

= Edmund Evans =

Edmund Evans (23 February 1826 ? 21 August 1905) was a prominent English wood engraver and colour printer during the Victorian era . Evans specialized in full @-@ colour printing , which , in part because of his work , became popular in the mid @-@ 19th century . He employed and collaborated with illustrators such as Walter Crane , Randolph Caldecott , Kate Greenaway and Richard Doyle to produce what are now considered to be classic children 's books . Although little is known about his life , he wrote a short autobiography before his death in 1905 in which he described his life as a printer in Victorian London .

After finishing an apprenticeship , Evans went into business for himself . By the early 1850s , he had established a reputation as a printer of covers for a type of cheap novels known as yellow @-@ backs . In the early 1860s , he began to print children 's toy books and picture books in association with the printing house Routledge and Warne . His intention was to produce books for children that were beautiful and inexpensive . For three decades he produced multiple volumes each year , first illustrated by Crane , and later by Caldecott and Greenaway .

Evans used a woodblock printing technique known as chromoxylography , which was used primarily for inexpensive serialised books and children 's books requiring few colours , so as to maximize profits . However , chromoxylography allowed a variety of hues and tones to be produced by mixing colours . The process was complicated and required intricate engraving to achieve the best results . Evans possessed a meticulous eye for detail and used a hand @-@ press and as many as a dozen colour blocks for a single image . He went on to become the preeminent wood engraver and colour printer in Britain during the second half of the 19th century .

= = Apprenticeship and early work = =

Evans was born in Southwark , London , on 23 February 1826 , to Henry and Mary Evans . He attended school in Jamaica Row , where he enjoyed mathematics but wished he had learned Latin . As a 13 @-@ year @-@ old he began work as a " reading boy " at the printing house of Samuel Bentley in London in 1839 . However , he was reassigned as a general errand boy because his stutter interfered with his duties . The hours were long ? from seven in the morning until nine or ten at night ? but the printmaking process itself , and the books produced by the establishment , fascinated Evans . Bentley soon realized the boy was talented after seeing his early attempts at scratching illustrations on slate , and arranged for Evans to begin an apprenticeship with wood @-@ engraver Ebenezer Landells .

Evans started with Landells in 1840 . His duties included delivering proofs of drawings to be approved by artists such as Edward Dalziel , or authors such as Charles Dickens . A year later , Landells launched Punch magazine , and as early as 1842 had Evans illustrate covers for the new publication . Evans worked and became friends with Myles Birket Foster , John Greenaway and George Dalziel . Foster and Evans became lifelong friends . When Landells received a commission from the Illustrated London News to provide illustrations of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert , he sent Evans and Foster to Balmoral to make sketches , which Evans engraved . Toward the end of his apprenticeship , the demands of the Illustrated London News caused Evans to work late into the night and return early in the morning .

When his apprenticeship ended in 1847 , Evans , then 21 , refused an offer of employment from Landells , deciding instead to go into business for himself as a wood @-@ engraver and colour printer . In 1848 Evans engraved a title @-@ page illustration , among other commissions , for the Illustrated London News . However , the Illustrated London News stopped employing him on the basis that his wood engraving was too fine for newspaper work . His final print for the Illustrated London News showed the four seasons , and was illustrated by Foster . In fact Foster received his first commission from the publisher Ingram , Cook , and Company to reproduce the four scenes in oil . In 1851 , Ingram chose Evans to engrave three prints for Ida Pfeiffer 's Travels in the Holy Land . He used three blocks for the work : the key @-@ block , outlining the illustration , was printed in a dark @-@ brown hue ; the other two were in a buff colour and a grayish @-@ blue colour . For the

same firm , Evans completed an order for a book @-@ cover using bright reds and blues on white paper . That year he received the first commission to print a book , written by Fanny Fern and illustrated by Foster . Evans had enough business to apprentice his two younger brothers , Wilfred and Herbert , and to buy a hand @-@ press . Soon he moved his premises to Racquet Court , and bought three more hand @-@ presses .

