

EDYTH STARKIE

If Edyth Starkie is remembered at all, it is as the wife of the English artist and illustrator Arthur Rackham (1867–1939), or as the aunt of the writers Enid (1897–1970)¹ and Walter Starkie (1894–1976). Edyth did not, however, merely live by proxy as part of the lives of these people eminent in the arts, but had a notable life of her own, as an artist of some stature and reputation. She deserves, at the very least, to be recognised as such, and put with her work into the context of her time.

Edyth Starkie was born at Westcliffe House, County Galway in 1867, the seventh² and youngest child of William Robert Starkie, J P, R M (1824–1897),³ and his wife Frances Starkie, née Power. William Starkie was an Anglo-Irish Protestant, who, probably in the 1870s, inherited a family property, Cregane Manor, Rosscarbery, near Skibbereen in County Cork, to which the family subsequently moved. All of William and Frances Starkie's children were Catholic, their mother's faith, except the eldest son and heir who was brought up as a Protestant to inherit the estate.

The family, some of whom were photographed in 1863 on the lawn in front of their summer residence, Elsinore in Sligo, has been vividly described by Enid Starkie, the daughter of the sixth child, W J M Starkie, in her book *A Lady's Child*, published in 1941. 'By their speech and manner,' Enid writes of her uncles and aunts, 'one could not have guessed them to be Irish, for there was no trace of brogue in their accent and, indeed, they seemed to us children to talk pompously, as if they had potatoes in their mouths.'⁴ Edyth's father was the Resident Magistrate, a post now abolished, but the one that provides the weft and the warp of the *Irish R M* stories of Somerville and Ross. As Edith Somerville wrote in 1928 in the preface to *The Irish R M Complete*,⁵ 'the duty of the Resident Magistrate was to flit from Courthouse to Courthouse in order to impart, as it were, a dispassionate, even an exotic flavour to the local administration of justice. For anyone whose powers of endurance were fortified by the sense of humour, the long hours on "The Bench" of an Irish country-town were not without their enjoyable moments.' William Starkie was said to have been an attractive but lazy man, 'laid back' as we might describe him today, who spent many hours on the Bench reading the

Galway-born artist, Edyth Starkie (1867–1941), aunt of the writers Enid and Walter Starkie, and wife of the artist Arthur Rackham, had her own notable career, producing paintings of international repute.

James Hamilton here gives an account of her life and work.



Edyth Starkie, *The Spotted Dress*, oil on canvas, 1913, Musée de l'Art Moderne, Paris.

newspaper.⁶ The Starkie family is one that might have tumbled from the pages of Somerville and Ross, and, perhaps significantly, the first biographer of Somerville and Ross records that *A Lady's Child* was one of the books that Edith Somerville read in her last years.⁷

Enid had the greatest affection for her Aunt Edyth, and described her as

*'A woman of great charm and beauty, very tall... with fair hair, classical features and vivid blue eyes which seemed to have a light behind them. She had a beautiful voice and a sympathetic manner which set people at their ease and made them tell her everything about themselves. When I was small I remember her standing at her easel in the garden at Undercliffe⁸ and painting. I remember, too, that she used to colour pictures for us in our books of fairy stories.'*⁹

Enid was thirty years younger than her aunt, and this memory must therefore have been of a woman in her late thirties or early forties. Nevertheless, Enid is describing somebody who, to her, appeared young, in a recollection that is one of near adoration. This beautiful artist, a romantic among the other older and more pompous uncles and aunts who surrounded her, stood out for Enid as entertaining and amusing, a favoured and trustworthy confidante. Enid goes on to reveal a deep admiration for her aunt's daring: 'Aunt Edyth, in her youth, was said to have been wild... so outrageous was her behaviour — and Aunt Fanny's too — at Mass at Skibbereen that the parish priest denounced them from the pulpit.' Walter Starkie confirms this, saying that Edyth was 'so full of mischief that I wondered how she could be the sister of my austere father.'¹⁰

Cregane Manor had been built on an exposed headland overlooking Rosscarbery Bay. It was burnt down in the Troubles in the 1920s but has been described as having white-washed walls, gothic doorways, castellations and a jumble of soft blue-grey slate roofs, ringed round by a grove of windswept trees. 'Dotted about the grounds,' Barbara Edwards, Edyth Starkie's daughter recalled years later,¹¹ were 'the little white-washed cottages of the tenants, those legendary characters who ministered into the estate in various ways, digging the land, grooming the horses, plucking the geese, fishing in the bay, providing their children as boot-boys and their grandmothers to sit and poke the fire and tell apocryphal stories of Starkie ancestors.' Edyth rode to

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hounds, sailed in the Bay, teased her brother's tutors and was terrified by nurses, who told her that the pointed stones in the courtyard were the corners of coffins whose inmates would rise up and haunt her if she was naughty. As a little girl, she was also made to wear a vest in the bath-tub, lest the Virgin Mary see her naked.

