

# Taking the Waters

The lighter side of the Harrogate Cure  
*through the humorous postcards of the 1900s*



Gavin Holman

November 2019 (updated January 2021)

# Introduction

Since the early 17th century, the waters of Harrogate had been taken by locals and visitors to the area. The chalybeate springs of High Harrogate were originally the more popular, but by the middle of the 18th century doctors had discovered a satisfactory method of using the sulphur wells of Low Harrogate for internal treatments and extended their use in baths. A separate chalybeate spring was found, where the Royal Hall now stands, which effectively made it independent of High Harrogate. The Pump Room was opened, a Promenade Room was built, and the Valley Gardens were laid out. In total 87 springs arose within the town's boundaries.



The first honorary secretary of the Harrogate Bath Hospital, Pickersgill Palliser, was a man of many talents who in 1834 started to produce a list of "*The Company at Harrogate*" - a list of visitors to the town and where they were staying. As time went on, he added information about events, church services and advertisements, and by 1836 he realised that a newspaper had evolved from the "*List of Visitors*" and he adopted the name *The Harrogate Advertiser*. Entertainments for the visitors were soon brought into the town, and musical concerts in the various grounds and bandstands became a daily feature, lasting through until WW2.

Visitors to the town who arrived for curative purposes were encouraged to take part in various activities, in addition to any prescribed treatments, which ranged from gentle walks in the gardens, to more exhausting tramps through the woods and nearby "moors", on return they could relax to entertainments provided by the town or the various spa organisations, consisting of concerts from the local orchestra and bands, and others e.g. pierrots and singing groups.



## The Daily Routine

The basic recommended length for the "cure" was for a period of not less than three weeks for "permanent benefit to be gained" and to be followed, in some instances, by a further visit to the seaside. Visitors were also encouraged to take the waters and bathing treatments under prescription.

7.00-8.00am	Rise and visit Pump Room for first tumbler of water
7.00-8.15am	Walk about, listening to the band
8.15am	Take second tumbler of water
8.15-9.00am	Listen to the band and if prescribed take third glass of water
9.00am	Breakfast
	For some people it is advisable that they drive; either by omnibus, carriage, or bath chair but the walk home can be advantageous if it can be accomplished without undue fatigue. Care should be taken to avoid exertion.
10.00-11.00am	Morning paper or letter writing
11.00am	Shopping/Walk/Listen to band/or Bath
11.30am	Second visit to Pump Room
1.00pm	Rest for half an hour
1.30pm	Lunch to be followed by one hour of rest
Afternoon	Driving, Walking, Cycling, Golfing or third visit to Pump Room. Afternoon tea in Gardens listening to the band
7.00pm	Dinner
	Concert room
10.00pm	Bed
	<i>For some patients, massage is better than exercise</i>

## Promotion of the town and its “cure”

Harrogate had to compete with similar spa towns in the UK and Europe, and it used various advertising methods to draw patients and more casual visitors to it. One advantage it had was that Knaresborough was nearby, with a range of additional attractions for visitors to the area.

As well as the newspaper and leaflet advertisements, the town also supported the production and sale of picture postcards for visitors to send to friends and family, or to keep as souvenirs. These only became common in the late 1890s and thereafter, the “golden age” being from 1895 to 1910.

Aside from the photographic or “landscape” style of postcard, which showed views of the town and countryside, or scenes of buildings and streets, there were a large number of more humorous cards which illustrated the “delights”, or otherwise, of the Harrogate experience. Many of these featured aspects of “taking the waters” – mainly because of the unpleasant taste and smell of the sulphurous springs – which in some cases were so bad they had to be doing you some good!

One card even had the following poem on it, extolling the benefits of the well:

### Harrogate – the Old Sulphur Well

*Ye gracious gods defend us,  
And never again send us,  
Though dear friends tickets lend us,  
For the Old Sulphur Well*

*Youth and beauty here appear  
When the morning sun shines clear,  
Darby and his Joan dear  
Grace the Old Sulphur Well*

*Kind spirits – all preserve us  
From maidens who observe us  
While “hot and strong” they serve us  
From the Old Sulphur Well*

*“Take the bitter with the sweet”.  
“Get it down”. “Enjoy the treat”  
Greet each other as we meet  
At the Old Sulphur Well*

*Stroll around while music charms  
All our direst first alarms,  
Read the news of towns and farms  
Far from Old Sulphur Well*

*But, ye gods, the half hour’s bye,  
Must we have another “try”?  
Ten ounces more!! – then – Goodbye  
To you Old Sulphur Well*

Here following are a selection of the cards and images which show the lighter side of Harrogate’s cure culture, which sadly is no more, though you can still experience the waters at the town’s Pump Museum – if you dare!

See also: Ellis, Norman – Drinking the Harrogate Waters – *Picture Postcard Monthly* – December 2000, pp. 32-33



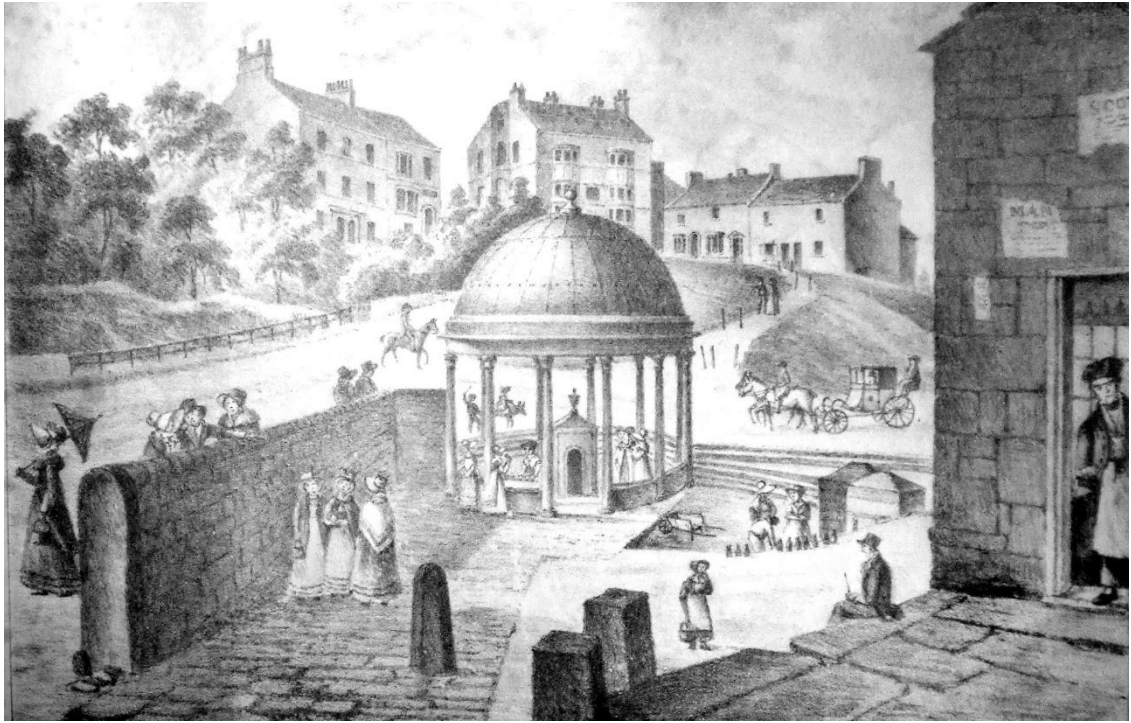
# Welcome to the town

Various cards giving a general welcome to the town. The first few are prints from the very early days when the spa was just establishing itself, and before the mass arrival of visitors due to the coming of the railways.

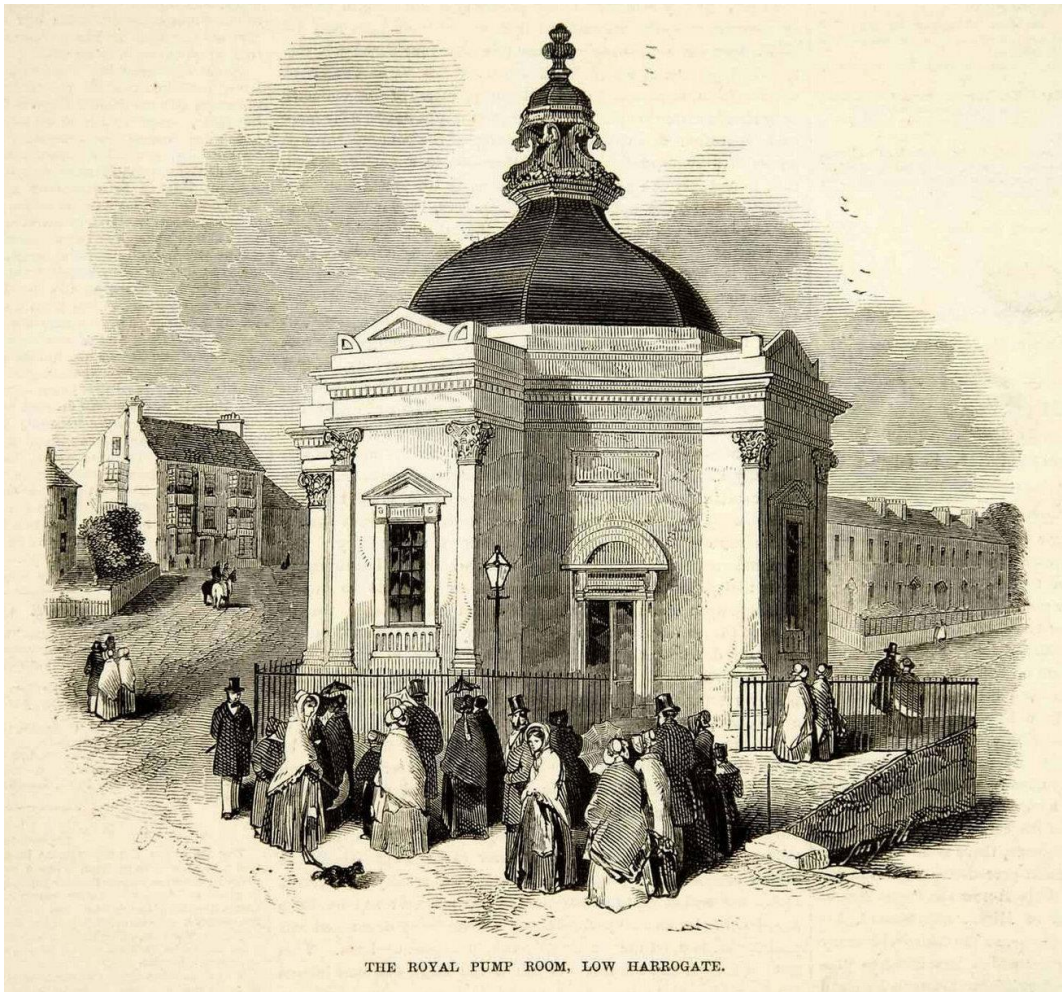
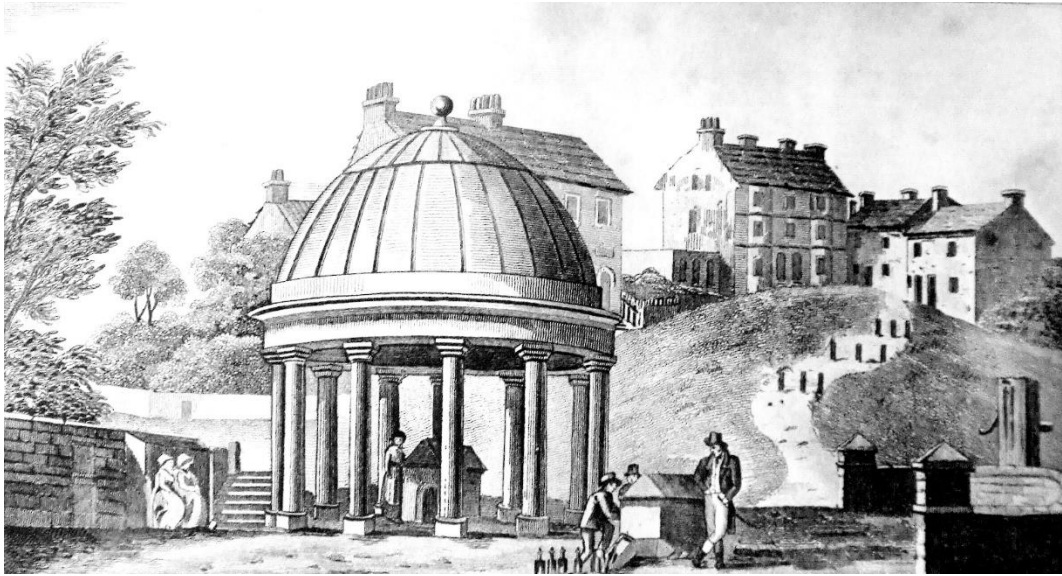




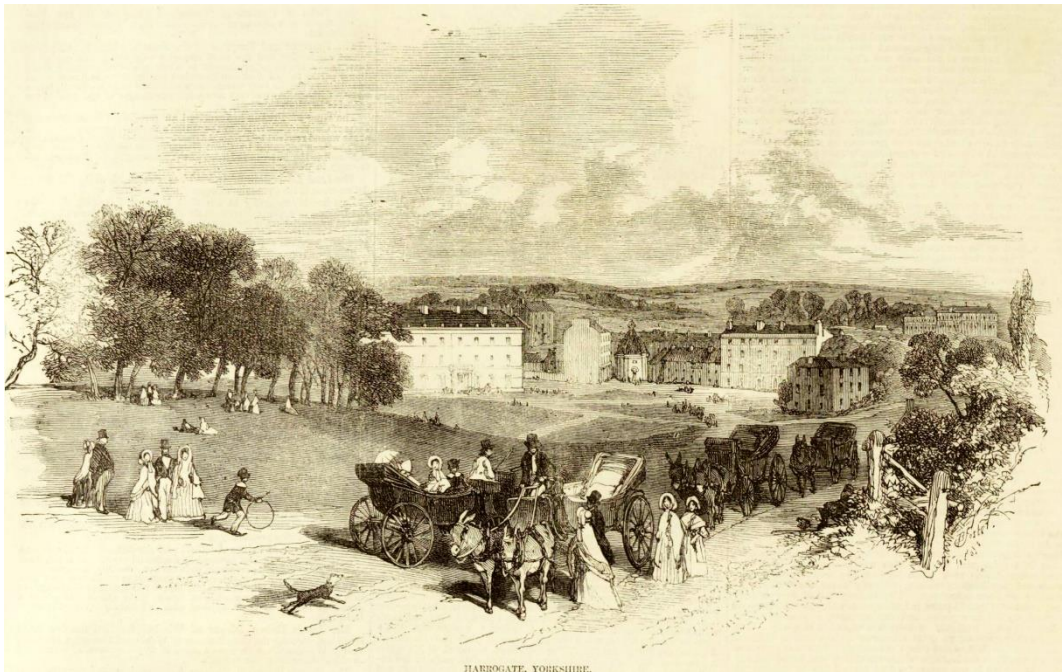












HARROGATE, YORKSHIRE.