In the early 1850s , Evans designed book @-@ covers known as yellow @-@ backs , a " book bound in yellow @-@ glazed paper over boards " . He perfected the method and became the printer of choice for many London publishers ; by 1853 he was the chief yellow @-@ back printer in the city . He developed the yellow @-@ back as he disliked the white paper book @-@ covers that became soiled and discoloured ; as a result of this aversion he experimented with yellow paper by treating before adding the printed illustration . Often yellow @-@ backs were used for unsold editions , so that they functioned as reprints or waste ; typically " enormous number of these covers " were left behind for publishers . Other terms for the books were " Penny dreadfuls " , " railway novels " and " mustard plaisters " . For the illustrations , Evans commissioned artists such as George Cruikshank , Phiz , Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane . Evans ' first cover was brightly coloured , utilising only reds and blues , overprinting blue over black to create what appeared as a black background . He continued the practice of using red and blue , engraving " in graduation " for lighter tints of reds used for faces and hands , and engraving the blue blocks in a manner that created textures and patterns . Evans realised books that may have been unsuccessful in a first printing were easy to sell with well @-@ designed cover art .

In the mid @-@ 1850s , Evans and Foster visited Scotland to create sketches for a series of guide books , which Evans printed . He later engraved Foster 's illustrations for Lady of the Lake , and Foster 's illustrations for The Poetical Works of George Herbert (1856) , printed in Edinburgh . Of the George Herbert engravings he states : " these illustrations I consider the best that I ever engraved " . By 1856 Evans had " perfected a process of colour printing from wood blocks " , and achieved a reputation as the preeminent wood engraver and best colour printer in London .

In the late 1850s Evans worked on an edition of The Poems of Oliver Goldsmith , illustrated by Foster , published in 1859 . The volume was successful enough to warrant a second edition , with 11 more colour @-@ printed illustrations , which was published in 1860 . During the 1860s , his most notable work was for James Doyle 's A Chronicle of England , which includes 80 illustrations , and is considered evidence of his capability as a master of colour . His method of coloured wood engraving allowed for watercolours to be reproduced , and was used for The Art Album : Sixteen Facsimilies of Water @-@ colour Drawings , which he engraved and printed in 1861 . Before he began printing children 's books , much of Evans ' business was to provide colour printwork for magazines such as Lamplighter , The Sunday School Companion and Chatterbox . With increased print orders , Evans leased space on Fleet Street to expand the business , adding steam engines , boilers and " many extra machines " .

From the late 1850s to the early 1860s , Evans produced the blocks and printed for , among others , books illustrated by W. S. Coleman including , Common Objects of the Sea Shore , Common Objects of the Country , Our Woodlands , Heaths , and Hedges , and British Butterflies . The printing process used up to 12 colours and , as was his usual practice , a hand @-@ press . During these years he also completed work on Foster 's Bible Emblem Anniversary Book , and Little Bird Red and Little Bird Blue . In 1870 , Evans printed In Fairyland , a Series of Pictures from the Elf @-@ World , illustrated by James Doyle 's brother Richard in which Doyle depicted fairies living " among birds , snails , butterflies and beetles as large as themselves " , and Evans produced his largest wood @-@ engravings for the volume . The 36 illustrations contained within are " often considered the masterpiece of Victorian illustration . " During the 1860s and 1870s , he was employing up to 30 engravers .

In 1864 , Evans married Mary Spence Brown , Foster 's niece , and the couple lived in Witley , Surrey . Foster was their neighbour , as was George Eliot . Commenting on his work , Evans said that it " kept me fully employed mind and body : I had to direct the engravers to the direction of the lines in the colour blocks , and the printers for the tones of the inks for printing , often mixing the inks " . Whenever possible he visited Brighton , where he enjoyed the air .

= = Process and techniques = =

During the Victorian period , the art of book illustration gained popularity , supported through the work of wood engravers . Woodcut extended back centuries in Europe and further in Asia . Typically the parts to be printed in black were left in relief by the carver , allowing illustrations to be printed along with the text . Thomas Bewick developed the technique in the 18th century and " perfected the process that was used extensively throughout the 19th century , which necessitated the use of hardwood blocks and tools for metal engraving " . The preferred method of relief engraving had been to work with the grain on the plank side of a block ; however Bewick worked the end of the block and carved against the grain using a burin . Bewick passed his techniques to apprentices , including Landells , who in turn passed them to Evans . In the 1860s , Thomas Bolton developed a method for transferring a photographic image onto block , which enabled the engraver " to work on the surface " .