The high local colour of these stories, told by Edyth to her daughter, paint a lively picture of her background and upbringing. Her artistic leanings were apparent at an early age, for in 1883, when she was sixteen, Frances Starkie put her husband into rooms in Cork and, with Edyth, left the confined society of Skibbereen for London, where Edyth enrolled at the Slade School. There were few serious opportunities for women to train to become painters in Ireland. The Royal Hibernian Academy, for example, did not admit women until 1893. Other aspiring young women artists whose families could afford to do so, such as Edith Somerville or Sarah Purser, travelled abroad with chaperones to the art schools of London or Europe.¹²

Enid suggests that Frances had hopes of Edyth fulfilling, at second hand, the romantic dreams of her own girlhood. There seem, however, to have been deeper reasons behind Frances' concern for her daughter, because, despite the reported liveliness of her background, Edyth suffered as a child from the poor health that was to affect her all her life. As a friend, Mina Welland, wrote twenty years later: '(Edyth) was for years very delicate, and even now her nerves are not strong and she puts her best strength into her work and it suffers if she is not up to the mark. Nobody would suspect this if they had only known her in health, but I know.'¹³

In 1883, the Slade School, then under the Professorship of the French-born painter Alphonse Legros (1837–1911), was one of Europe's most progressive art schools, teaching a strictly observed drawing of the nude, portraiture and figure composition. Form was all. 'Drawing has nothing to recommend it,' wrote John Fothergill in an essay on the principles of teaching drawing at the Slade, 'except that which it expresses, which is form.'¹⁴ Legros encouraged an awareness in his pupils of contemporary French painting, and equally encouraged them to travel. Perhaps at Legros' suggestion,



Edyth Starkie, Self Portrait, oil on canvas, 1889/90

Edyth and her mother moved to Paris in 1884, where Edyth enrolled at the Académie Julian.¹⁵ This was an informal art school, with several branches throughout Paris, one especially for women, which had been enterprisingly established in 1873 by Rodolphe Julian to take the large numbers of French and foreign students who had flocked to Paris, but who were unable to win a place at the École des Beaux Arts. The teaching in the hot and crowded studios was often perfunctory. One of Edyth's teachers,

Jules Lefebvre (1836–1911), managed to correct some seventy works in an hour, while another, Tony Robert-Fleury (1837–1912), would often examine studies without uttering a word.¹⁶

Among other British artists of Edyth's generation who studied at the Académie Julian were Hugh Bellingham-Smith (1866–1922), James Pryde (1866–1941), Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862–1927) and John Lavery (1856–1941). The feverish exposure to French art and art education that they and others ex-

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Edyth Starkie, *Portrait of a Seated Girl*, oil on canvas, dated 1891.

perienced was to determine the course of British art, and to contribute to the development of groups of like-minded artists such as the New English Art Club, the Newlyn School and the International Society. With Edyth at the Académie Julian was the Russian artist and diarist Marie Bashkirtseff (1860–84),¹⁷ who was suffering, terminally, from consumption. Bashkirtseff's *Diaries* give her breathless and self-absorbed account of life at the Académie, and in a *cri de coeur* written in June 1884, a few months before her death,

when Edyth was undoubtedly working at her side, Bashkirtseff exclaims: 'Go to Italy? Stop in Paris? Get married? Paint? What was to be done? If I went to Italy I couldn't be in Paris and wanted to be everywhere at once!'¹⁸

How long Edyth and her mother stayed in Paris is not recorded, through it is most likely that they were there in May 1887 when Edyth exhibited a drawing at the Paris Salon. From Paris, the pair travelled to Dresden, where, once again, Edyth enrolled to study art. From Dresden they

went to Kassel, to visit Edyth's elder brother Rex, who was an officer in the Prussian Guard. Rather too speedily, perhaps, Edyth became engaged to a Prussian officer, Colonel von W —,¹⁹ and a marriage was arranged. When she left Kassel for London to buy her trousseau,²⁰ Edyth was escorted to the railway station by a troop of soldiers who clicked heels for her as the fiancée of their Colonel.²¹ In London it appears that Edyth soon changed her mind about her Colonel, who had sent her home to prepare for 'Kirche, Kuche und Kinder,' and who, as Edyth herself described years later, would insist on challenging to a duel any man to whom his fiancée so much as smiled in the street. Edyth, somewhat the wiser, resumed her studies at the Slade.