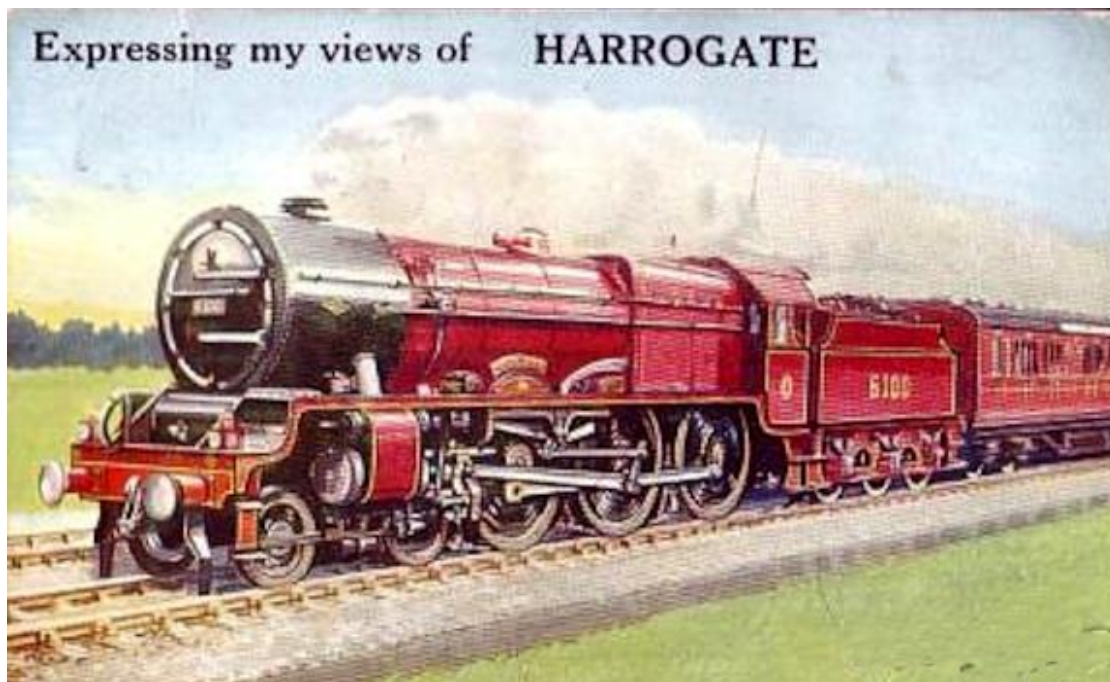




ROYAL PROMENADE, AND CHELTENHAM PUMP ROOM, LIBRARY, AND PLEASURE GROUNDS, LOW HARROGATE.



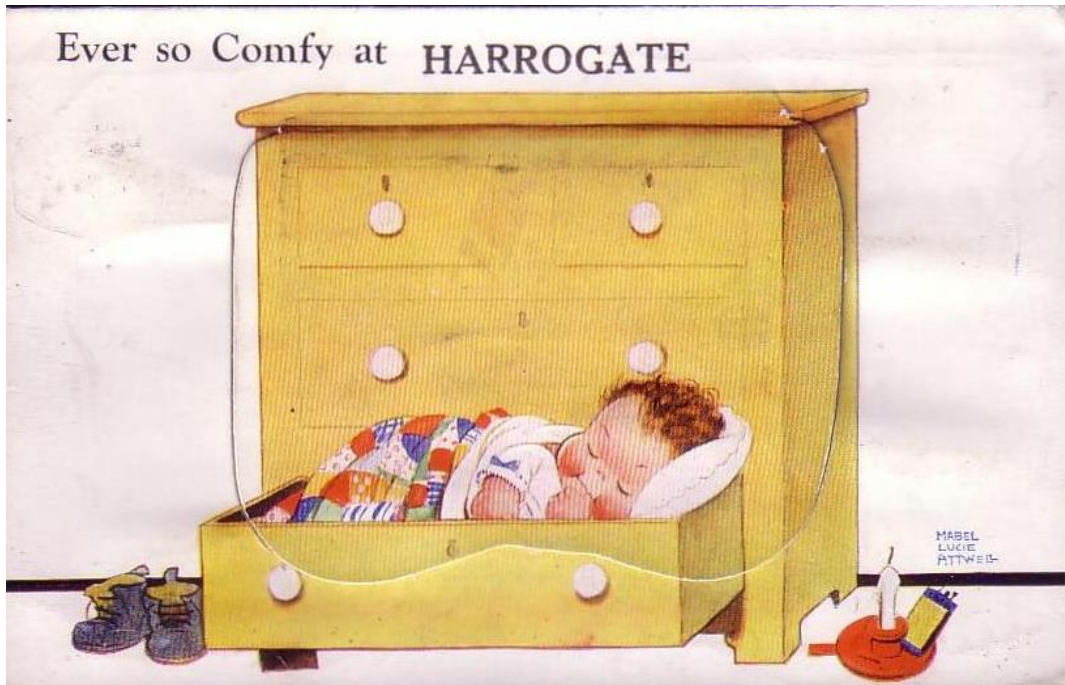




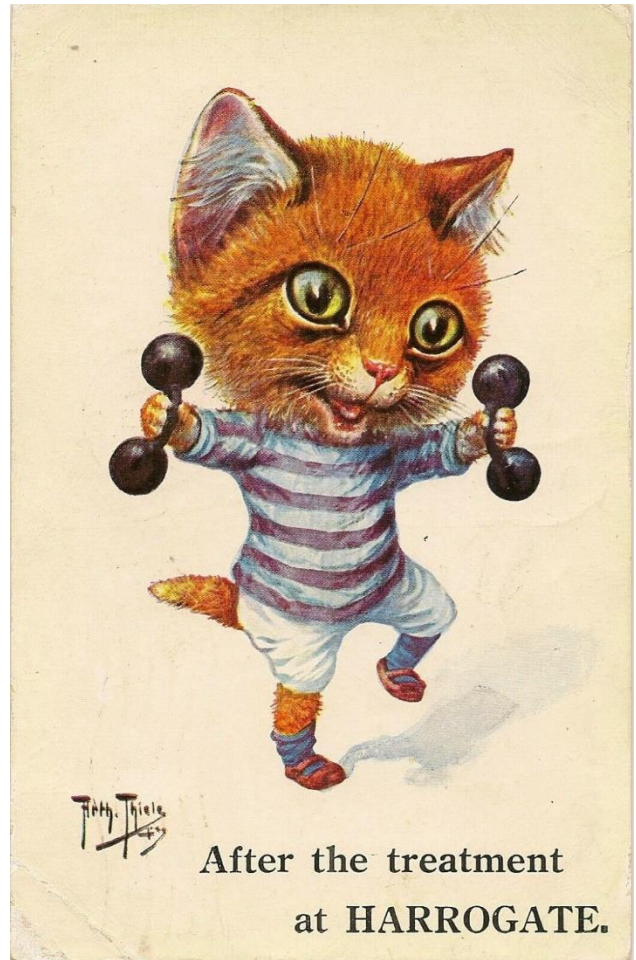




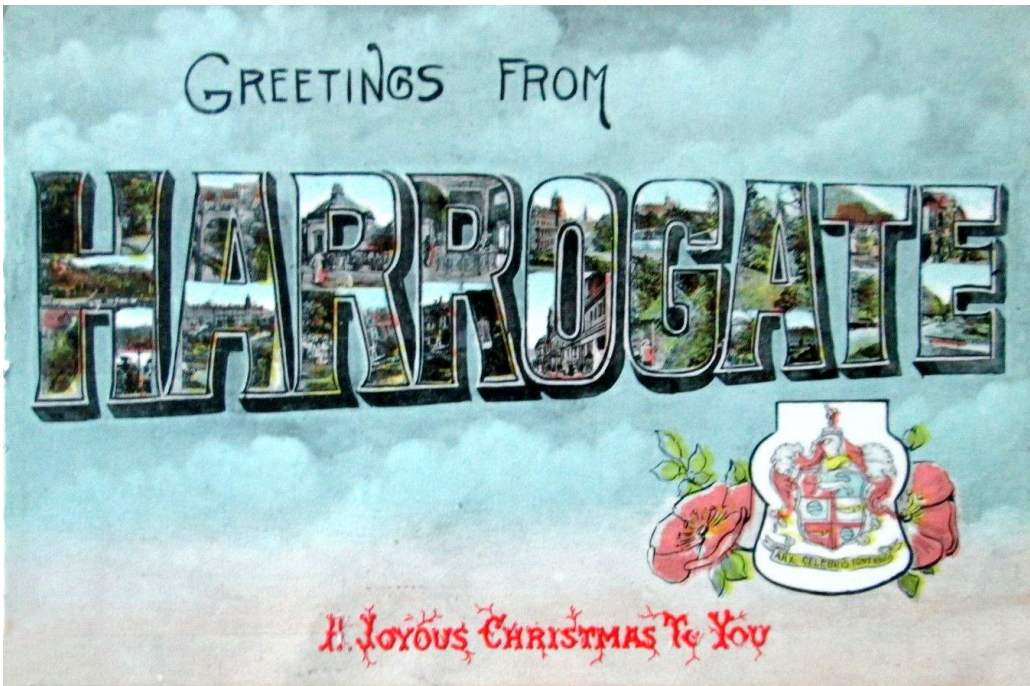
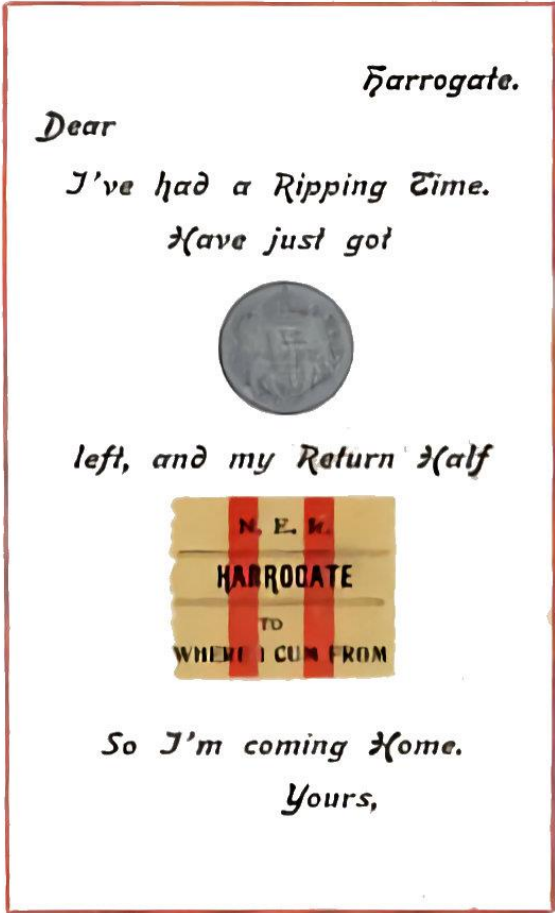
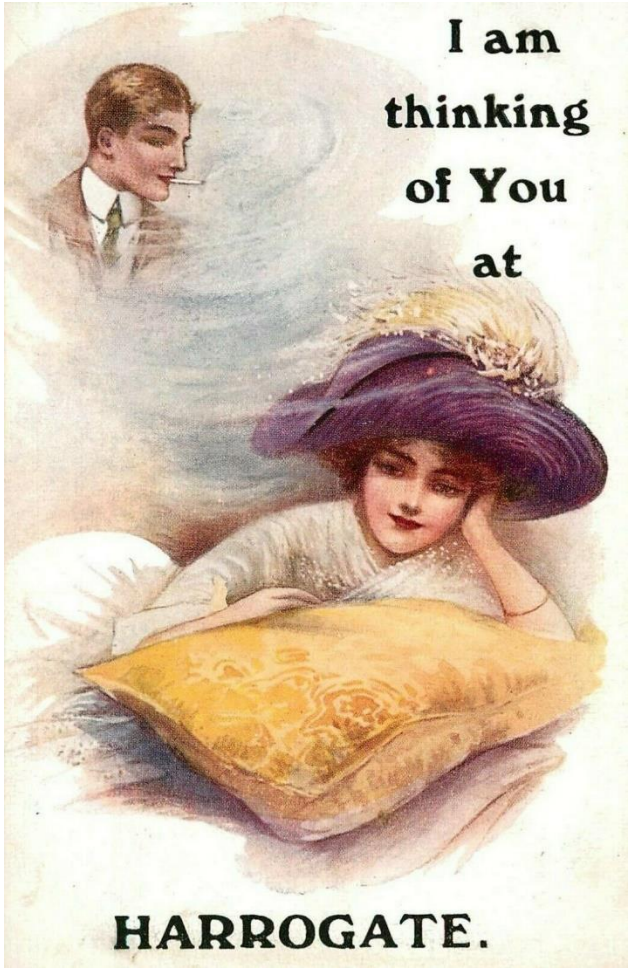










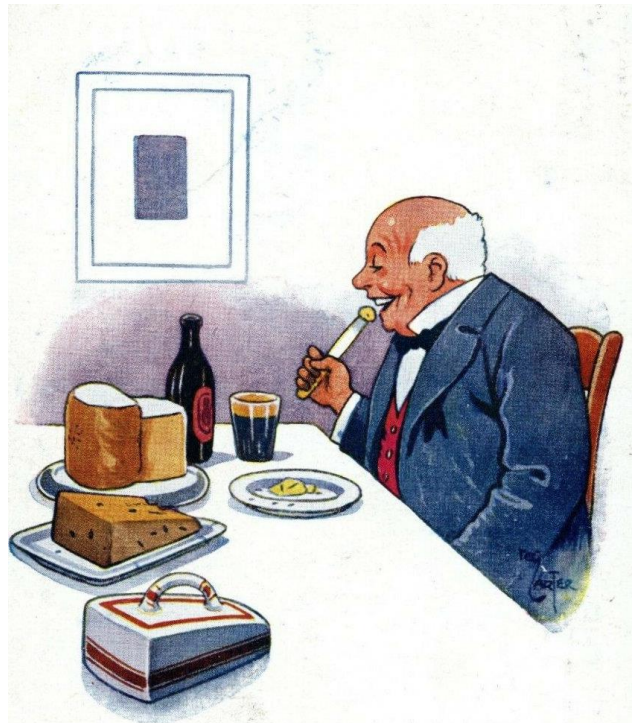




Just a Sprig of Heather  
to wish you the Best  
of Luck.



From Harrogate.

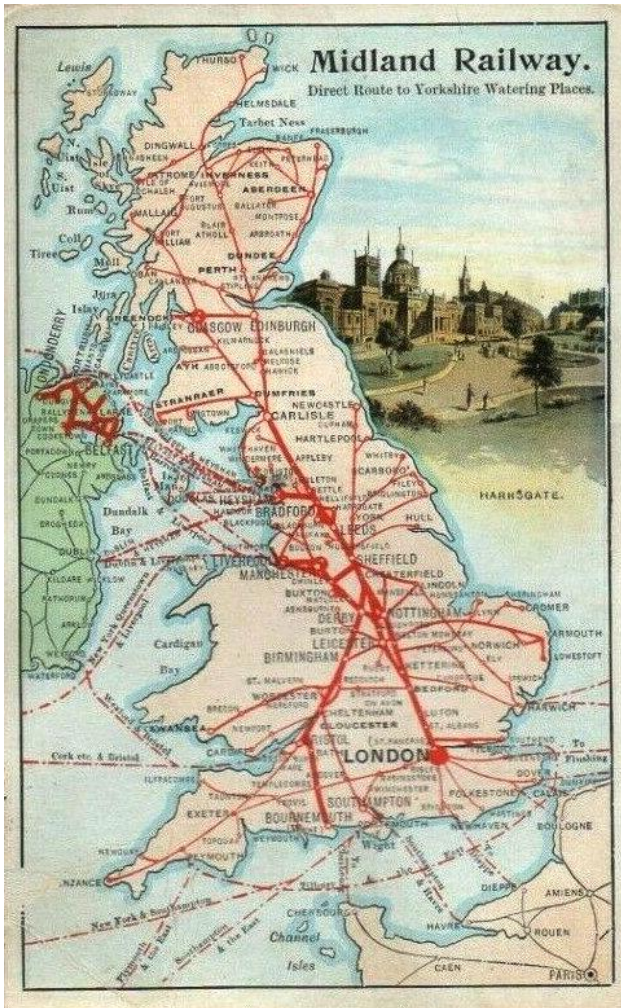


"I AM HAVING A MITY FINE TIME!"  
AT HARROGATE.