In the 1830s George Baxter repopularised colour relief printing , known as chromoxylography , by using a " background detail plate printed in aquatint intaglio , followed by colours printed in oil inks from relief plates ? usually wood blocks " . Evans followed the Baxter process , with the modification of using relief wood blocks only . For *The Poems of Oliver Goldsmith* , Evans created a facsimile of a watercolour , by superimposing colours with the use of separate colour blocks , one by one , to achieve the graduated colours of the original . First , Foster drew the illustration directly on the woodblocks that were to be cut , and he then recreated a coloured paper copy of the drawing . Evans , using the same pigments as Foster , grinding them himself , produced inks to match Foster 's colours . The printing was done using a hand @-@ press , with nine or ten print runs required for each illustration . For *A Chronicle of England* , Evans engraved prints dropped into the text at six @-@ page intervals . Doyle drew the illustrations directly onto the wood blocks and created coloured proofs . Nine or ten wood blocks (colour blocks) were used for each of the 80 illustrations , which Evans again printed on a hand @-@ press . The use of colour and the ability to create subtle tones are characteristic of Evans ' skill as a colourist . His work was distinctive because of the characteristic quality of the wood engraving (carving) and his manner of limiting the use of ink to create a more striking result .

Evans ' process involved a number of steps . First , the line drawing of an illustration was photographed and printed onto block while the line drawing was engraved . Proofs of the key block were coloured by the illustrator ; Evans would then " determine the sequencing and register ... to arrive at a close reproduction of the artist 's original " . Blocks were painted and engraved ; one for each colour . A proof of each colour block was made before a final proof from the key block . Ideally , the proof would be a faithful reproduction of the original drawing , but Evans believed a print was never as good as a drawing . He took care to grind and mix his inks so they closely emulated the original . Finally , each block was placed so as to allow the individual colours to print on the page exactly as intended . Aware of costs and printing efficiencies , he used as few colours as possible . Illustrations were produced with a base of black , along with one or two colours and a flesh tone for faces and hands . In some cases , Evans may have used as few as four colour blocks : likely black , flesh and two primary colours ; the addition of yellow allowed him a greater range . Each colour was printed from a separately engraved block ; there were often between five or ten blocks . The chief problem was to maintain correct register , achieved by placing small holes in precise positions on each block to which the paper was pinned . If done correctly , the register of colours match , although sometimes ink squash is visible along the edges of an illustration .

Often the artist drew the illustration in reverse , and directly onto a block ; in other cases the printer copied the illustration from a drawing . After the 1860s , images could be photographically projected onto the blocks , although it was more difficult for the printer to carve the reliefs without leaving the distinctive lines of the illustration . Books printed by Evans have been reproduced using some of the original blocks which have " remained in continuous use for over a century " .

= = Children 's books = =

Critics regard Evans ' most important work to be his prints of children 's books with from the latter part of the century with Walter Crane , Kate Greenaway , and Randolph Caldecott which revolutionized children 's publishing . Early in the century children 's book were often hand colored , and the chromoxylography processes Evans perfected " brought an immense improvement in coloured picture books for children in the last quarter of the century " . In 1865 , Evans agreed with publishing house Routledge and Warne to provide toy books ? paperbound books of six pages , to be sold for sixpence each . They " revolutionized the field of children 's books " and lent Evans his association with children 's book illustrators . The market for toy books became so great that he began to self @-@ publish and commission the artists for illustrations . When demand swelled beyond his capacity , he employed other engraving firms to fill the orders .

The concept of a picture book for children , with the art dominating the text rather than illustrations supplementing the text , was an invention of the mid @-@ 19th century . According to Judith Saltman of the University of British Columbia , Evans ' work as a printer of children 's picture @-@ books is particularly notable ; she believes he printed the " most memorable body of illustrated books for children " in the Victorian era , and the three illustrators , whose works he printed , can be regarded as the " founders of the picture @-@ book tradition in English and American children 's books " . He considered full @-@ colour printing a technique well @-@ suited to the simple illustrations in children 's books . Evans reacted against crudely coloured children 's book illustrations , which he believed could be beautiful and inexpensive if the print run was large enough to maintain the costs . In doing so , Evans hired Walter Crane , Kate Greenaway and Randolph Caldecott as illustrators , all of whom became successful because of Evans ' " recognition , encouragement , and brilliant colour reproduction " .

= = = Walter Crane = = =

In 1863 , Evans employed Walter Crane to illustrate covers for inexpensive novels sold in railroad stations called " yellow backs " ? after their yellow covers . In 1865 , they began to collaborate on toy books of nursery rhymes and fairy tales . Between 1865 and 1876 , Crane and Evans produced two or three toybooks a year . The earliest of the series (which grew in popularity) showed only two colours ? red and blue ? with black or blue used for the key block . Crane illustrated the early books , printed by Evans , This Is the House That Jack Built and Sing a Song of Sixpence , in which the simple designs are presented without background ornamentation and printed only in red , blue and black . Between 1865 and 1886 , Crane illustrated 50 toybooks , all of which were engraved and printed by Evans . These commercially successful books established Crane as one of the most popular illustrators of children 's books in England .