The Colonel was not, however, Edyth's only fiancée. Where he came in the pecking order will probably remain a mystery, but Enid and Walter Starkie²² both record that before she finally agreed to marry Arthur Rackham, Edyth had been engaged, mainly to art students, seven times. By 1895, she and her mother had returned to England for good. They settled in a studio first at 118 Adelaide Road, Hampstead, and then, perhaps following William Starkie's death in 1897, moved nearby to 3 Wynchcombe Studios, England's Lane.

It was in London that Edyth made her career as an artist, her surviving paintings being, without known exception, portrait or figure subjects. Her earliest works, to judge by the lists of exhibitions in which she took part, were portraits. Of these the earliest that can be dated with any degree of precision is the *Self Portrait* of 1889 or 1890 (whereabouts unknown; negative dated 30.3(?)90). The sad eyes that Edyth depicts seem to have a prescience, a penetrating, melancholy mood, off-set by the soft-focus, New English Art Club brushwork of the barely discernible shelf and lamp in the background. The subject of another portrait of the 1890s, perhaps *Miss E. L.* (exhibited 1893) or *Miss Dale* (exhibited 1895), has a similar wistfulness and reserve, a mood with which Edyth was characteristically in tune. It has a kinship with the portraits of Edyth's compatriot, William Orpen (1878–1931), and, moreover, with Arthur Rackham's early portraits.

Towards the end of the 1890s, Edyth made a series of figure paintings, which were probably larger in scale than her por-



Edyth Starkie, *The Grebe Hat*, oil on canvas, exhib. 1907.

RIGHT
Edyth Starkie, *Lady in Black*, oil on canvas, exhib. 1909.



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traits, and which include *Saint Cecilia* (exhibited 1898) and *Pippa Passes* (exhibited 1899), a subject taken from Browning. These paintings, and the portraits, are known to the present writer only through a group of contemporary sepia photographs. They show a distant but expected relation, in their use of flattened space and significant gesture, to the work of Edyth's former professor Alphonse Legros and, before him, to Puvis de Chavannes. Influence of a more contemporary kind is evident from the work of the artists of the Newlyn School, in particular from Stanhope Forbes (1857–1947) or Henry Scott Tuke (1858–1929).

Edyth Starkie and Arthur Rackham met as two sociable young artists of exactly the same age in Hampstead in the 1890s.²³ She was 'quizzical, ironic, imaginative like the Irish', and he 'prim, precise and very English in manner'.²⁴ Arthur had been living at Brecknock Studios, Tufnell Park, but he also took a neighbouring studio to Edyth's in those years. Their relationship developed, and in 1901 Edyth became engaged for the eighth and last time. Even so, she maintained her independence for as long as she reasonably could, as Enid Starkie recalled: '...she had many "followers" and kept Arthur Rackham dangling for many years... but he always waited patiently.'²⁵ Edyth's mother was fond of Arthur, his puckish humour appealing to her own Irish sense of fun. He was beginning now to become popular and widely known for his fantasy illustrations to *The Ingoldsby Legends* (published by Dent in 1898) and *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (published by Freemantle in 1900), and Frances Starkie was particularly pleased with this growing success, seeing it as a security for her youngest daughter. Two letters from Frances to Arthur survive, one, of 1901, inviting him to spend Christmas Day with her and Edyth: 'I am quite counting on the pleasure of your spending one day, tomorrow, with us — no refusal I hope.'²⁶ In the other, written just over a year later, Frances tells Arthur of how 'it was a great pleasure to me to hear of your successes. I pray to God they may continue.' She adds, trusting that her future son-in-law would look into the matter for her, 'I often worry myself about the chance of leakage of gas from the cooking stove. Is there any danger of it? Will you see to it?'²⁷

Edyth and Arthur were married in Hampstead on 16 July 1903, an event



Edyth Starkie, *St Cecilia*, oil on canvas, exhib. 1898.

which prompted the letter from Mina Welland quoted above. Mina Welland paints as loving a picture of Edyth as any that survive, and it is the only one we have that was written from the perspective of close friendship, rather than from the obligatory nearness of family:

'I have known Edyth so long, fifteen years. She is one of the most gracious, most beautiful women I have ever known and loved; she is more beautiful now than when she was a lovely girl looking at the world with innocent eyes. I do not know anyone who has grown so in mind, and in nobility of character keeping still the innocence and gaiety of a young girl. Perhaps this would not have been so if she had had to fight her way into the world, or to deal with unsympathetic people, an atmosphere of love was the only one she could grow in... She was always very sensitive, perhaps too much so, but out of that sensibility has developed a keen sympathy, I suppose the best gift of an artist. I don't think she can stand too much excitement, or much worry.'