AND LOTS OF LOVELY VIEWS FROM HARROGATE





## HARROGATE.

### THE OLD SULPHUR WELL.

Ye gracious gods defend us  
 And never again send us,  
 Though dear friends tickets lend us  
 For the Old Sulphur Well.

YOUTH and BEAUTY here appear  
 When the morning sun shines clear,  
 DARBY and his JOAN dear  
 Grace the Old Sulphur Well.

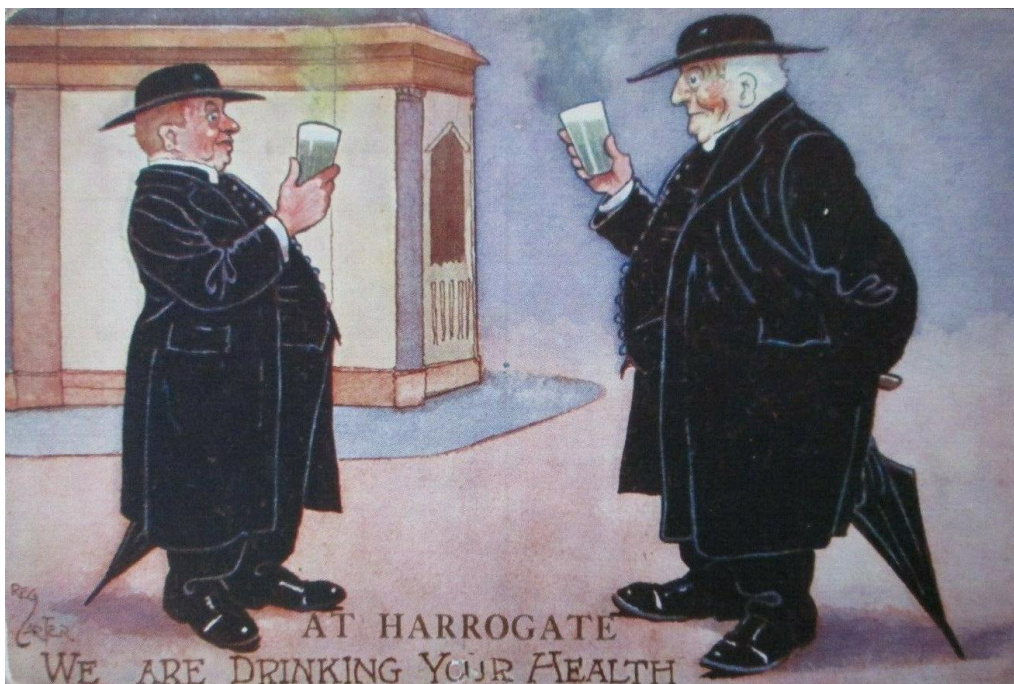
Kind spirits all—preserve us  
 From maidens who observe us  
 While **“Hot and Strong”** they serve us  
 From the Old Sulphur Well.

“Take the bitter with the sweet”  
 “Get it down”—“Enjoy a treat”  
 Greet each other as we meet  
 At the Old Sulphur Well.

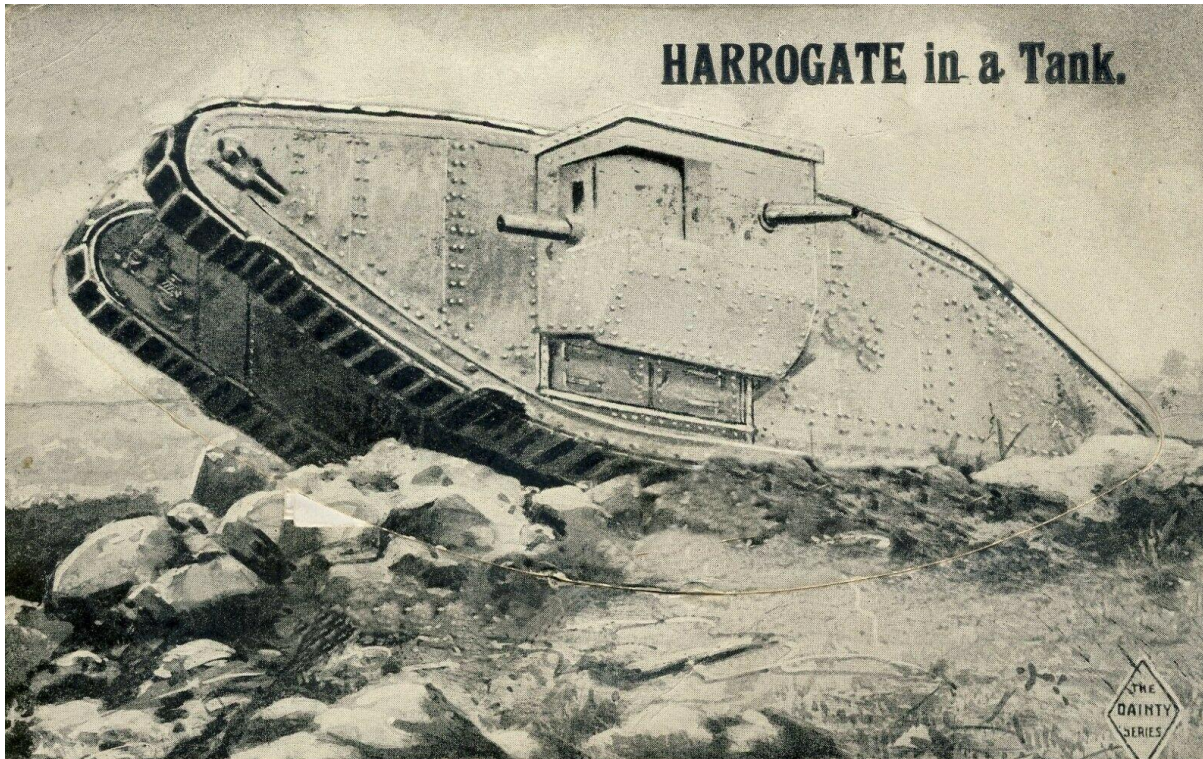
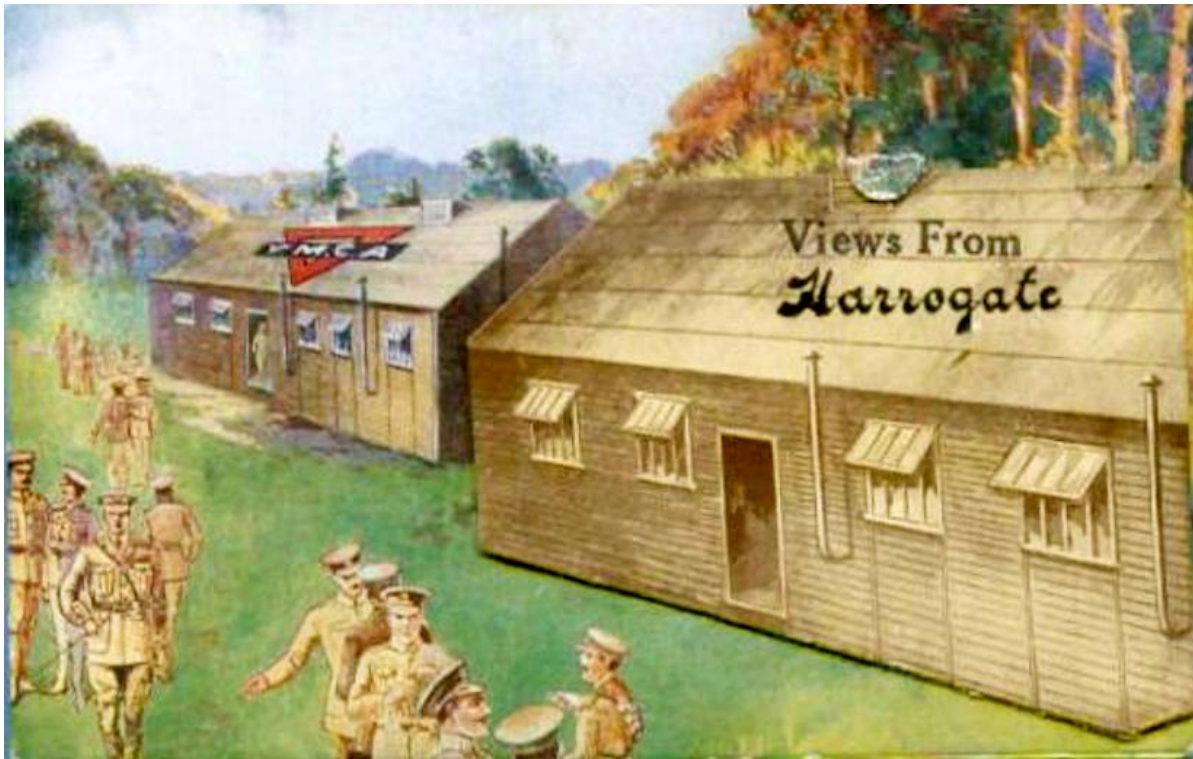
Stroll around while music charms  
 All our direst first alarms,  
 Read the news of towns and farms  
 Far from Old Sulphur Well.

But, ye gods, the half hour's bye,  
 Must we have another “try”?  
 Ten ounces more!!—then—Goodbye  
 To you, Old Sulphur Well.

JOB.

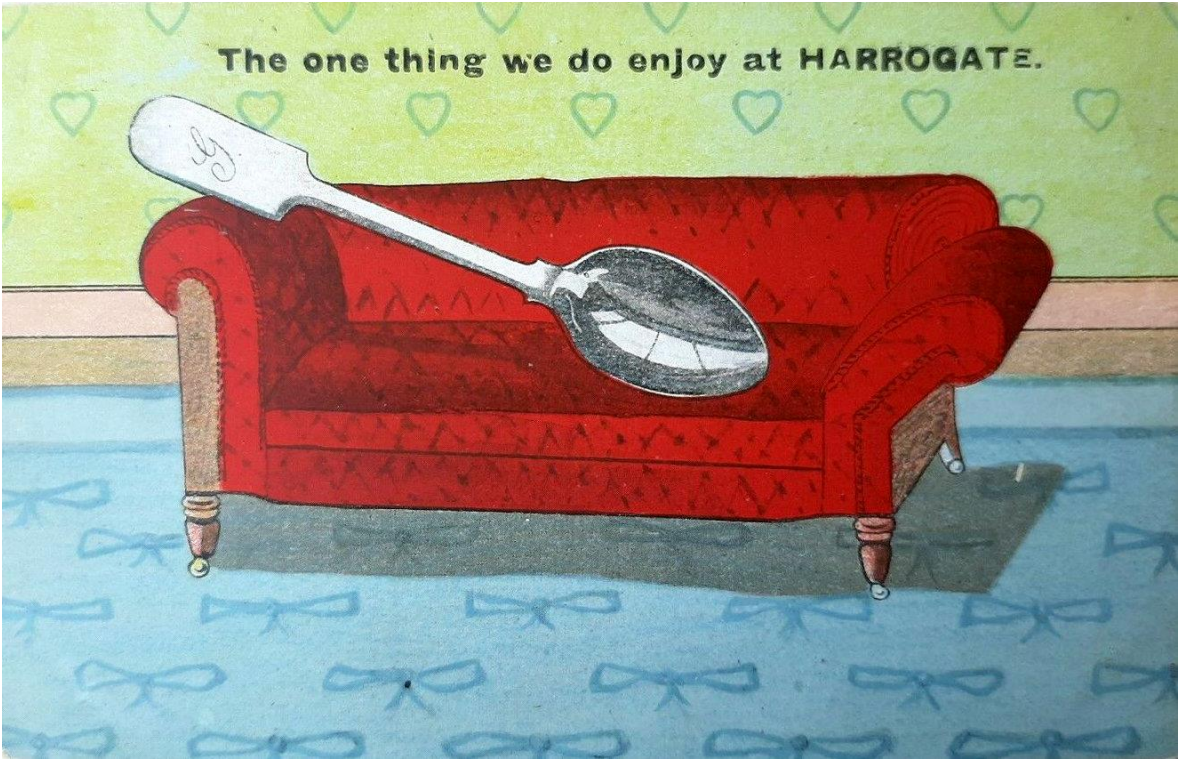








The one thing we do enjoy at HARROGATE.

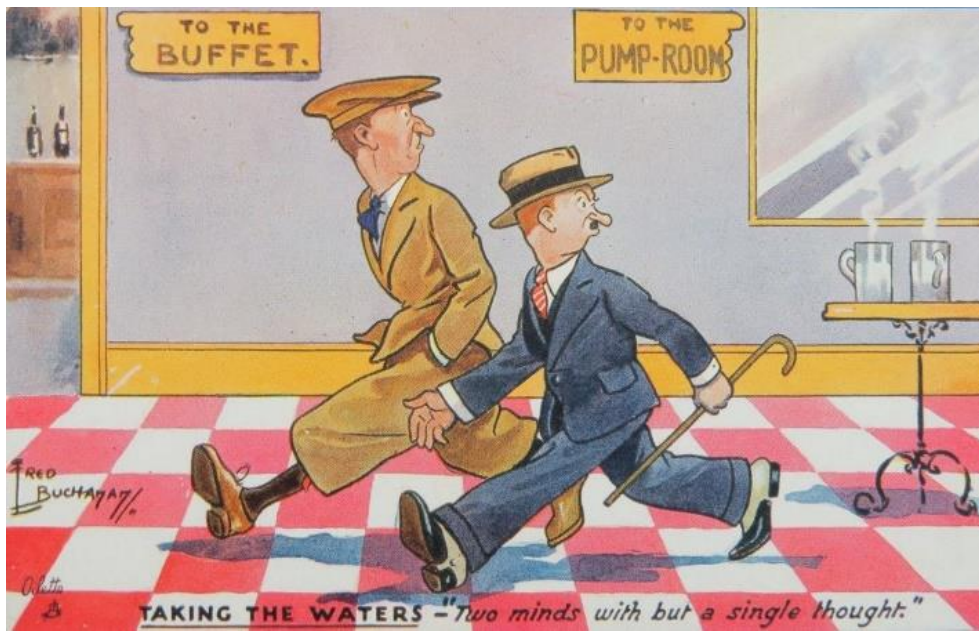


# Various images of a colourful nature

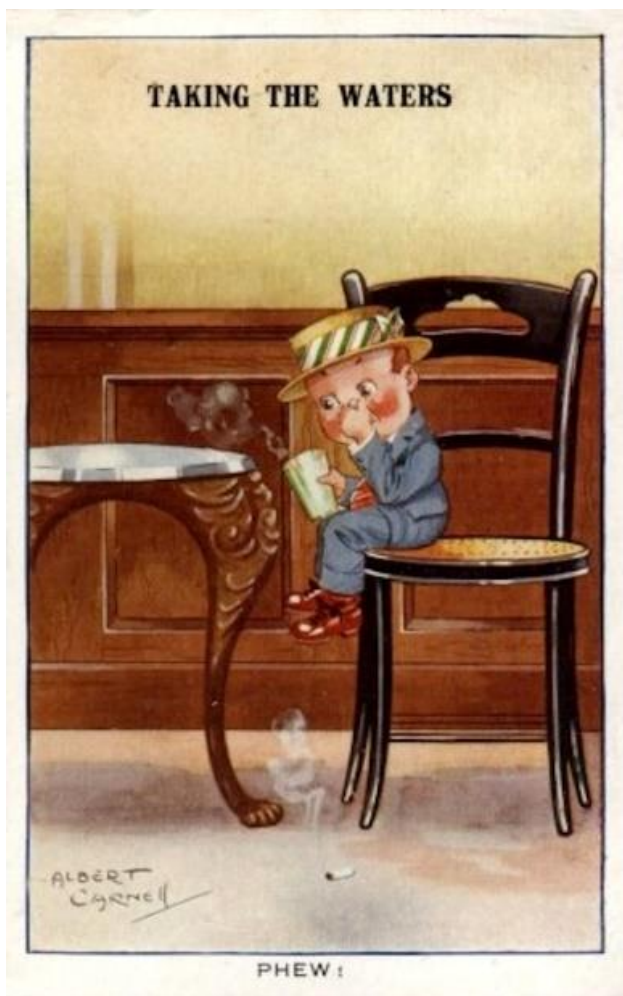
A selection of cards of a general nature extolling the virtues or otherwise of Harrogate



