

THE ROYAL PICK

J.K. Rowling's John Hancock

Bloomsbury Auctions, 24 Maddox Street, London: Auction Sale 614, Modern First Editions, lot 220, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, by J.K. Rowling. First edition, signed dedication copy from the author, with her additional autograph identification of the number line indicating first edition, tiny abrasions to corners, otherwise a fine copy, 1997. A guide price of £20,000 to £25,000, and eventually sold for £23,000 plus buyer's premium. What I find amazing is the ridiculous price realized for a signed modern first edition. Some collectors and/or dealers are crazy. I fully realize that the books are well written and are extremely popular with kids and some adults and that J.K. Rowling's books have turned young kids on to reading again, especially the boys, but where does this madness end? I know people collect all different genres, but I cannot believe that a 10-year-old signed book is worth about the same as a set of Captain Vancouver's travels. Maybe I have got it all wrong and this crazy market will fall, but where is the beauty in this book compared to a Doves printing or a fine Aldus Manutius? In the same sale an unsigned third impression of the same book sold for £170 plus buyer's premium, so is J.K. Rowling's signature (a living author) worth over £22,000? Not on your nelly!

Henry Sotheran Ltd., 2 Sackville Street, London: Children's and Illustrated Books catalogue, item #151, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare and illustrated by Arthur Rackham, published by William Heinemann, London, 1908, at £650. A first edition illustrated by Rackham in the original printed dust wrapper, a very scarce book. This is a real bargain in my view, as it contains 40 beautiful coloured plates of fairies by Rackham, one of the greatest illustrators of children's books. When compared with the previous listing of Harry Potter, there just is no comparison. Shakespeare, the greatest British writer of all time, paired up with Rackham—an unbeatable combination. Maybe in 400 years' time Rowling may be just as great. Only time will tell.

Maggs Bros. Ltd, 50 Berkeley Square, London: catalogue 1412, Military and Naval History, had many interesting items, notably for me item #167, *The Golden Carpet* and *The*

Silver Crescent, by Somerset Struben de Chair. Both books were published by permission of the War Office and printed by the Golden Cockerel Press, 1943, and both are inscribed by the author to Glubb Pasha and with the Golden Cockerel "Announcement" flyer loosely inserted, at £500. This I believe to be a bargain, as Golden Cockerel printings, especially in wartime, are scarce. De Chair was the intelligence officer with "Kingcol," a flying column of less than 1,500 men under the command of Brig.-Gen. Kingstone. This tiny force was sent from Palestine to Baghdad to deal with the effects of the "Golden Square" coup amongst pre-Nazi Iraqi military officers. Despite the air support extended to the Iraqis by the German and Italian air forces, the operation was a complete success, with Baghdad falling on May 30, 1941. This story is told in *The Golden Carpet*. The sequel volume, *The Silver Crescent*, continues the narrative, telling of the occupation of Baghdad and the opening of the campaign against the Syrian armies of Vichy France. De Chair compares Glubb very favourably with Lawrence of Arabia.

Nicholas Goodyer, 8 Framfield Road, London: catalogue 77, the Summer Catalogue, had one particularly interesting item, #250, *The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls and a Golliwogg*, published by Longmans Green N.D., 1895, at £295. The Dutch dolls, wrapped in the Stars and Stripes, awake on Christmas Eve and play with a hobby-horse to their peril until they meet the golliwogg, Jack-in-the-Box, scissors-boy and others, and sneak outside to play in the snow. The golliwogg is not the scary threat that some politically correct writers and "Loony Left" politicians from the U.K. would have us believe; he is friendly and helpful and has a laughing face. A few years ago the "Loony Left" in the U.K. and Canada started to ban golliwoggs and other characters such as Big-Ears and Noddy. Even Robertson's Jams, which had a golliwogg as their trademark, had to remove poor old Golli' from their products. But even as I write this article, my Golliwogg sits on the windowsill of my office encouraging me to write more in his favour. It is about time for an official re-evaluation.

John King is a bookseller based on B.C.'s Sunshine Coast.