Here, perhaps, is an explanation for the sadness behind Edyth's eyes in her *Self Portrait* of 1890. It also may suggest that the reason for her many engagements was not a fickleness, or due to any flirtatious streak, as if she were the Zuleika Dobson of the Art Schools, but a fear through nervousness of committing herself. Like Arthur, indeed, she had been of fragile health as a child, marking her out from her rumbustious brothers and sisters.

Two months after their marriage, Edyth and Arthur moved to 3 Primrose Hill Studios, off Fitzroy Road, Hampstead. Edyth soon became pregnant, but the following March her baby, a girl, was stillborn. The couple remained at Primrose Hill Studios until 1906, when they moved to a large detached house, 16 Chalcot Gardens, Hampstead. Arthur's fame was now almost unassailable in the public eye, and each Christmas his latest illustrated book was eagerly awaited in the bookshops. His *Rip Van Winkle* was published in 1905, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* in 1906, *Alice in Wonderland* in 1907 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1908. Arthur was now a famous man, and as a result of his fame was courted for his opinions on subjects ranging from illustration to dolls, and was even caricatured in *Punch*. Their house was a centre for parties and musical gatherings in Hampstead, and among their many friends and visitors were George Bernard Shaw, Charles Holroyd, Briton Rivière, Lewis

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Edyth Starkie, *Pippa Passes*, oil on canvas, exhib. 1899.

Baumer and Eleanor Farjeon. In 1908, their daughter, Barbara, was born.

The twelve years between Edyth's marriage, when she was aged thirty-six and 1916, when, aged forty-nine she suffered a severe heart attack, were the years of her mature output as a gifted painter. They were also the years when her gaiety, hospitality and sense of fun were given their happiest expression. Her nephew, Walter Starkie, described how she was the perfect foil to Arthur's prim English

manner, and that when in company she would do her best to shock him.²⁸ Barbara's memories of her mother, which date from the years of the First World War at the earliest, are of a woman whom everybody liked, and many people loved. They echo, in part, Enid Starkie's memories, and those of Mina Welland.

'I don't think she was conventionally beautiful, but people instantly felt that she was. She had a smooth pink and white complexion, unlined even to the end of her

*life, wide-open blue eyes and snow white hair from an early age. She made people laugh without ever saying anything particularly witty, and could give great comfort without much useful advice. Servants and tradesmen adored her, and she only had to paint a room a certain colour for her friends to want to copy it. She loved experimenting in interior decoration, and often became very daring, covering chairs with bits of old petticoat and other fancies. She used to arrange flowers in saucepans long before Constance Spry made it fashionable.'*²⁹

In parallel with her husband's developing fame, Edyth was building a personality and a following of her own. Having had works included in seven Royal Academy Summer exhibitions since 1897, and being a regular exhibitor in the Autumn Exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, from the same year, Edyth exhibited with the International Society at the Grafton and Grosvenor Galleries from 1905, and was invited to join the National Portrait Society at its inaugural exhibition in 1911.³⁰

In common with those of the 1890s, Edyth's later portraits have a pensive quality and a characteristic and highly personal intensity of mood. Now, however, they are painted in subdued colours, pointing to Edyth's strong identification with Sickert and Whistler. This is a manner fully in tune with the ideals of the International Society, of which Whistler was the Founder President. Edyth was now beginning to receive occasional mentions in reviews of group exhibitions in the national press, although when this happened her name usually came well down at the bottom of the articles.³¹ An exception came when she was taken to task by *The Times* in a review of the 1915 National Portrait Society exhibition for painting 'a sincere and interesting portrait of a woman... in a fog.'³² *The Globe*, on the other hand, commended the same painting, anonymously called *Portrait* (whereabouts unknown), for 'a certain sombre distinction of manner and for a rather unusual quality of style.'³³ Official invitations to exhibit were now coming Edyth's way. In 1914 the Walker Art Gallery invited her to show *Girl's Head*, and, in the same year, the Royal Scottish Academy asked her to exhibit *Reflections*. Both of these works had been 'spotted' by the exhibition's committee members at the Royal Academy and the Grosvenor Gallery respectively. Such in-

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vitations, to by-pass the normal sending-in and jury procedures, did not come lightly, suggesting that Edyth was already marked out as an artist to watch.

Perhaps Edyth's greatest achievement was her recognition in Spain and France. She was asked to submit a painting to the 1907 5th International Exhibition of Art in Barcelona, an invitation which was followed by another from Barcelona to take part in the 1911 6th International Exhibition. It was here that she won a Gold Medal for *The Black Veil*, a work bought the following year by the Barcelona Municipality for their public collection. In Paris, too, her painting *The Spotted Dress* was bought by the collector Edmund Davis in 1913 for presentation by him to the Luxembourg Gallery with thirty-six other works by contemporary British artists, including Eric Kennington, William Nicholson, James Pryde and her husband Arthur Rackham.