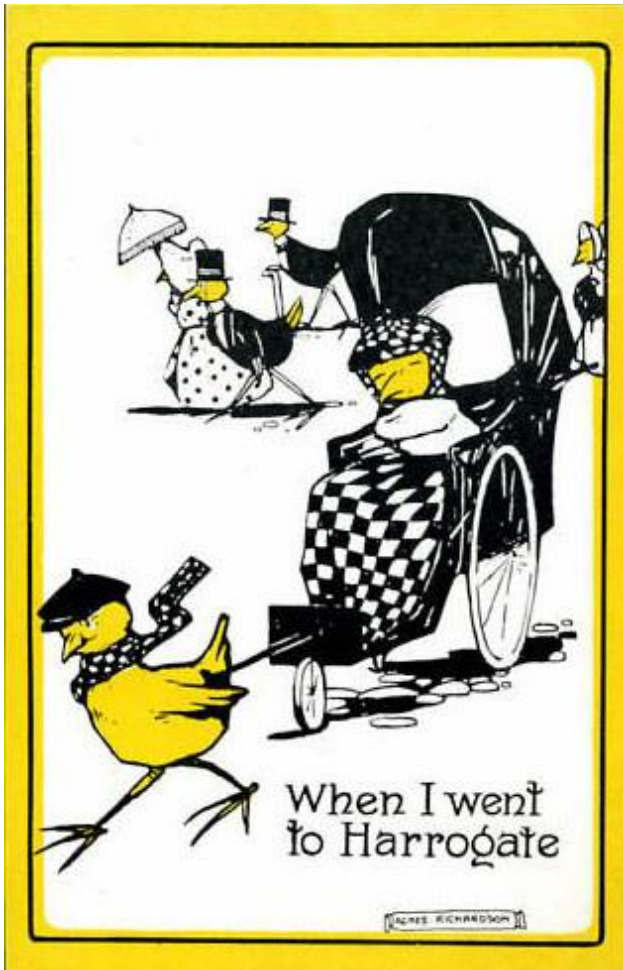
















" Yes, old man, the wife has gone to Harrogate for her kidneys."

" Good gracious! However did she manage to leave 'em there ? "



Taking the Waters



Just had Three-pennyworth of Misery.

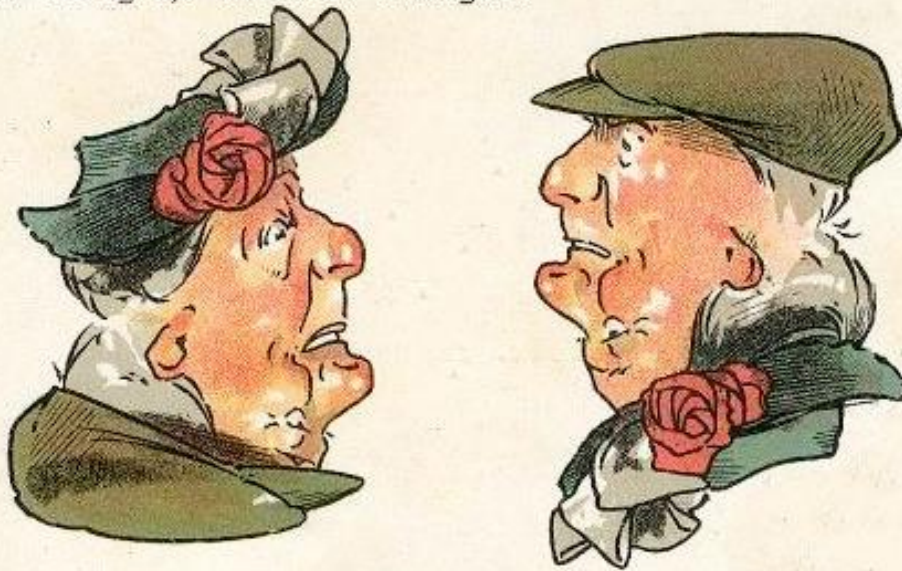


Before taking the waters at Harrogate.



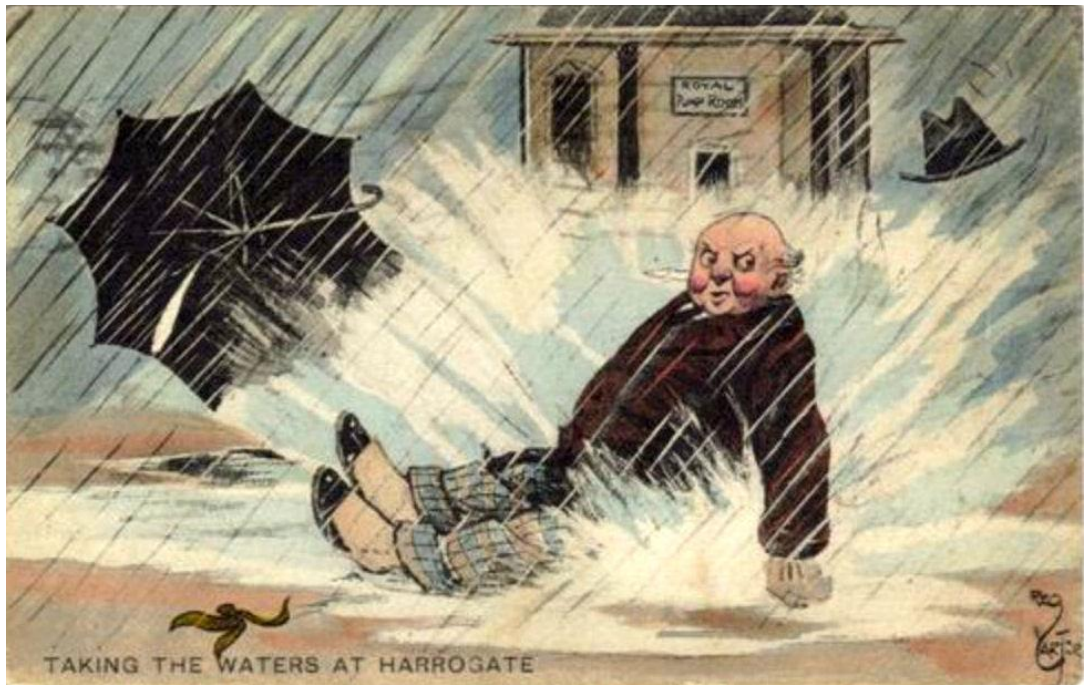
After taking the waters at Harrogate.

After taking the waters at Harrogate.



Before taking the waters at Harrogate.













# Various images of a monochrome nature

A few hand-drawn cards



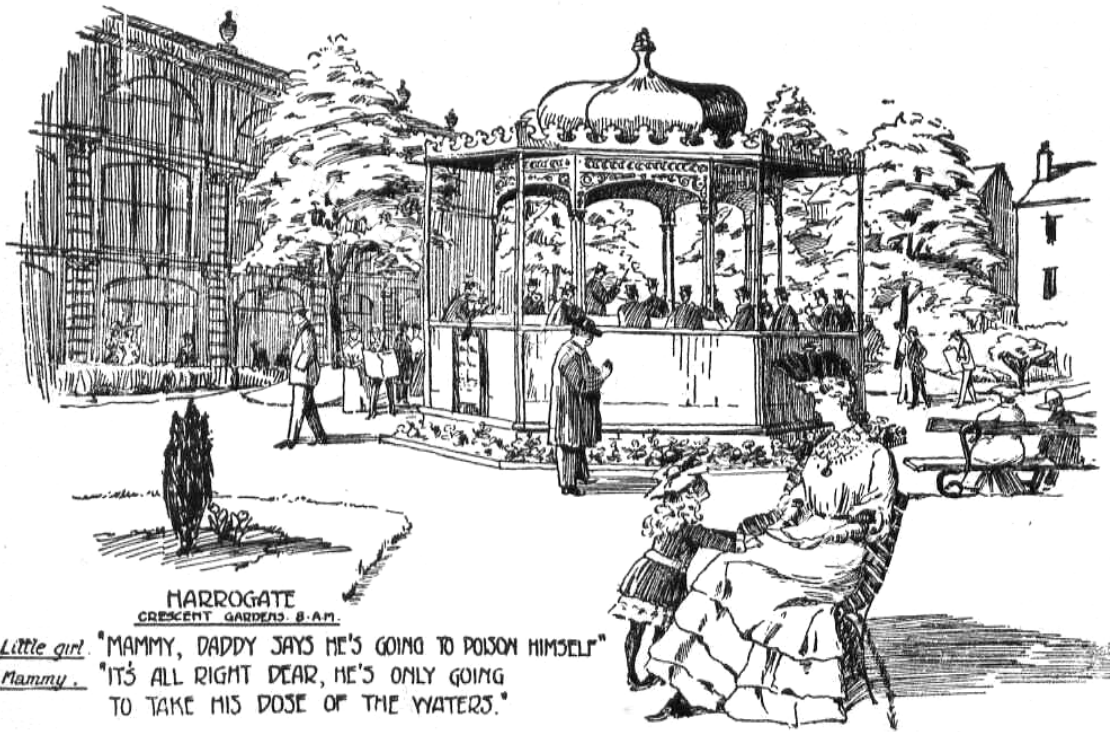




SATAN PASSING OVER HARROGATE WELLS.







HARROGATE  
CRESCENT GARDENS 8 A.M.

*Little girl* "MAMMY, DADDY JAYS HE'S GOING TO POISON HIMSELF"  
*Mammy* "IT'S ALL RIGHT DEAR, HE'S ONLY GOING TO TAKE HIS DOSE OF THE WATERS."



THE ASCENDING DOUCHE.  
 "Now Sir, please to take a seat here."



SPAWING AT HARROGATE.

BEFORE taking the Waters!



AFTER taking the Waters !!

SPAWING AT HARROGATE.

SPAWING AT HARROGATE.

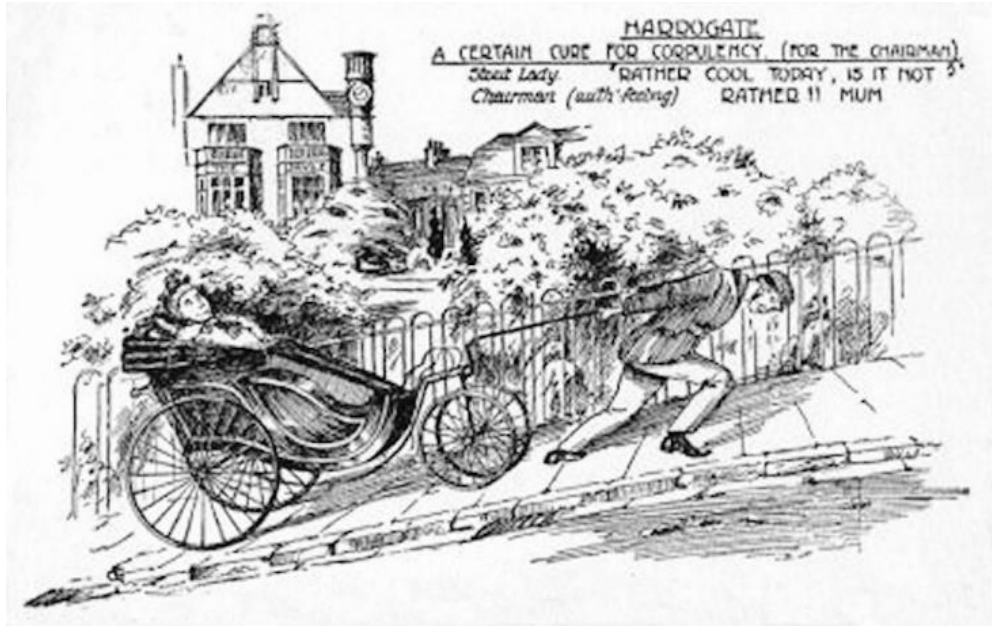
AFTER taking the Waters !!



BEFORE taking the Waters!

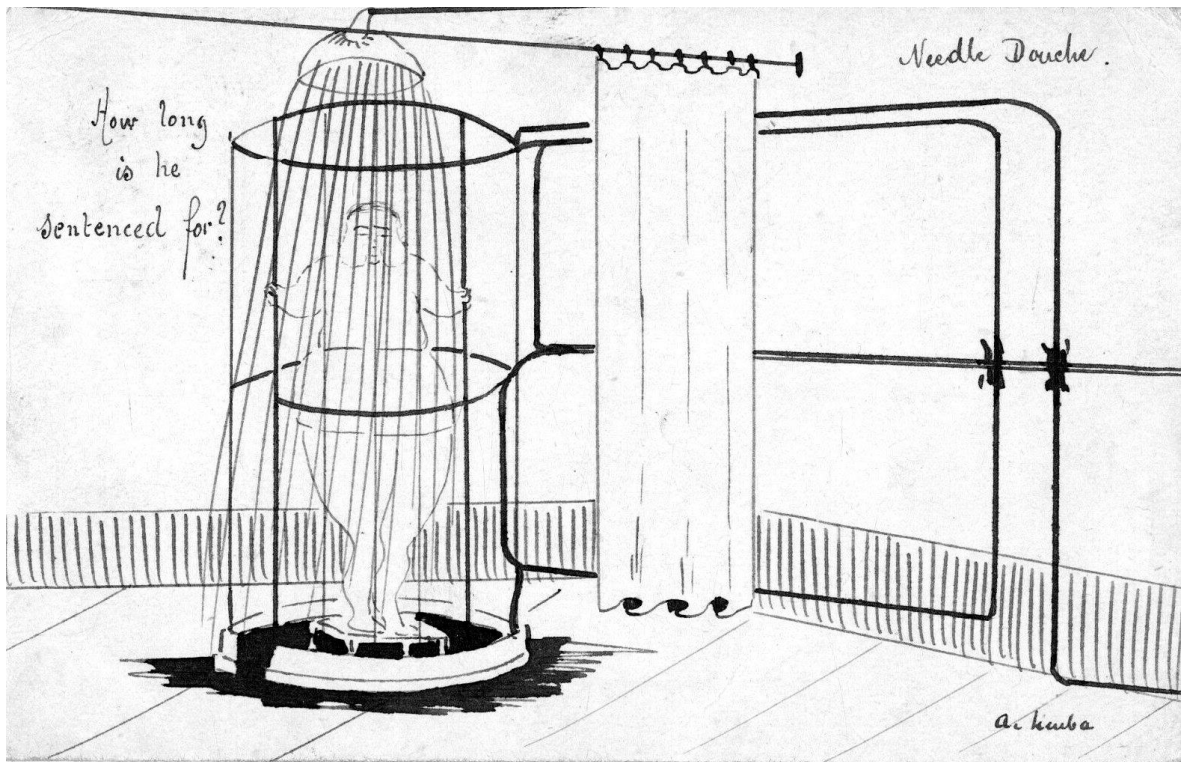
SPAWING AT HARROGATE.





**TOO TIRED.**

Here sits a woman who was always tired;  
 She lives in a house where no work is required;  
 Her friends here on earth know well where she is going,  
 Where washing isn't done nor sweeping nor sewing,  
 But everything there will be exact to her wishes,  
 For where there's no eating, there's no washing of dishes;  
 She will go where loud anthems will be ringing,  
 But having no voice will be out of the singing;  
 So don't think of her now, don't think of her ever,  
 She'll be happy doing nothing for ever and ever.

