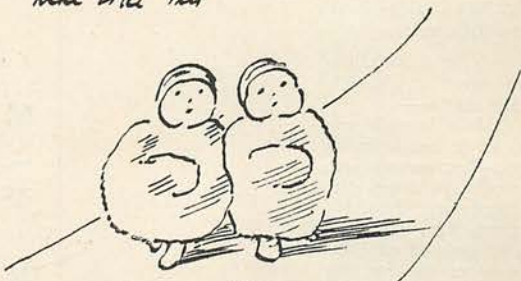
Monday,
The Grange,
West Kensington, W.

My dear little —,

It seems to me you are enjoying yourself very much—getting wet & draggletailed, & dabbling in eel pits and the homes of newts. wish I was there too, I do, playing with messes and lolling about, & reading three lines of a book & then tumbling into deep sleep. perhaps that shall be by & bye — but now I am at work and mustnt leave it (11)

And I am very well and quite fat again — hating

*one day when I as suddenly meet you
both in the highway will you be
more like this*



NO. 12.

& so powerfully that I believe I shall have to be operated upon too—for I feel full of horrors.

Good-bye, dear little Maiden, and give them all my love.

Your afft.
Ebj.

The following letter contains an interesting reference to Damien, the brave man who went out amongst the lepers :—

Mr. Clifford came & brought me a little line from Damien but writing is difficult to him & he is dying now. One day when I as suddenly meet you both in the highway will you be more like this (12)

wernt at all like that yesterday. I have ½ a mind to run over & see how you are to-day, but it's a busy day and I must be in town some time to get things for foreign travel.

Your afft
Ebj.

At one time he sends her “ 2 tikets for the privit view at the ryle acadmy ”; at another, he sends his regrets for inability to make an engagement, and, at the end of the letter, breaks into a flood of tears, which figure conspicuously on the sheet as nine ragged lumps of red sealing-wax. “ These are my tears,” he writes. He also sends a pencil drawing of a dumpy and fluffy little chicken just out of its shell. Again, when inclosing a photograph, he says :—

Is this the photograph
of that old old old
old
old
old
old
old

O I D thing

you meant?
and later, in the same letter, he adds: “ What a what of a day — not meant for work, was it ?

*now I am at work and mustnt
leave it*

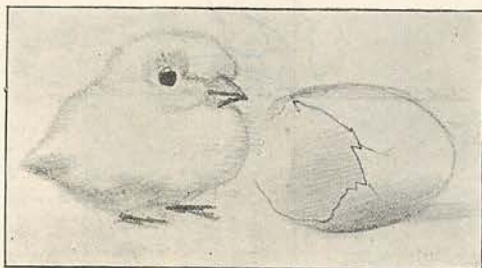


NO. 11.

the thunder weather very much — & in evenings resting altogether, but I am still bereft of babes, & is I dont know where — somewhere in the outer world — & & at the sea.

The artist then makes a touching reference to the illness of a dear friend, and goes on in sympathetic yet lightsome mood :—

I went yesterday to see an ill friend — a dear one — & he being eloquent & gifted described an operation that had been performed upon him so fully



NO. 13.

Want to have picnic on river with friends I do."

At another time he writes his letter as follows:—

at a bookshop in town
My dear —.

I have brought you a little reminder of me—because you are certain to forget the discomfort I have given you day after day (so you can't remember me for that reason) and when next I come—Friday—I will blazon your name in it—can't do it now, hands so frozen.

This is a day when I hope you are all round the fire snoozing and blinking softly, & passing the cat from lap to lap:

ever your affectionate friend

(14)

And ends with another pictorial signature which, had it not been done by himself, would have been a libel on the kindly features which all knew so well.

To the ordinary reader these signatures are most amusing when they are most abnormal in execution. The artist was once in Rottingdean at Lammastide, yet it was bitter cold, bright, and cloudless, with no mist or fog. He

ever your affectionate friend



NO. 14.

could hardly believe it was summer, and as proof of his physical condition he appended to his interesting little gossip the accompanying picture of himself, shivering on the hillside, a lone figure in the midst of a whirling snowstorm. Legs contorted with wonderful tortuosity, hair drooping as if with the weight of

icicles, and eyes staring into the distance hopeless and forlorn—he stood in the foreground of a bleak landscape shivering. "Oh, little —, good bye," he wrote. "This is the 47th letter I have written this morning." The forty-seventh letter! Yet, at the end of all that tiresome labour he had time to draw a picture for the child he loved.

When the artist died there were more sympathetic hearts than one, and not the least among them was that of the child who, in these letters, had been shown the tender and loving qualities of a great man.



NO. 15.