The only record which survives to give documentary evidence of the day-to-day extent of Edyth's activity as an artist in Arthur's account book for 1915 to 1939.³⁴ In 1915, Arthur records that fees paid for Edyth's models amounted to £25, costume hire for the models to £2 and materials to £2. The accounts show that Arthur himself paid between 5/- and 10/- for a model session, so this suggests that Edyth might have had, say, seventy-five sessions over the year with her model, indicating, if not an intense activity, at least a regular and methodical one. The fact that she worked extensively from the model accords with her adoption of the widespread contemporary practice of maintaining sitters' anonymity, by giving them fragmented or poetic titles that forbade identification.

Arthur himself paid tribute to his wife's work, in the knowledge that his own fame might be casting Edyth into the shade. When Eleanor Farjeon, then a young author and journalist, was preparing an article on Arthur for the American *Saint Nicholas Magazine*, Arthur wrote to her to comment on what he had seen of Eleanor Farjeon's first draft:

'I do rather feel that so intimate an article on me that yet doesn't mention other half is somewhat wide of the truth... I should like it if you could put in something as prettily as is ever possible about her being a companion in craft as in the rest of life. The inexorable shutting of the downstairs studio door during certain hours only conceals a



Arthur Rackham, *The Three Bears*, 1918.

*fellowship. The house that you refer to so pleasantly is of course due to her influence more than anyone else's, much. She is at least as distinguished in her own way as — well as any other living artist almost — only her work makes such rare appearances that she is very little known... But to give any true picture of our life she should appear, and as a fellow artist.'*³⁵

Another way in which Arthur paid tribute to his wife was by including her painting *The Grebe Hat* (exhibited 1907) in the furnishings of the dining room of *The Three Bears* in his illustration of the subject made in 1918 for the Macmillan edition of Flora Annie Steel's collection of *English Fairy Tales*. There it hangs in its gold frame, behind the chair of the Father Bear, who is clearly an art collector of discrimination, and beside a drawing of a ballerina and an eighteenth century rococo figure painting.

This tasteful setting for Edyth's picture is the more apt in the light of this illegibly signed letter to Edyth written probably in 1914: 'Just a line, dearest Edyth, to say your portrait in the International is the most beautiful, tender and exquisitely felt thing in the whole room — it holds one with the force of a fine old master. May Sir Philip (Sassoon)³⁶ see those you did of me as he greatly admires your 'Girl's Head' (a title quite unfitted to so subtle an expression of temperament and so masterly a rendering of the mysterious.)'³⁷ The old master quality that the correspondent identified could also be applied to *The Grebe Hat* (Private Collection), with its

impenetrable dark background and arrangement of head and hands reminiscent of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* and *Saint John the Baptist*.

In addition to paintings, there is a suggestion that Edyth made portrait sculpture, though there is no record of the size of her output, and the present writer has found no evidence that she ever exhibited sculpture. One piece, reportedly the head of a nurse, who in 1916 was employed to look after the Starkie nephews and nieces in Dublin, was in the collection of Enid Starkie.³⁸

Although Edyth had no children of her own who could be called up, and Arthur was well over the recruitment age, she was nevertheless greatly affected by the First World War. She felt the suffering of her friends acutely, and this had a destructive effect on her already fragile health. In the first few weeks of the war, one close friend, Laura Bell, the French wife of the artist Robert Anning Bell, sent a postcard with this tragic message about her son from her first marriage:

*'My boy is in the 148th Regiment of Infantry. This regiment is from Givay near Sedan, and was practically wiped out. They are reforming it here, with children of the 1914 class. My Charles has already distinguished himself and is proposed for a commission. (All the officers are killed nearly). He starts on Monday 26th for Nantes and from there to the Front. My dear husband has let me come here with my hands full for my dear child, whose brave calm courage has given me calm, and it is with humble prayer to God to spare him that I shall bid my dear boy farewell.'*³⁹

News of this magnitude was hard enough for Edyth to bear, and it was followed by another misfortune which stemmed from a misunderstanding. Edyth's brother, Rex, the officer in the Prussian Guard, had died of tuberculosis in the 1890s, but Edyth had kept in close touch with his German widow, Alle Starkie, and her sister Dr Lili Müzinger. The friendship, however, was shattered for the duration of the war when Edyth was affected by the anti-German propaganda in the British press, and the news that some of Arthur's work had been lost when an exhibition of English illustration at Leipzig Museum was destroyed by a fire thought to have been caused deliberately. When Lili was wrongly accused of being a spy, and arrested by police in Northern Italy, she begged Edyth to help her clear her name

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by obtaining references from prominent English people. Edyth tried, but was unable to give Lili the help she needed, but nonetheless Lili wrote a cutting note saying: 'I have the feeling that you dare not do anything in my favour because you yourself are not convinced of my not being the spy. But that is an awkward and painful revelation.'⁴⁰

When this misunderstanding was at its height, Edyth's health gave way and she suffered a serious heart attack, probably in 1916. Arthur's accounts for 1916 reflect this, showing a sudden drop, to £8, in fees paid for Edyth's models, representing about twenty five sessions for the year, while for the seven subsequent years there are no entries at all.