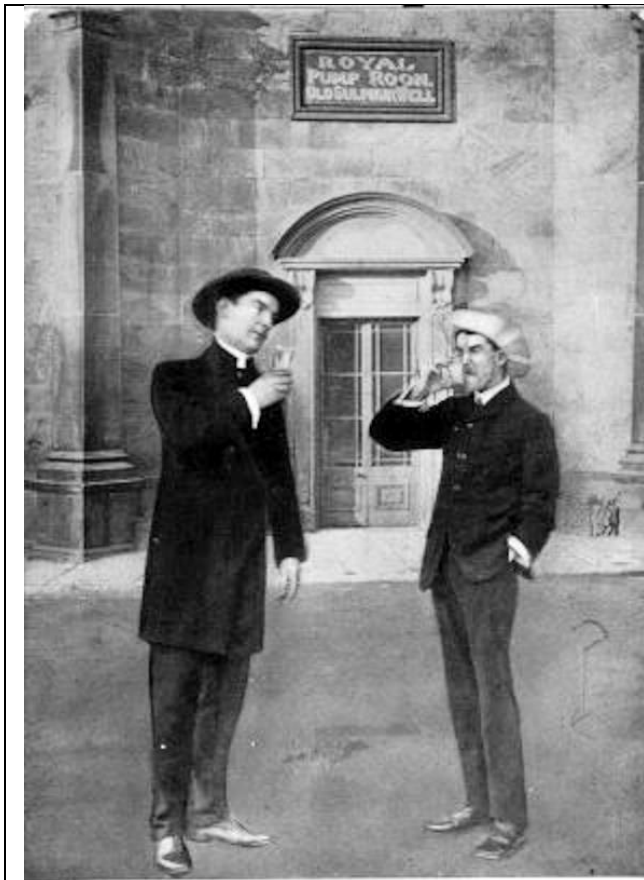






# Drinking the waters at Harrogate

A series of six images of two men deciding whether to sample the Pump Room's offering



1—"Does it taste?"

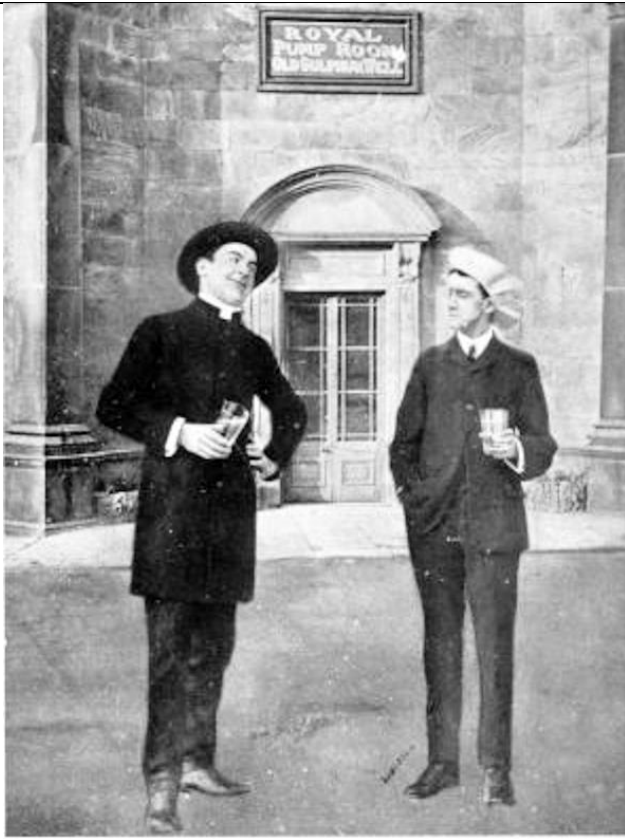






3—Good—!  
DRINKING THE WATERS AT HARROGATE.





5—"Nothing when you're used to it!"

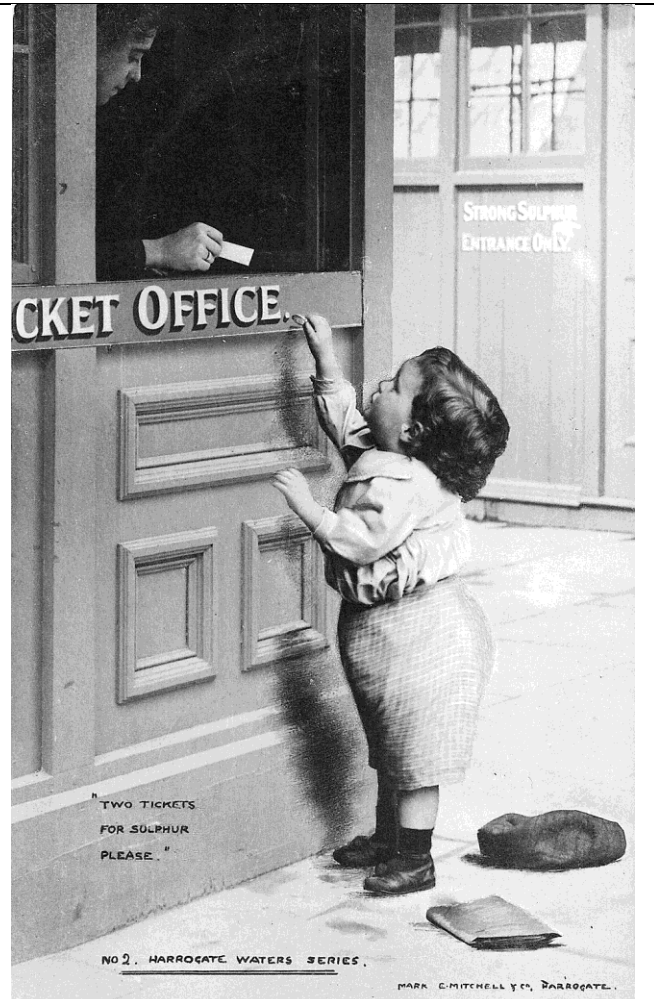


# Harrogate Waters series

A series of six images of a toddler finding out just what the water tastes like



*Will you sulphur with me?*



*Two tickets for sulphur please*



*Oh phew, what a smell!*



*Well, good health!*





*I don't see what there is to laugh about*



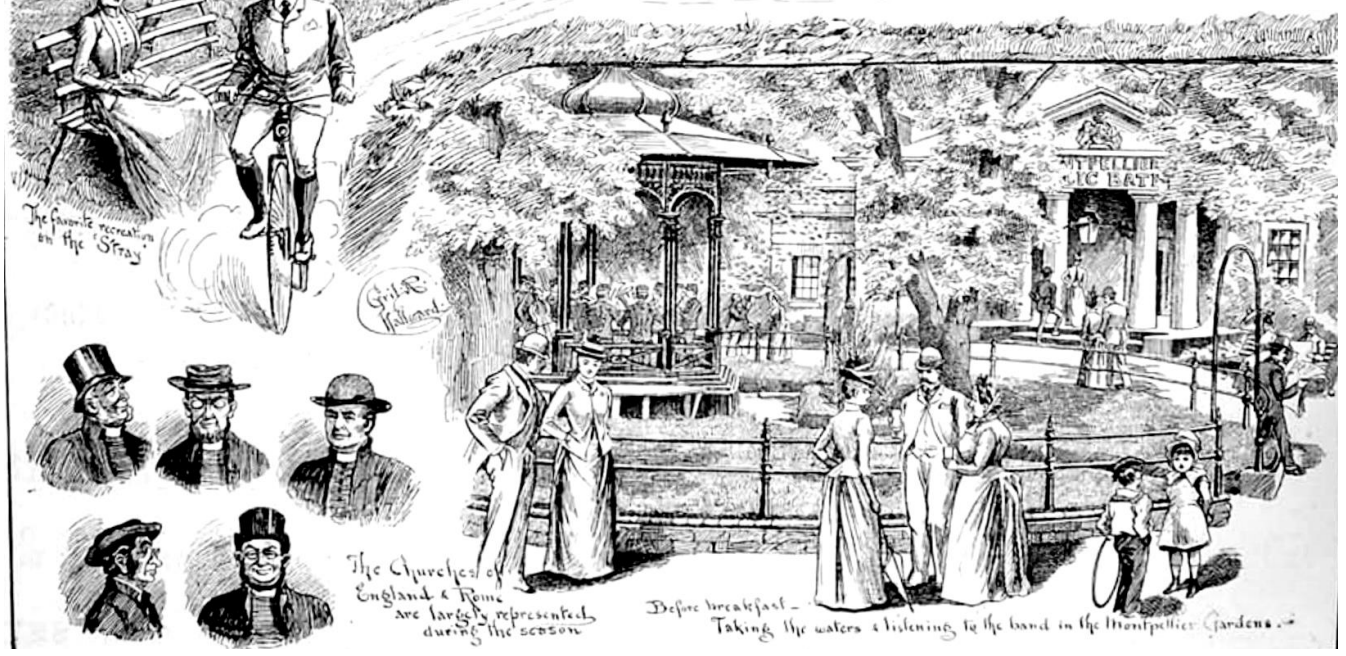
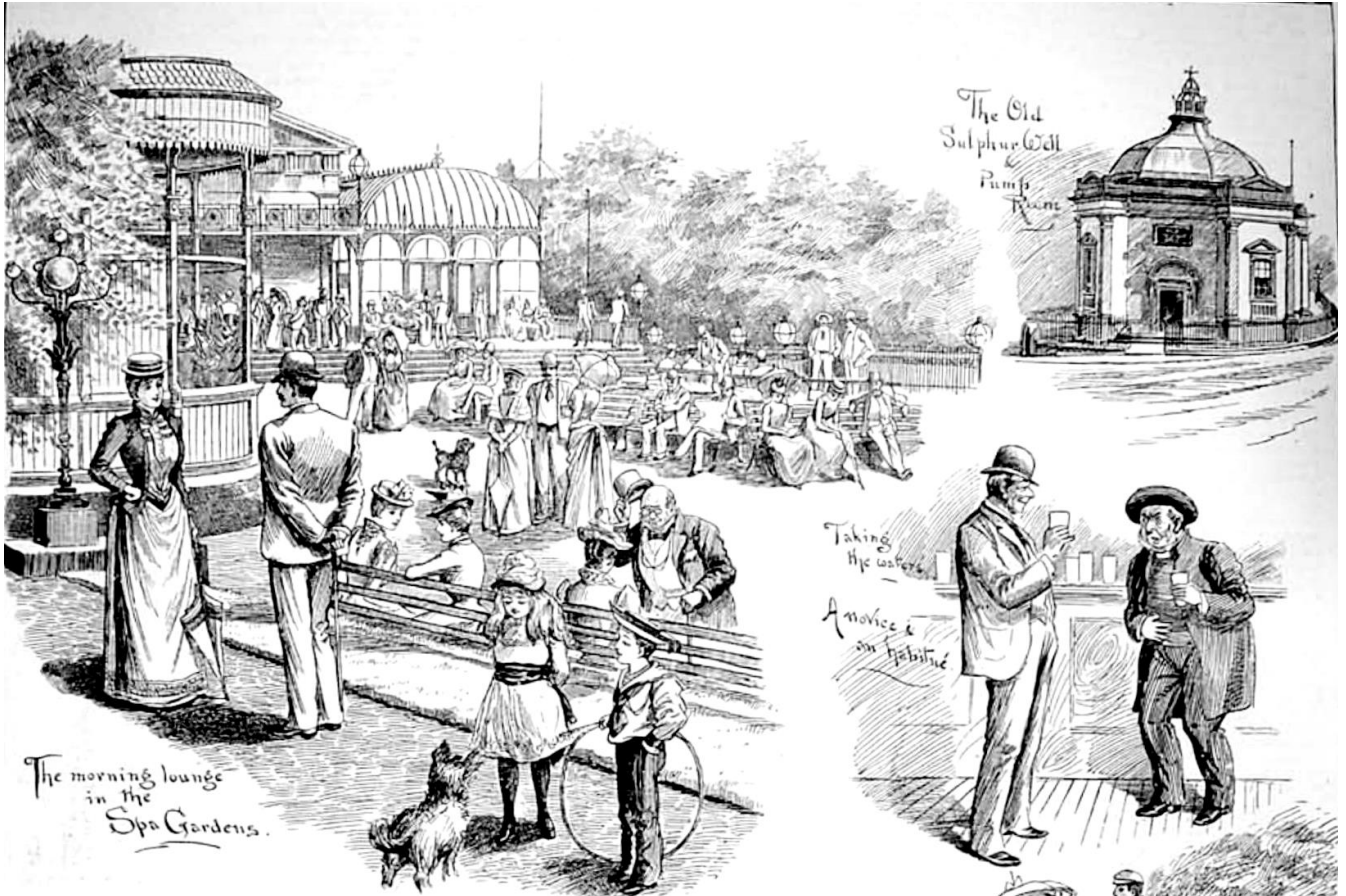
*No second glass for me!*

# Various photographic cards



1. Harrogate—"Preparing the Waters."





MONTPELLIER QUARTER

MAJOR TOM'S SOCIAL

Harlow Carr



BRIMHAM  
Tewit Well ROCKS



THE VALLEY GARDENS

The Viper Rooms



OLD SWAN HOTEL

THE FAT BADGER



# HARROGATE



TURKISH BATHS

Harrogate Flower Show



THE WINTER GARDENS

THE STRAY



HALES BAR



THE HERLIER GALLERY

THE GOLDI BELL



THE GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOW



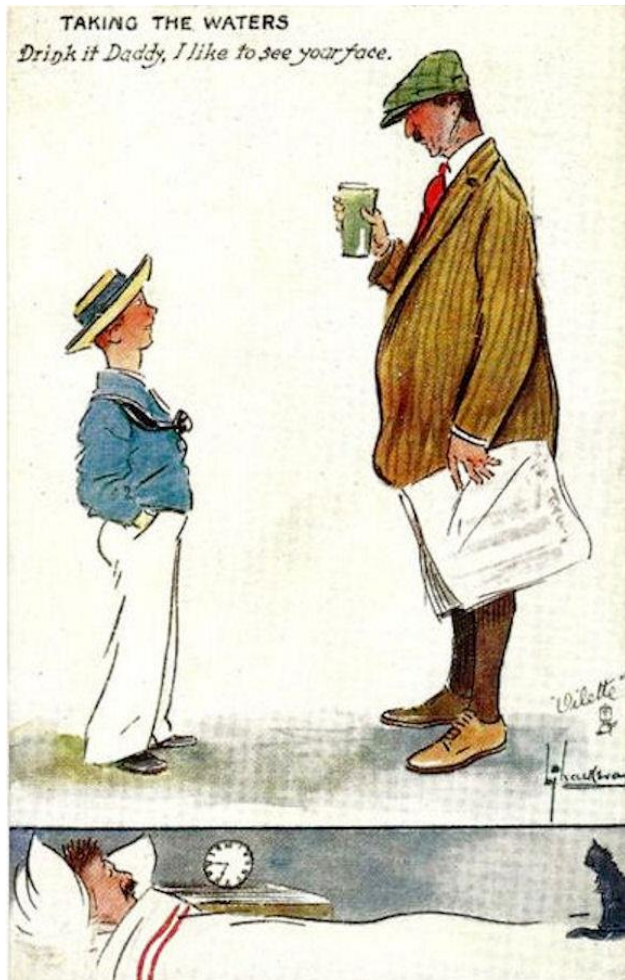
TAYLORS YORKSHIRE TEA





# Lance Thackeray – split images

Thackeray (1869-1916) featured aspects of life at the Harrogate Spa. Each card has a small panel with an associated image, usually following on in some respect to the main picture.