Crane drew his designs directly on the blocks . The designs gradually became more elaborate , as Crane became influenced by Japanese prints . In 1869 , Evans added yellow , which he mixed with red and blue to create a greater variety of hues . The following year , Crane was given a set of Japanese prints and , impressed with " the definite black outline , the flat brilliance as well as delicate colours " he applied the techniques to toy book illustrations . His interest in design details , such as furniture and clothing , are reflected in his illustrations . During these years Crane and Evans worked for the publishing house Routledge and collaborated on books such as The Yellow Dwarf , Beauty and the Beast , Princess Belle ? etoile , and Goody Two Shoes . Crane sold his illustrations directly to the publisher and , with printing and engraving expenses , large print runs were required .

Crane was abroad from 1871 to 1873 while Evans continued to print his work . Evans received Crane 's illustrations via post , photographed the image to the keyblock to be engraved , and then returned a proof to Crane for colouring . In 1878 Crane and Evans collaborated on The Baby 's Opera , a complex project with a dozen fully illustrated pages , and decorative borders on each of the 56 pages . Crane visited Evans at his home in Witley to design the book . Evans gave Crane a dummy book to design the layout of the entire volume . The first print run consisted of 10 @, @ 000 copies , but Evans quickly added more as demand for the volume grew . Evans added more hues to

the illustrations , with " light blues , yellows , and brick reds , delicately blended " replacing the brighter colours of earlier work .

In 1880 , Crane illustrated and Evans printed , *The Baby 's Bouquet : a Fresh Bunch of Old Rhymes and Tunes* , which went on to sell hundreds of thousands of copies . The book shows influences ranging from the Pre -@-@ Raphaelites , Japanese art to the incipient arts and crafts movement . In 1889 , *Flora 's Feast : A Masque of Flowers* was published , featuring flowers represented as human figures , for which Evans used as many as eight colour blocks . Their later collaborations includes an edition of *Alice in Wonderland* with coloured versions of John Tenniel 's 1890 illustrations , and the 1899 *A Floral Fantasy in an Old English Garden* .

= = = Randolph Caldecott = = =

The pressure of such steady production caused Crane to stop his work for a period , and Evans replaced him with Randolph Caldecott , whose magazine illustrations he had seen and liked . Initially Evans hired Caldecott to draw illustrations for nursery rhyme books , beginning with another printing of *The House that Jack Built* in 1877 . Evans proposed to fill each page with an illustration , which were " often little more than outlines " to avoid the blank pages which were customary in toy books of the period . In 1878 *The Diverting Story of John Gilpin* was published , illustrated by Caldecott and printed by Evans . Evans supplied Caldecott with materials for the illustrations and payment based on sales quantities . Evans explained the business arrangement :

I agreed to run all the risks of engraving the key blocks which he drew on wood ; after he finished colouring a proof I would furnish him , on drawing paper , I would engrave the blocks to be printed in as few colours as necessary ... the key block in dark brown , then a flesh tint for the faces , hands , and wherever it would bring the other colours as nearly as possible to his painted copy , a red , a blue , a yellow and a grey .

Beginning in 1878 through 1885 , Caldecott illustrated two books a year for Evans , and secured his reputation as an illustrator . The books were released for the Christmas season , when sales would be sufficient to warrant print runs as large as 100 @,@ 000 . Later , collected editions of four works reprinted in a single volume were published . Throughout the late 1870s , Evans and Caldecott collaborated on 17 books , considered Caldecott 's best , and to have changed the " course of children 's illustrated books " . Caldecott drew pen and ink illustrations on plain paper that were photographed to wood . Evans " engraved in facsimile " the illustration to the woodblock . Six blocks (one for each colour) were used to create a multi @-@ colour " image of extremely delicate quality " .

Caldecott died of tuberculosis in 1886 , and the following year Evans printed a collection of his picture books , titled *The Complete Collection of Pictures & Songs* . Ruari McLean explains in the introduction to Evans ' *Reminiscences* , that as late as the 1960s reprints of Caldecott 's *The House that Jack Built* were " astonishingly , still being printed from the plates made from the original wood @-@ blocks engraved by Edmund Evans " .