To ease her anxieties, and to remove her from the stress of the bombing raids over London, Arthur moved Edyth to lodgings in Littlehampton and nearby Rustington. Although during this period Walter Starkie found his aunt to be 'gay and ironic as I always remembered', in spite of her ailments and the stress of war, he noted that she showed more clearly than Arthur the ravages of the years, and was 'completely white-haired and suffered from heart disease. The air raids and the difficulties of catering in London had affected her nerves.'⁴¹

At the end of the war, Edyth was able to begin to rebuild her friendship with Lili, and tried to explain the misunderstanding of four years earlier. Her letter to Lili ends with the moving words: 'As you know there must have been hundreds of persons wrongfully accused during the war, and the only thing to do is to accept it as one of the hardships of the times, of which there were no end. Innumerable wrongs have had to be borne, for goodness sake let us forget them.'⁴²

Three months later, Edyth wrote to her sister-in-law Alle Starkie, in a letter which gives the first indications that Edyth was gradually beginning to paint again. 'We are all very well, at least if not very well I am stronger and able to work a little. Really better than I ever hoped to be again after my serious illness... It seems to me that everyone in the world is suffering, more or less...'⁴³

After the war, Arthur and Edyth sold 16 Chalcot Gardens and moved in 1920 to a large, rambling country house, Houghton House, near Amberley, less than ten miles north of Littlehampton. The relaxed, rural surroundings of Houghton gave

Edyth a new lease of life, and she was able to consolidate her health sufficiently and resume painting. The Rackhams' social life opened out, too, as they made a wide circle of friends in the neighbourhood, including the engineer Sir Henry Royce, and the families of the zoologist Sir Harry Johnston, the sculptor Francis Derwent Wood, and the painter Oliver Hall. Edyth's one surviving diary⁴⁴ gives a flavour of their life in 1923. It reveals that she was now highly active, travelling up to London where she met and dined with Arthur in his London studio, and visited the theatre, galleries and shops. She went for regular drives in the Sussex countryside, played bridge extensively, and was heavily involved with family and domestic matters.

It is also clear that she had begun to paint regularly. In February and March 1923, Edyth worked on at least three paintings of her model, Joyce, who seems to have come to Houghton for ten to fifteen painting sessions over those two months. There is now a returning spirit of joy in many of Edyth's entries in the diary, despite the fact that during the year she also records two or three minor heart attacks, and other periods of sickness. On 19 February she writes: 'Started new picture of Joyce in grey silk dress standing looking out of window. Got on well and very interested.' The next day Edyth tells us that she is making the silk frock for the new picture, and on 26 February she describes her medium: 'Painted Joyce... Did good work using my thin petroleum medium with a few drops of Perpoma in it.' Later in the year, being overwhelmed with running the house and other domestic work, Edyth writes despairingly, in a poignant echo of Marie Bashkirtseff's despair in 1884 at her illness, (24 April): 'Must try to get some of the sewing off my shoulders or I'll never paint or keep well.' On 27 June however, this mood seems to have passed, and Edyth records that she 'had Joyce and made a wonderful new discovery for painting.' Tantalisingly, however, what that discovery was we are not told; but what is already clear is that Edyth, in 1923, was still an eager and interested artist, carrying on with her work despite the pressures of ill health and domestic responsibilities.

It is unlikely that Edyth was able to work for much longer, as the final trace of her painting activity comes in an entry in Arthur's account book for 1924: 'Edyth's

model: £5.' This, it seems, was the end of Edyth Starkie's painting career, though she lived on in indifferent health until her death in March 1941, a year and a half after her husband. Barbara recalled her mother's last years spent in their new house at Limpsfield, Surrey: 'When she was bed-ridden... she listened in to everything, including Children's Hour, with great enjoyment. She was a keen, but theoretical, partisan of such things as Free Love and Communism, and other isms which, in her society, it was rather naughty to support. She herself led the most mild and strict of lives.'⁴⁵

Edyth was beset by two connected difficulties in her career as an artist: her poor health and her husband's fame, both of which made it increasingly difficult for her to establish an independent career. Arthur, however, drew strength from her work, and surrounding him in his studios, faintly visible in the backgrounds of photographs of him at work, were not his own paintings, but those of his wife, Edyth Starkie.