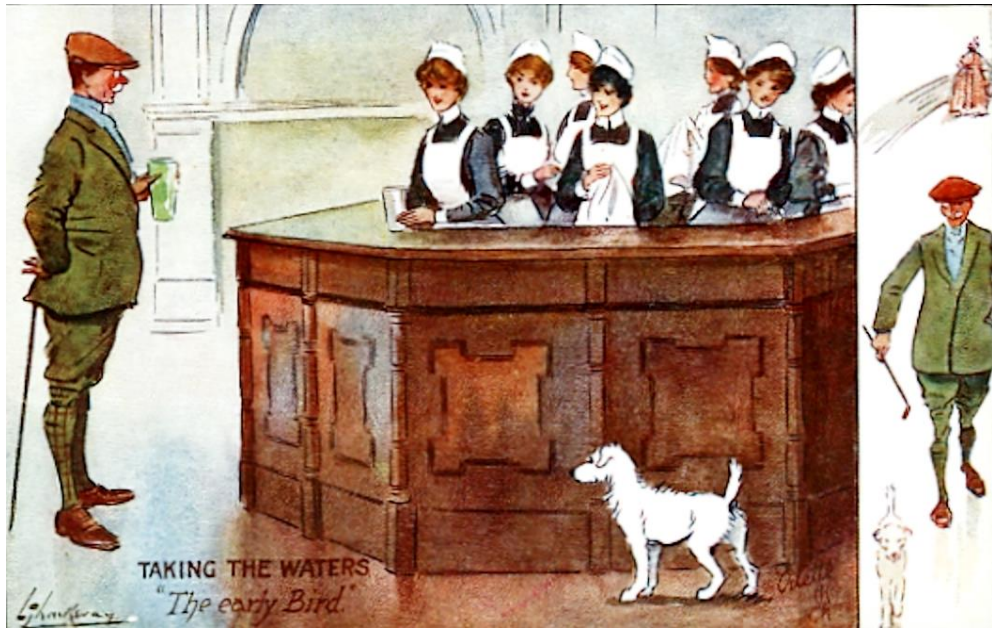


*Drink it Daddy, I like to see your face*



*Three of Scotch*





The early bird



It's high time to start taking the waters

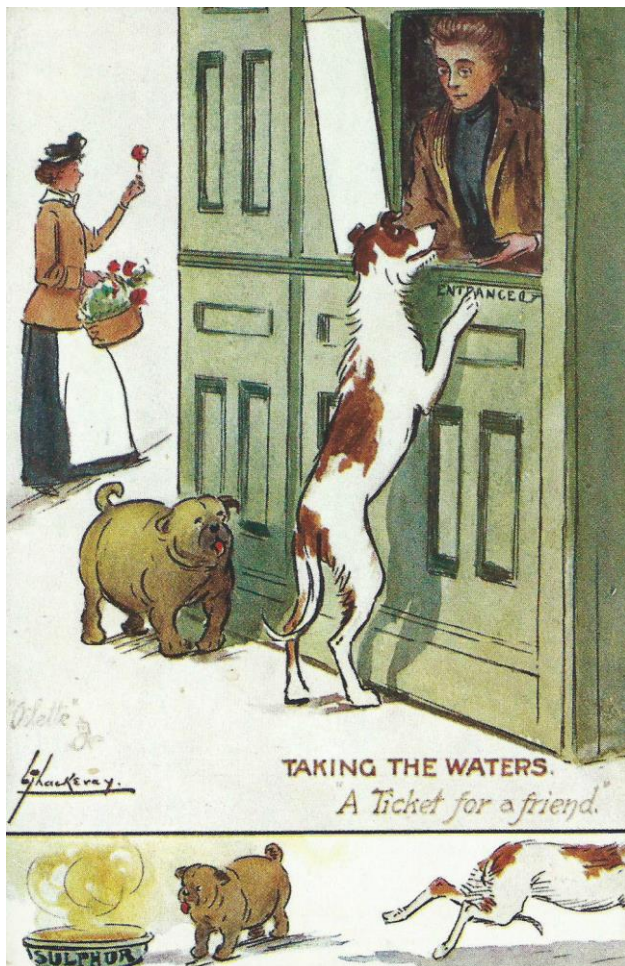


For better or for worse





*A first attempt*

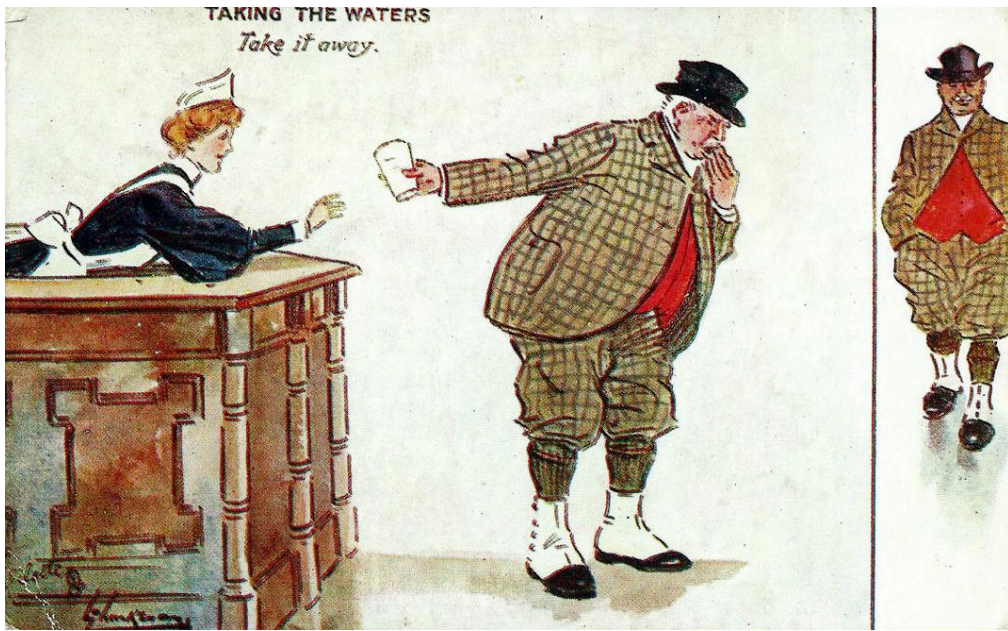


*A ticket for a friend*



*My first glass*





Take it away



Some of the visitors



The first glass





Three of Irish



A case for the S.P.C.A.



By the Doctor's orders

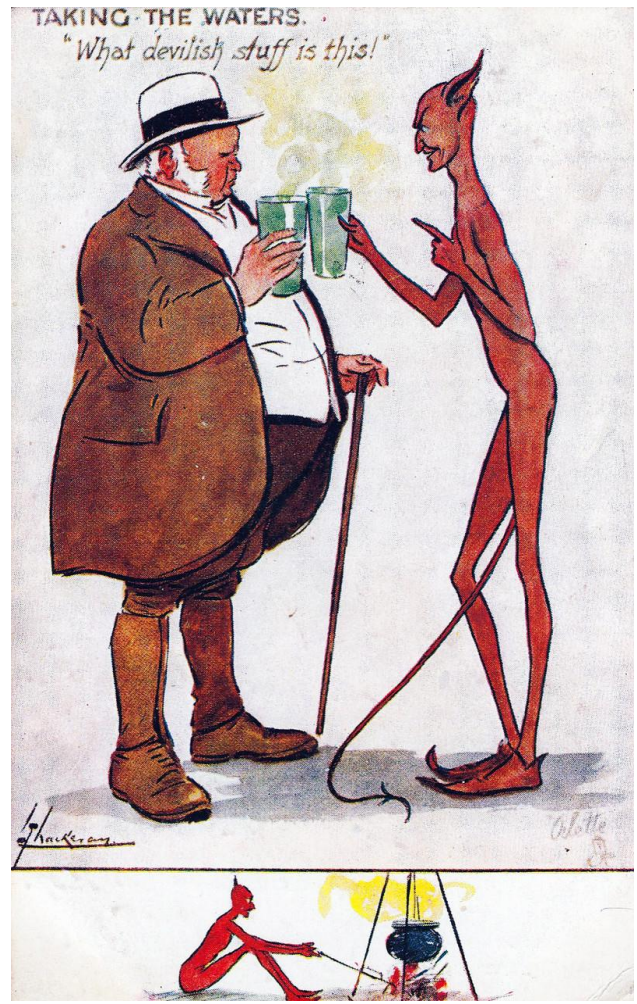




Comparing notes



I hope no one's looking



What devilish stuff is this?



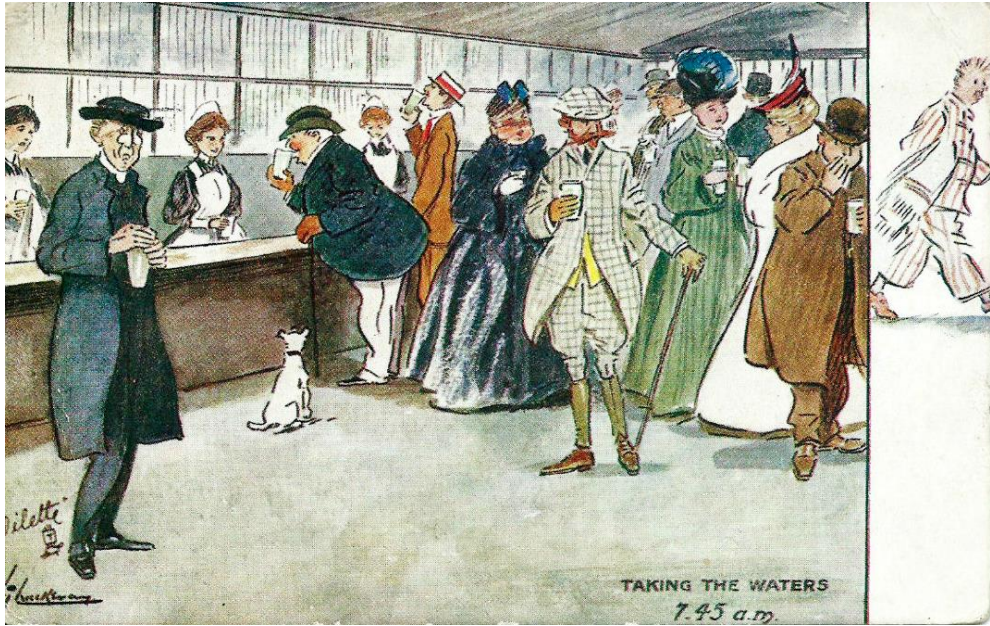


*Resigned*



*All sorts and conditions*





7.45 a.m.



A good suggestion how to take the waters



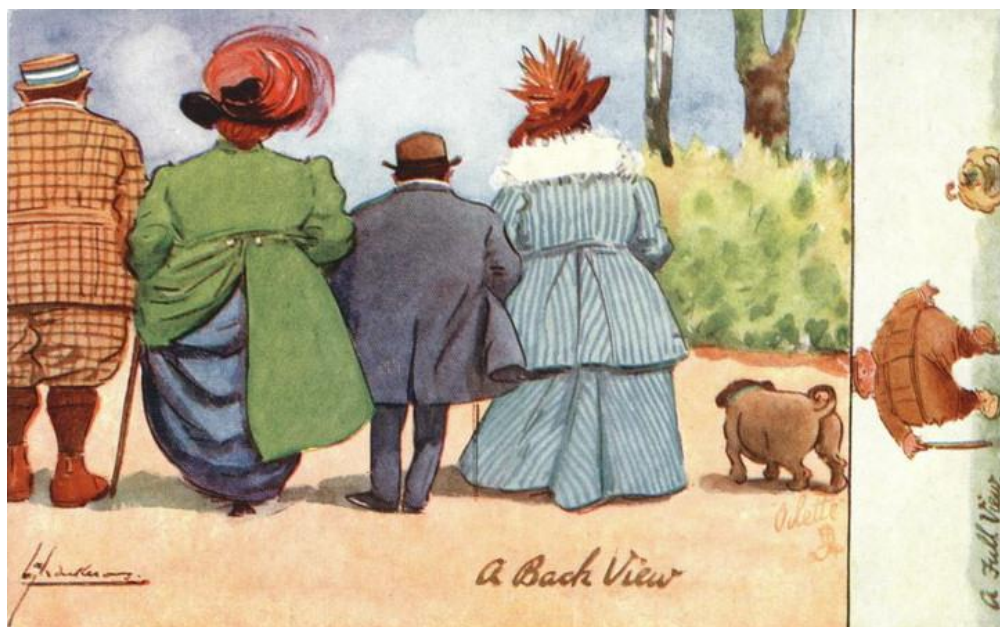


*An early constitutional*



*Turtle Dovedale*





A back view



Taking the waters





*Far from the Sulphur Well*



*Looking after Ma*



*The Toning Bath*



# Cats – by Violet Roberts & others

Violet Roberts was an Edwardian postcard artist who lived in Hull, and later Beverley. Her charming illustrations presented an array of quirky creatures that adopted personalities from all walks of life. Cats seemed to feature on her Harrogate illustrations, a subject which was also used by others, also shown here, including Clarice Firth, E.M. Gravely and A. Leuba. Another lover of feline images was Louis Wain (see the next section)



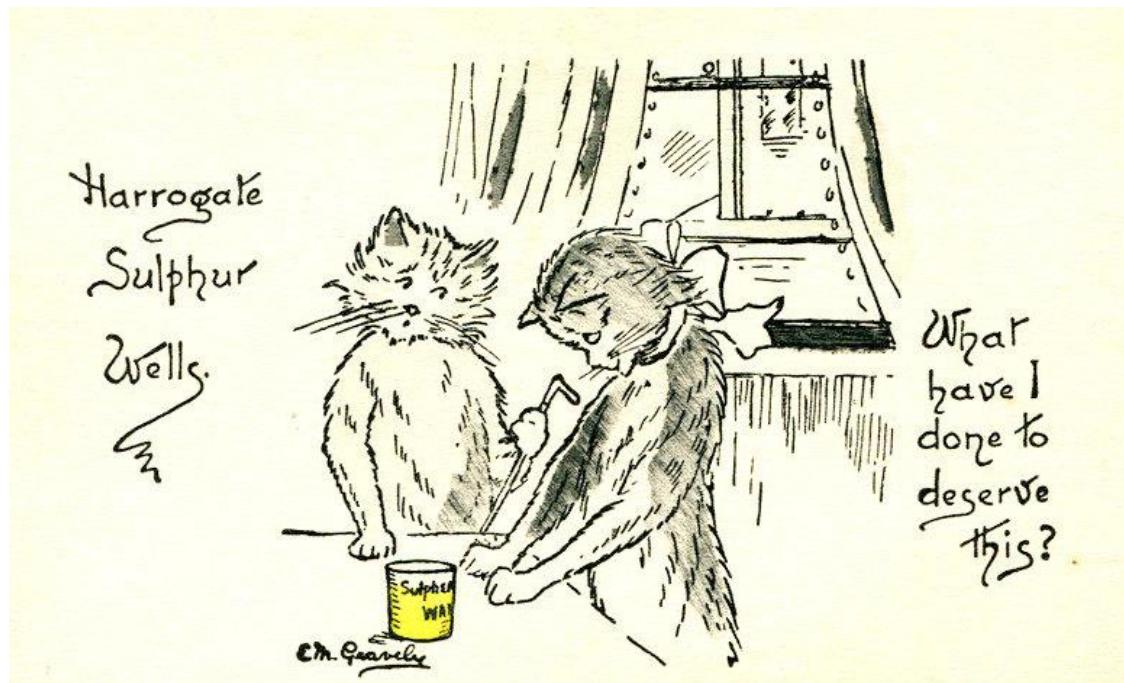
*I came to Harrogate like this*



All there is for dinner

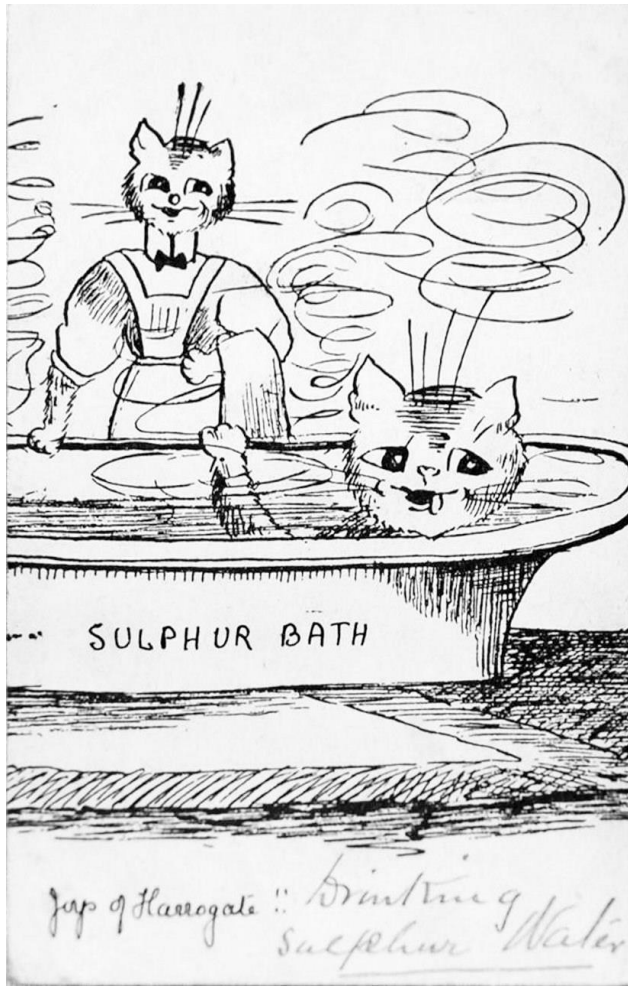


I do enjoy my Sulphur Baths



What have I done to deserve this?