= = = Kate Greenaway = = =

In the late 1870s , Kate Greenaway ? who spent her earlier career illustrating greeting cards ? persuaded her father , also in the engraving business , to show Evans her poetry manuscript , *Under the Window* . Evans invited her to Witley , and as he explains : " I was at once fascinated by the originality of the drawings and the ideas of the verse , so I at once purchased them . " Evans believed her illustrations to be commercially appealing and encouraged Routledge to publish the book . Of Greenaway 's first collection of illustrations and verse , Evans writes :

After I had engraved the blocks and colour blocks , I printed the first edition of 20 @,@ 000 copies , and was ridiculed by the publishers for risking such a large edition of a six @-@ shilling book ; but the edition sold before I could reprint another edition ; in the meantime copies were sold at a premium . Reprinting kept on till 70 @,@ 000 was reached .

When George Eliot saw Greenaway 's drawings , while visiting the Evanses at their home , she "

was much charmed by them " , however , she refused Evans ' request to write a children 's story to be illustrated by Greenaway . Published in 1879 , Evans produced 100 @,@ 000 copies of Under the Window (including French and German editions) which helped launch Greenaway 's career as an author and illustrator of children 's books . For Under the Window , Evans paid Greenaway outright for her artwork , and royalties up to one @-@ third of proceeds , after the costs of printing ; for subsequent books he paid half of the proceeds after deducting the printing costs . Evans photographed Greenaway 's drawings to wood , engraved in facsimile , and created colour blocks of red , blue , yellow and flesh tint .

Evans paid particular attention to detail in the printing of her Mother Goose . The " antique look " added to the Regency style artwork , while his ink and colouring choices conveyed the look of a hand @-@ coloured book suitable for a mass @-@ market edition . To achieve the antique look , rough paper was pressed and printed , with the roughness restored after printing by dipping the paper in water . As an example of 19th @-@ century book production , Mother Goose is considered exceptional , and facsimiles were printed well into the mid @-@ 20th century .

During the 1880s , Evans printed two to three Greenaway books a year , including a run of 150 @,@ 000 copies of Kate Greenaway 's Birthday Book (1880) , as well as Mother Goose (1881) , The Language of Flowers (1884) , Marigold Garden (1885) , The Pied Piper of Hamelin (1887) , and King Pepito (1889) . From the mid @-@ 1880s to the mid @-@ 1890s Evans printed , and Greenaway illustrated , nine almanacs ? one each year . Greenaway benefitted from her association with Evans . As the leading publisher of children 's books , Routledge provided Greenaway with a commercial base she may not have achieved without Evans ' influence . Children 's literature scholar Anne Lundin claims the distinctive quality of Evans ' printing , as wells as his popularity as a children 's book printer , linked Greenaway 's name with his , thereby increasing her commercial appeal . Greenaway often visited the Evans family , played with their three daughters and continued to visit Evans after his move to Ventnor . During her career as an illustrator , Greenaway used Evans as sole engraver and printer .

= = Later work and retirement = =

Evans eventually converted to the three @-@ colour printing technique . In 1902 he used the " recently developed Hentschel three @-@ colour process " , at Beatrix Potter 's request , to print her watercolour illustrations for her first book , The Tale of Peter Rabbit . Towards the end of his career , not all of his work was devoted to the three @-@ colour process ; in 1902 he engraved and printed Old English Songs and Dances for W. Graham Robertson , which was described as " harmonious " and " delicate " .

In 1892 , Evans moved to Ventnor on the Isle of Wight , and turned the printing business over to his sons Wilfred and Herbert , although when he stopped engraving wood is unknown . During his last decade he wrote The Reminiscences of Edmund Evans , a short volume he described as " the rambling jottings of an old man " . In that book Evans includes few details of his business practices and processes , and is significant because it adds to the scant information available on the colour printers of the era . In the 1960s , Ruari McLean edited the unrevised 102 @-@ page typescript released to him by Evans ' grandson which was published by the Oxford University Press in 1967 .

Evans died in 1905 , and is buried in Ventnor cemetery . He was survived by his two sons and three daughters . The firm was bought in 1953 by W. P Griffith , Ltd ; Evans ' grandson Rex became managing director . Before his death Evans offered Beatrix Potter an interest in the company which she refused , having recently bought a farm in the Lake District .

= = Additional Evans images = =

= = Detail of John Gilpin = =