James Hamilton

James Hamilton was born in Cambridge in 1948. He graduated from Manchester University with a degree in History of Art in 1971. From 1971 to 1989 he worked successively as an Assistant in the Ulster Museum, Belfast; Curator of Art at Portsmouth and Wakefield City Art Galleries; Keeper of the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield, and Director of Yorkshire Contemporary Art Group and Holbeck Triangle Trust, Leeds.

He has organised and written catalogues for many exhibitions, including Wilhelm Lehmbruck (Portsmouth, 1974); Paintings from the Festival of Britain (Sheffield, 1978); Arthur Rackham (Sheffield, Bristol and V&A, 1979-80); Edmund Dulac (Sheffield, 1982-83); John Singer Sargent's 'The Misses Vickers' (Sheffield, 1984); and Artist in Industry (Sheffield and tour, 1983-84) in which the work of Hughie O'Donoghue first reached a wide audience. His first book, Arthur Rackham — A Life with Illustration, was published by Pavilion Books in September 1990.

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NOTES AND LIST OF
EXHIBITED WORKS OVERLEAF

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NOTES

1. See Joanna Richardson, *Enid Starkie*, John Murray, 1973.
2. Enid Starkie, *A Lady's Child*, London, Faber, 1941, p. 58. Enid Starkie suggests that her grandparents, Edyth's parents, had five sons and two daughter, though the existence of one unnamed son remains shadowy.
3. An updated obituary of William Starkie is among the Starkie Papers in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Ref. Joanna Richardson, *op. cit.*
4. Enid Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. 56
5. E Oe Somerville and Martin Ross, *The Irish RM Complete*, Faber, 1928. Preface by E Oe Somerville.
6. Barbara Edwards, typescript memoir of her parents, 1957, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
7. Maurice Collis, *Somerville and Ross*, London, Faber, 1968, p. 266
8. Enid's parents' house at Killiney, overlooking Dublin Bay.
9. Enid Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
10. Walter Starkie, *Scholars and Gypsies*, John Murray, 1963, p. 18
11. Barbara Edwards, *op. cit.*
12. Jeanne Sheehy, 'The training and professional life of Irish women artists before the twentieth century', *Irish Women Artists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, National Gallery of Ireland, 1987, p. 9
13. Letter Mina Welland to Arthur Rackham, n.d. [1903] Rackham Family.
14. John Fothergill, 'The Principles of Teaching Drawing at the Slade School', *The Slade: A Collection of Drawings and Pictures.... 1893-1907*, London, 1907, p. 33.
15. Musée National du Luxembourg, *École Britan-*
nique: don Edmund Davis, Paris, 1915, p. 92, entry on Edyth Starkie.
16. For a lively account of the Académie Julian, see John Rewald, *Post Impressionism — Van Gogh to Gauguin*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1978, pp. 250-54. See also H C and C A White, *Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World*, John Wiley, New York, 1965, p. 26-27; and *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff* (trans. Mathilde Blind); Cassell, London, 1890, 2 vols., *passim*.
17. Walter Starkie, *op. cit.* p. 18
18. *The Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff*, Vol II, p. 440 (25 June 1884)
19. Her fiancé is so named by May C Starkie in her letter to Derek Hudson, 17 March 1958 (NAL, V&A). It is all we know of him.
20. Letter Enid Starkie to Derek Hudson, 7 November 1957 (NAL, V&A).
21. Letter May C Starkie to Derek Hudson, *cit.* (NAL, V&A).
22. Enid Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. 59; Walter Starkie, *op. cit.* pp. 18-19.
23. For further information about Arthur Rackham, see James Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham — A Life with Illustration*, (Pavilion, London 1990).
24. Walter Starkie, *loc. cit.*
25. Enid Starkie to Derek Hudson, letter *cit.*
26. Letter Frances Starkie to Arthur Rackham, 24 December 1901. Rackham Family.
27. Letter Frances Starkie to Arthur Rackham, 2 January 1903. Rackham Family.
28. Walter Starkie, typescript memoir of Arthur and Edyth Rackham, (1957), (NAL, V&A).
29. Barbara Edwards, *op. cit.*
30. Letter National Portrait Society to Edyth Starkie Rackham, 17 June 1910. Rackham Family.
31. Edyth's name was mentioned, albeit briefly, in the following reviews of International Society exhibitions. There may be others. *Birmingham Post*, 9 April 1913 and 22 April 1914; *The Queen*, 12 April 1913; *The Globe*, 20 April 1914.
32. *The Times*, 13 March 1915
33. *The Globe*, 20 March 1915
34. Coll: Rackham Family.
35. Letter Arthur Rackham to Eleanor Farjeon, envelope postmarked 18 December 1913. Sold Christie's, December 1989.
36. Sir Philip Sassoon, Bt. (1888-1939), the young connoisseur and art collector, who was MP for Hythe from 1912 until his death. A portrait of Sassoon by Philip de Lazlo was included in the 1915 National Portrait Society exhibition.
37. Letter Coll: Rackham Family.
38. Shown in a photograph of Enid Starkie, illustrated Joanna Richardson, *op. cit.*, facing p. 216. The present writer has not seen the sculpture.
39. Postcard Laura Bell to Edyth Starkie Rackham, 21 October 1914. Rackham Family.
40. Lili Müzinger to Edyth Starkie Rackham, 20 September 1915, postmarked 7 January 1916. Rackham Family.
41. Walter Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. 167
42. Edyth Starkie Rackham to Lili Müzinger, 11 August 1919. Rackham Family.
43. Edith Starkie Rackham to Alle Starkie, 9 November 1919. Rackham Family.
44. Coll: Rackham Family.
45. Barbara Edwards, *op. cit.*