*Joys of Harrogate – drinking sulphur water*



*Oh the taste!*



*No nearer my dear, I can smell it from here*



*I'm afraid it isn't nice*

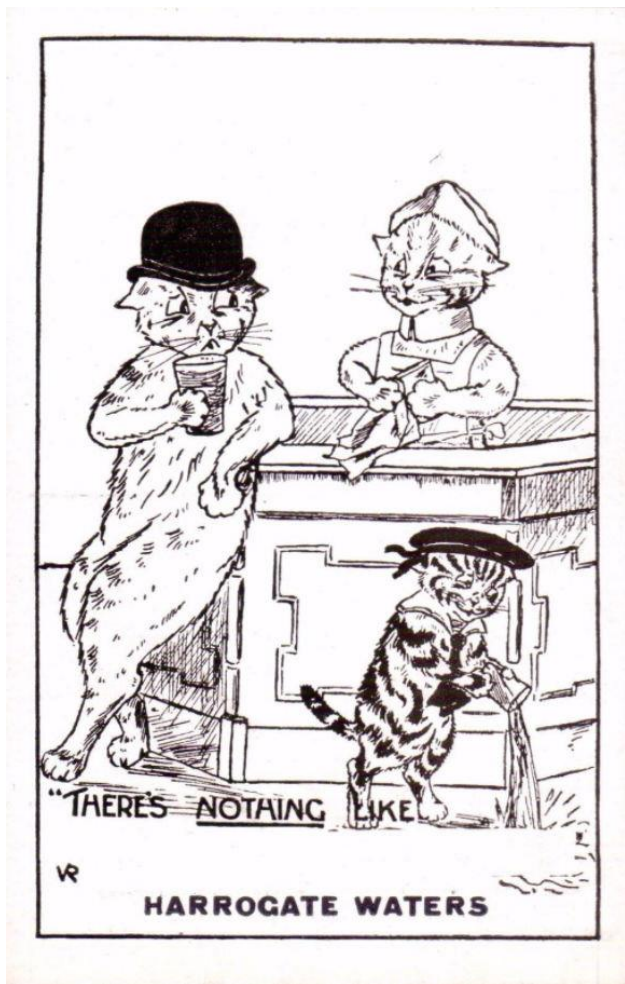


*Br-r-r beastliness isn't the word for it!*



*It is dangerous to tease a Sulphur patient*





*There's nothing like Harrogate waters*



*We are busy... at Harrogate*



*Thanks for your sympathy*



*Back from the Sulphur Well*



*Back from the Sulphur Well*

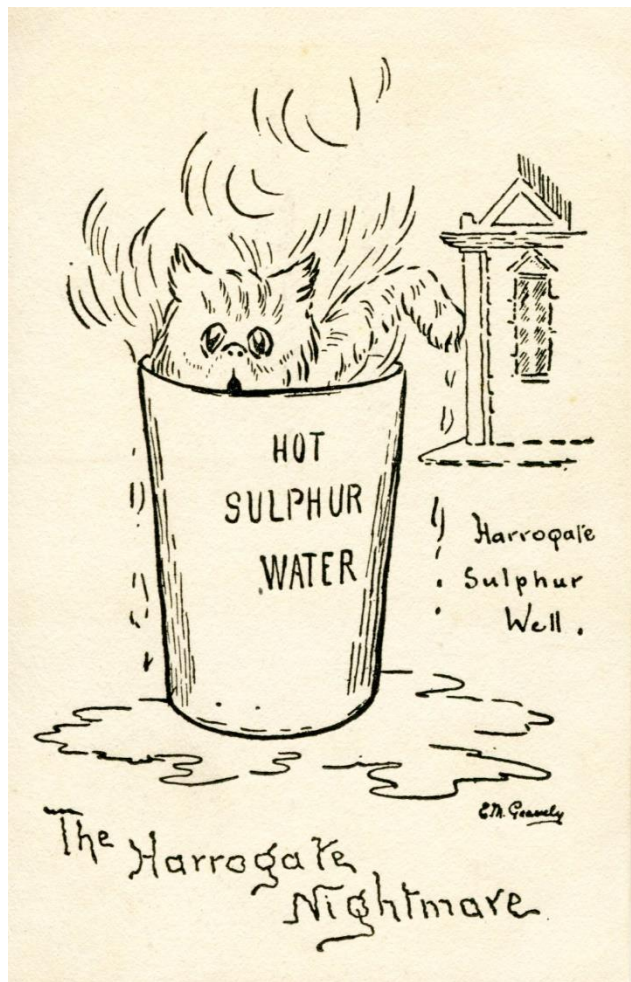


*O wad some power ...*





*Sulphur water will never tempt me again... never!*



*The Harrogate Nightmare*



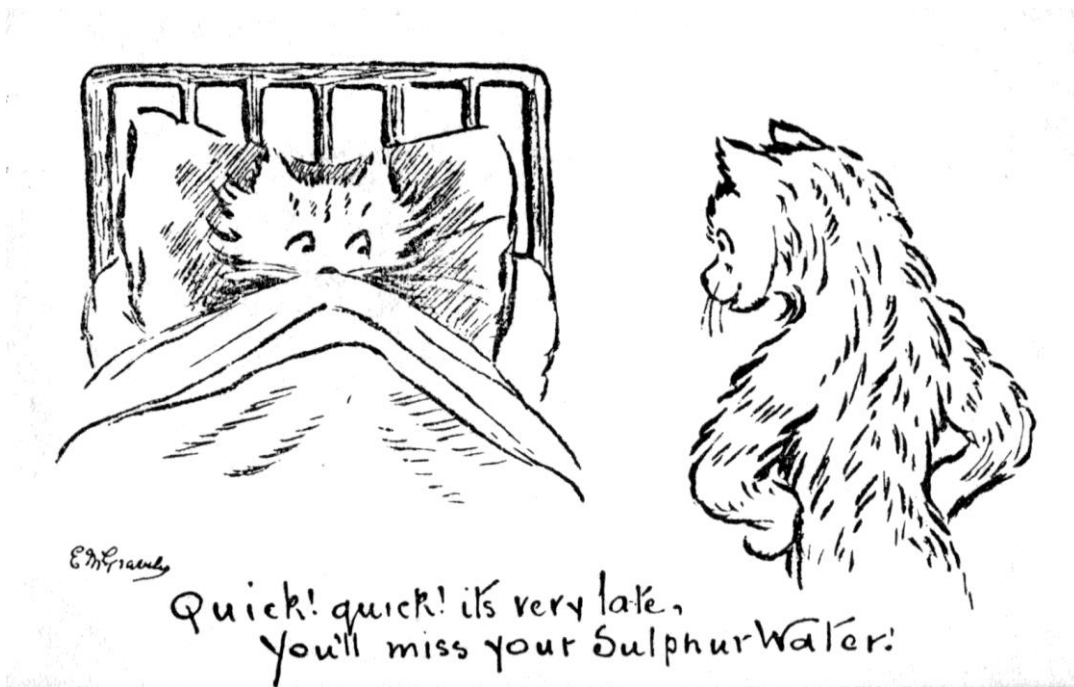
*Good gracious! I shall be late for my sulphur water*



*Better than sulphur water*



*Phew! I'm off*



*Quick! Quick! It's very late*

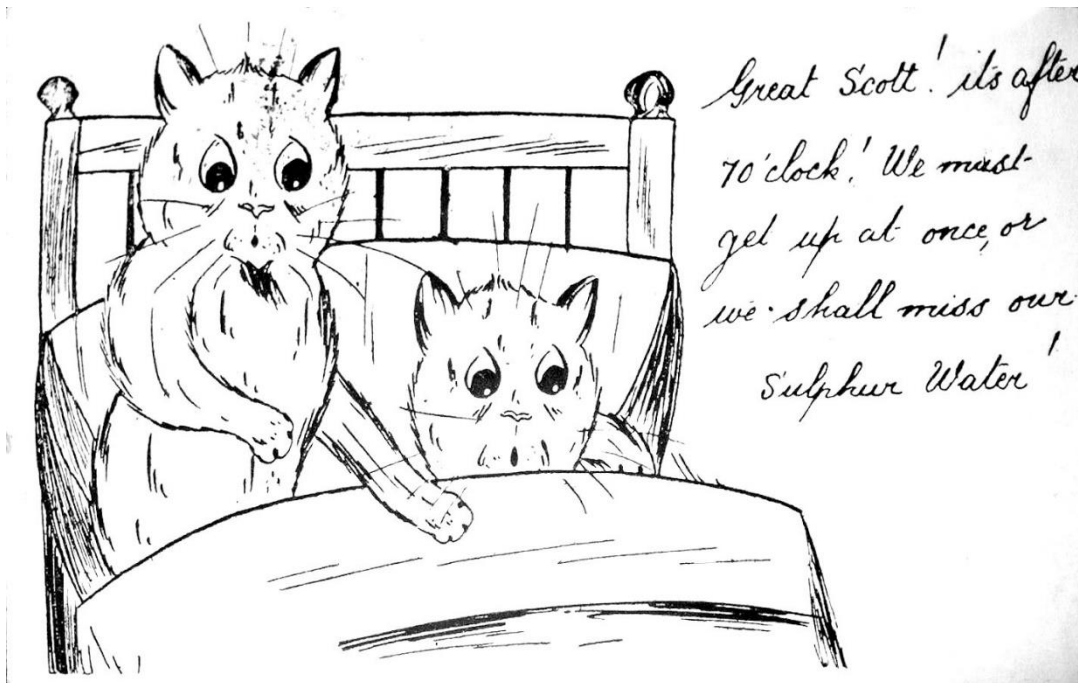




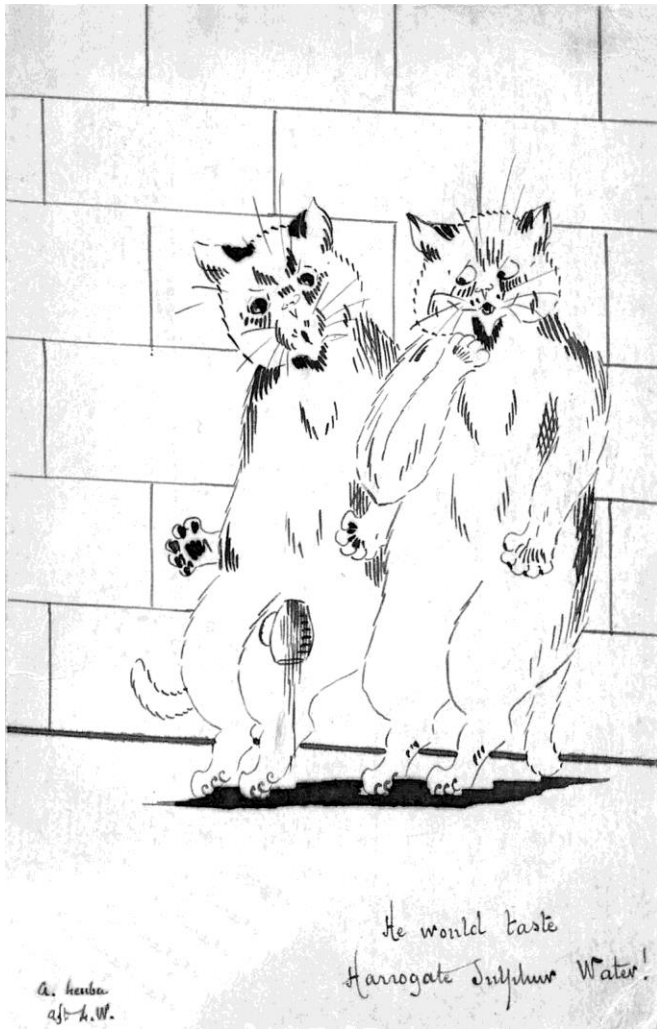
Bother! Sulphur again!



Better than sulphur water



Great Scott! It's after 7 o'clock!

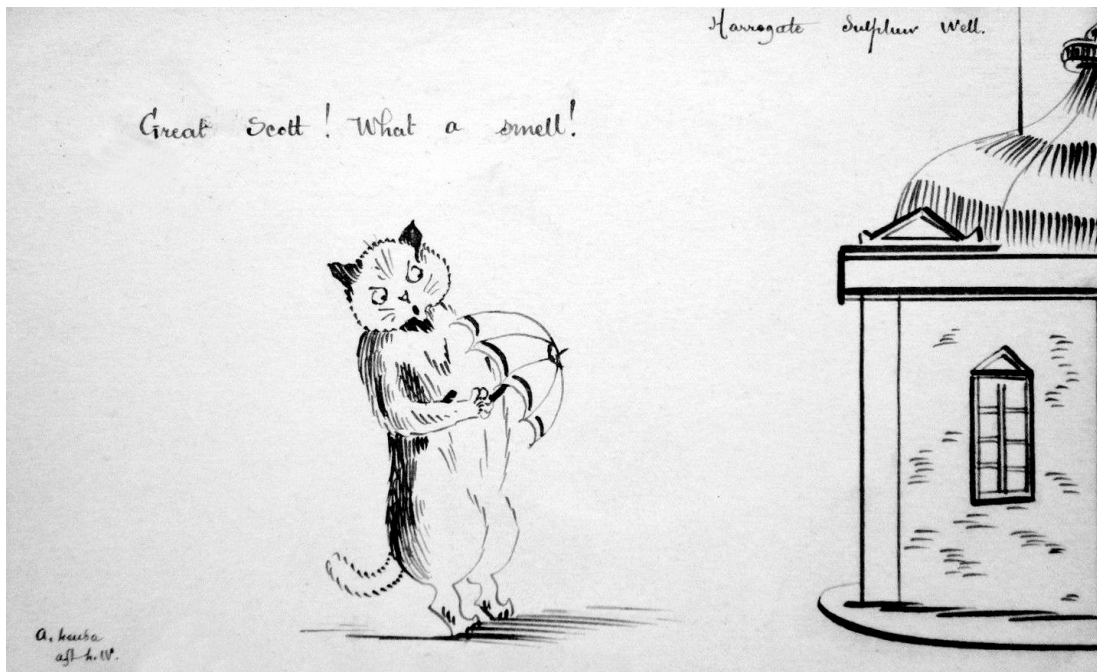


He would taste  
Harrogate Sulphur Water!