LIST OF WORKS

Exhibited works. All are oil on canvas, unless stated.

British Exhibitions

International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, London.

- 1905 *Young Girl* (222)
 1909 *Reflections* (187) (Exhibition of Fair Women.)
 1913 *Lady in Black* (142)
 1914 *The Straw Hat* (15)

National Portrait Society, London.

- 1911 *The Locket* (109)
Reflections (110)
Portrait Study (121) (drawing)
 1914 *Miss W. W.* (109)
 1915 *Portrait* (68)

Royal Academy

- 1895 *Miss M. D.* (287)
 1897 *Lilla* (702)
 1898 *St. Cecilia* (294)
 1899 *Pippa Passes* ('How near I ever might approach all these,' etc. — R. Browning)
 1907 *The Grebe Hat* (814)
 1909 *A Lady in Black* (503)
 1910 *The Black Veil* (32)
 1914 *Girl's Head* (277)

Royal Society of Portrait Painters
 1893 *Miss E. L.* (110)
 1895 *Miss Dale* (57)

Royal Watercolour Society
 (One work — title unknown)

Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool¹

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| 1897 <i>St. Cecilia</i> (79) | £105.00.0 |
| 1898 <i>Pippa Passes</i> (1107) | £157.10.0 |
| 1900 <i>The Gardens of Pleasure</i> (28) | £ 84.00.0 |
| 1909 <i>A Lady in Black</i> (1026) | no price |
| 1910 <i>The Grebe Hat</i> (1047) | no price |
| 1912 <i>Reflections</i> (1113) | £ 31.10.0 |
| 1914 <i>A Girl's Head</i> (1003) | £ 63.00.0 |

Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh.
 1914 *Reflections*

Foreign Exhibitions

Barcelona, International Expositions of Art
 1907 Exhibit title unknown
 1911 *The Black Veil* (609) (winner of Gold Medal)

Paris Salon
 1887 *Portrait of Mlle. K...* [Drawing] (3473)

Luxembourg Galleries: Edmund Davis Collection
 (Presented 1913)
Portrait of a Woman: The Spotted Dress.

Catalogue of Oil Paintings.

(This is not a complete list, and includes only those works known by the present writer to have been painted by Edyth Starkie. The dates given are the dates of first exhibition.
 W. U. = Whereabouts Unknown.)

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|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1889/90 | <i>Self Portrait</i> | W. U. |
| 1893 | <i>Miss E. L.</i> | W. U. |
| 1895 | <i>Miss Dale</i> | W. U. |
| 1897 | <i>Lilla</i> | W. U. |
| 1898 | <i>St. Cecilia</i> | W. U. |
| 1899 | <i>Pippa Passes</i> | W. U. |
| 1900 | <i>The Gardens of Pleasure</i> | W. U. |
| 1905 | <i>Young Girl</i> | W. U. |
| 1907 | <i>The Grebe Hat</i> | Private Collection |
| 1909 | <i>A Lady in Black</i> | Private Collection |
| | <i>Reflections</i> | W. U. |
| 1910 | <i>The Black Veil</i> | Barcelona Museum |
| c. 1910 | <i>Old Woman going to Mass</i> | Private Collection |
| 1911 | <i>The Locket</i> | |
| 1913 | <i>The Spotted Dress</i> | Paris, Musée de l'Art Moderne |
| 1914 | <i>The Straw Hat</i> | Private Collection |
| | <i>Miss M. W.</i> | W. U. |
| | <i>Girl's Head</i> | W. U. |
| Date unknown | <i>Portrait of Edward Mackenzie</i> | Baskerville Private Collection |