He would taste Harrogate sulphur water



Anticipation & Realisation

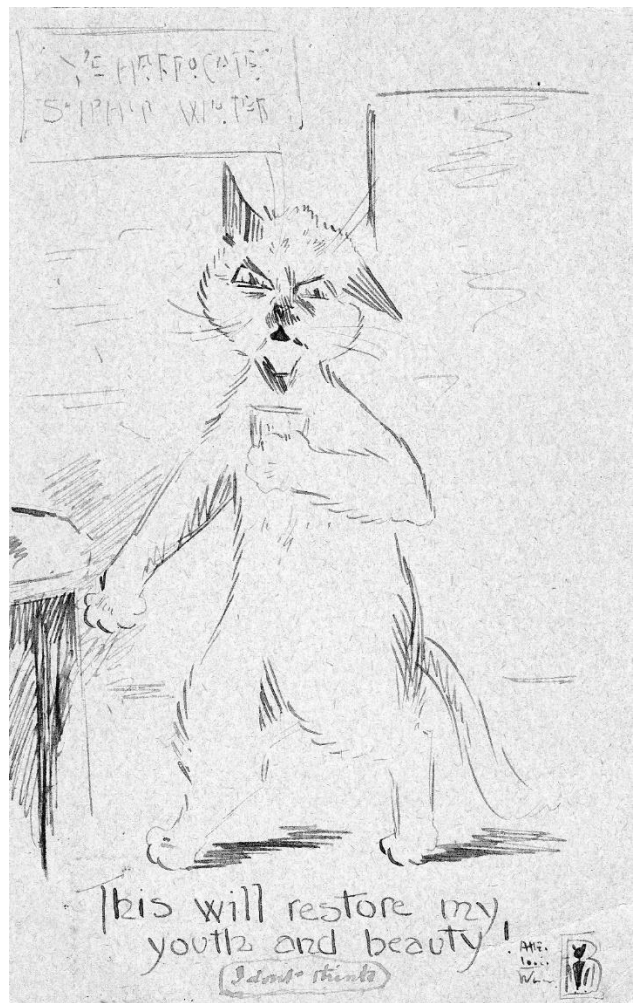


Great Scott! What a smell!

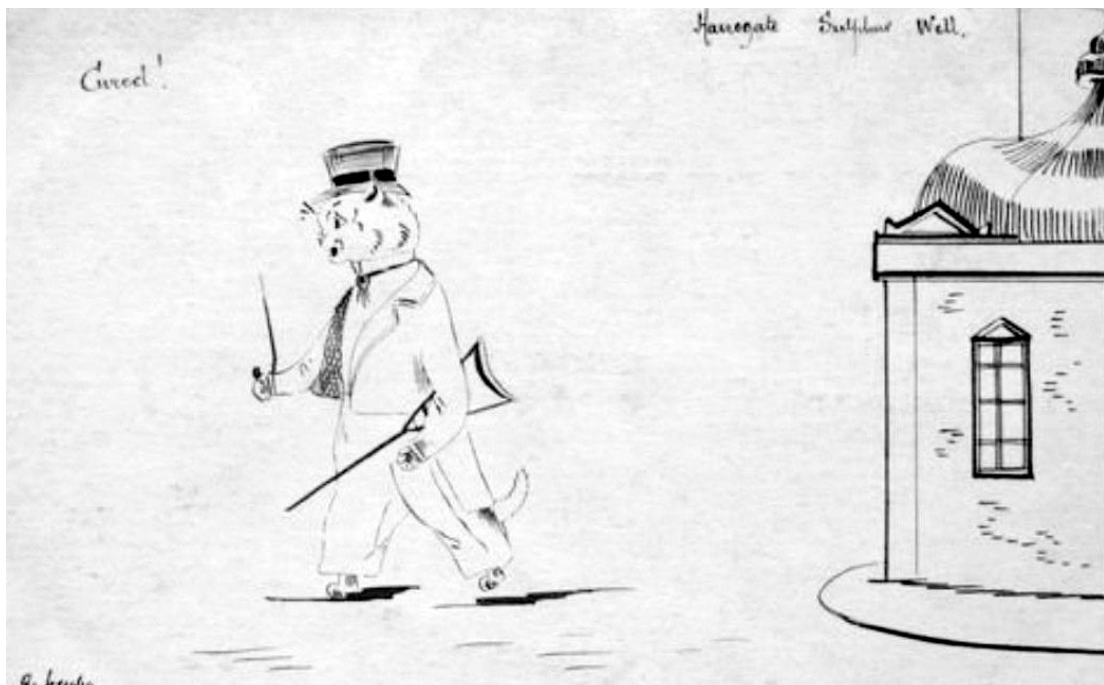




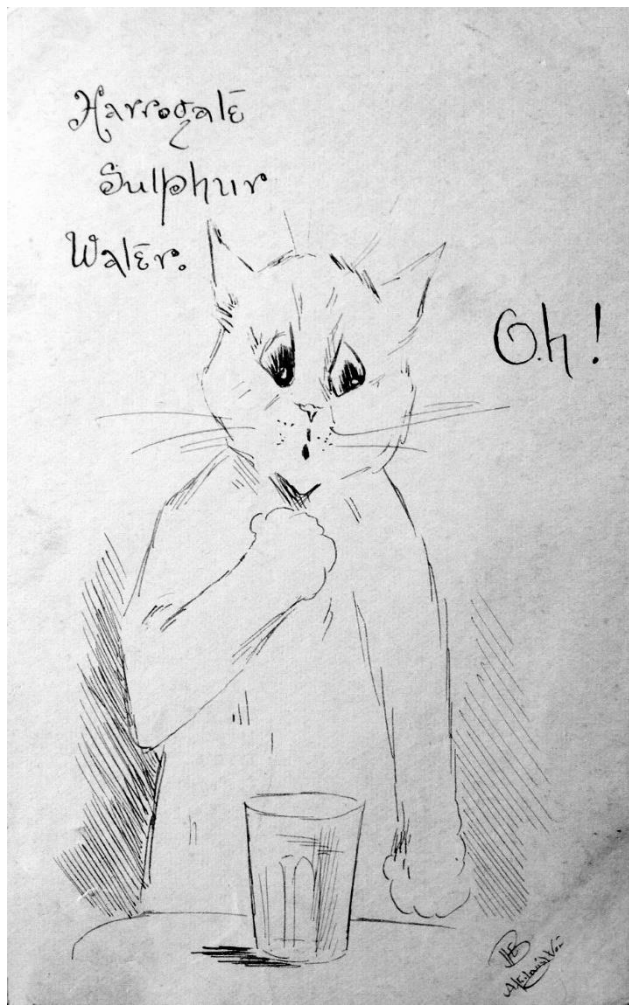
Goodbye Old Sulphur Well



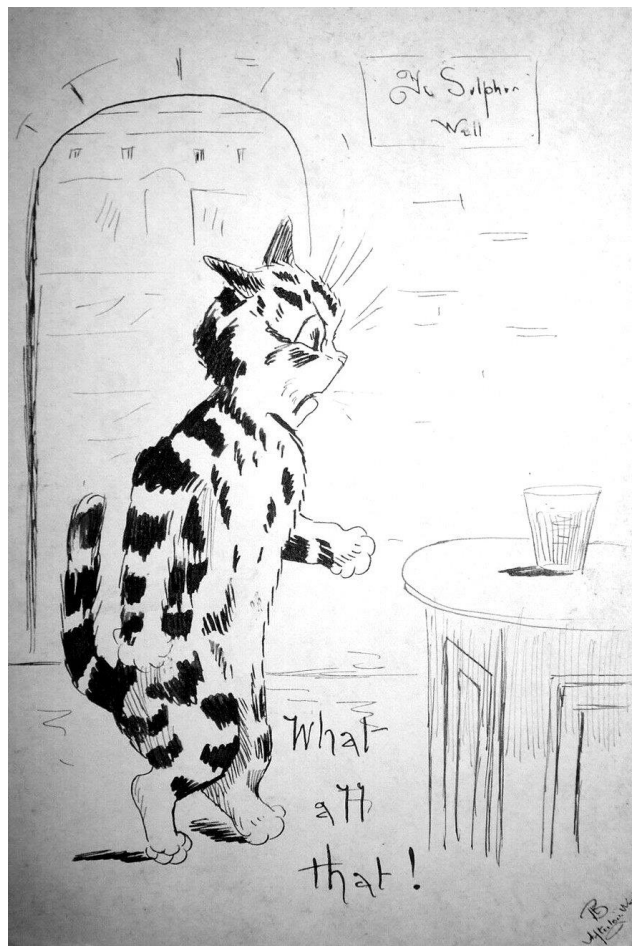
This will restore my youth and beauty



Cured!



*Oh!*

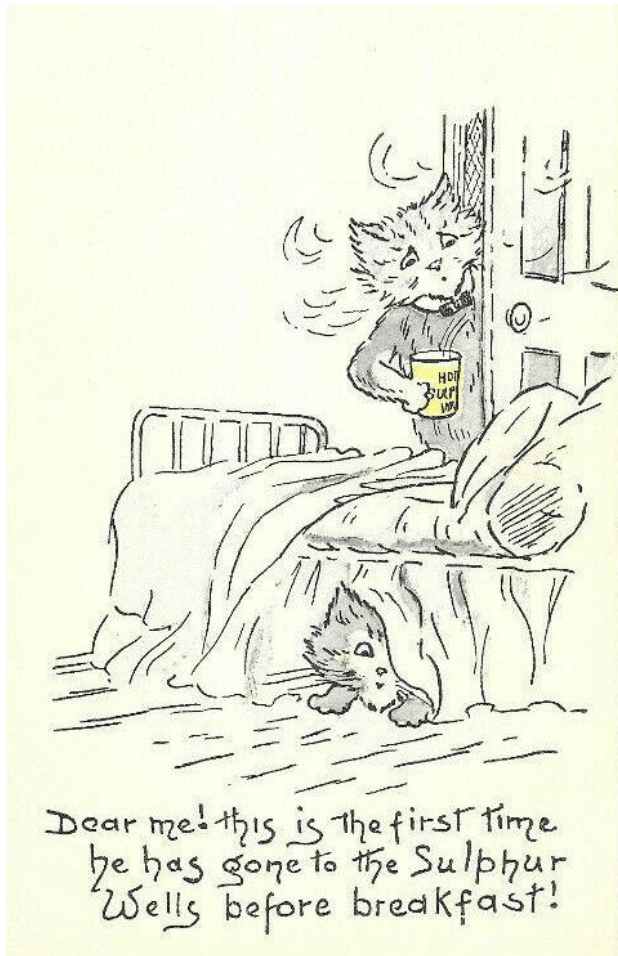


*What, all that!*



*It wasn't Sulphur Water!*





*Sulphur again!*

Nothing bad enough!



Even a golfer's language has its limits.

Harrogate Sulphur Well.



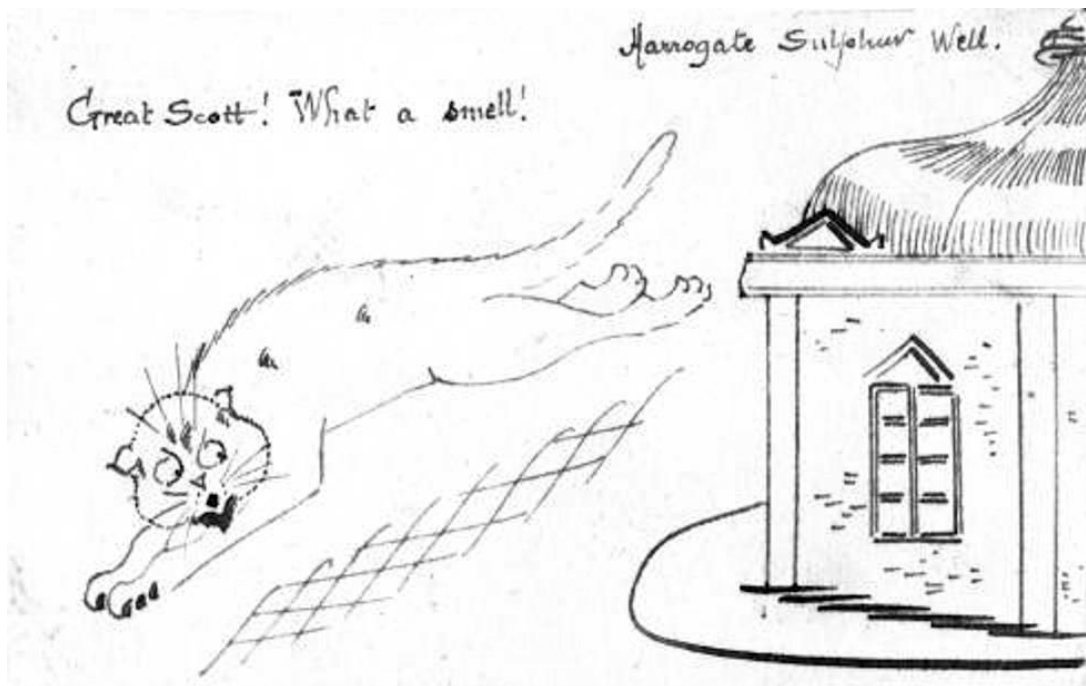
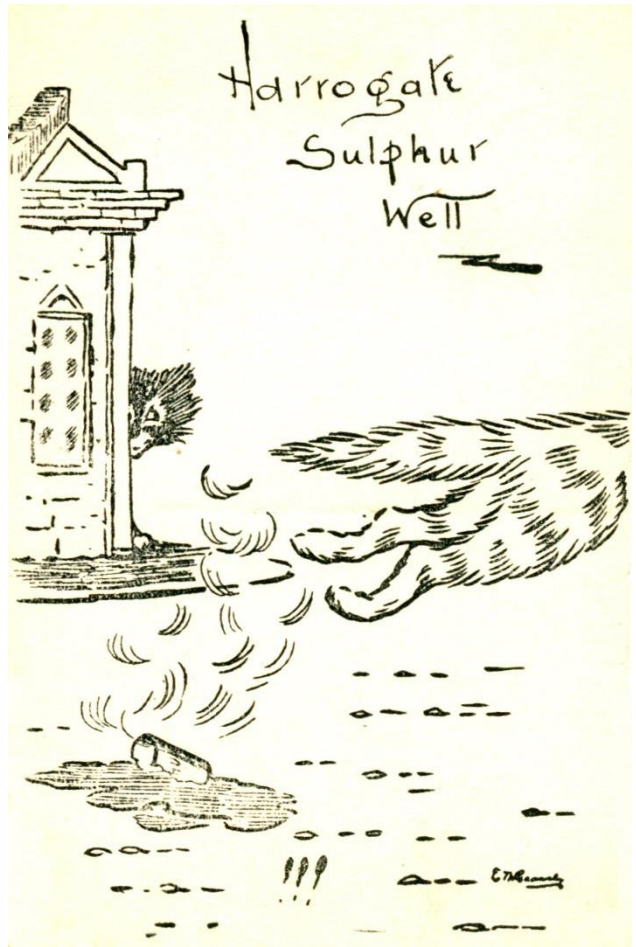
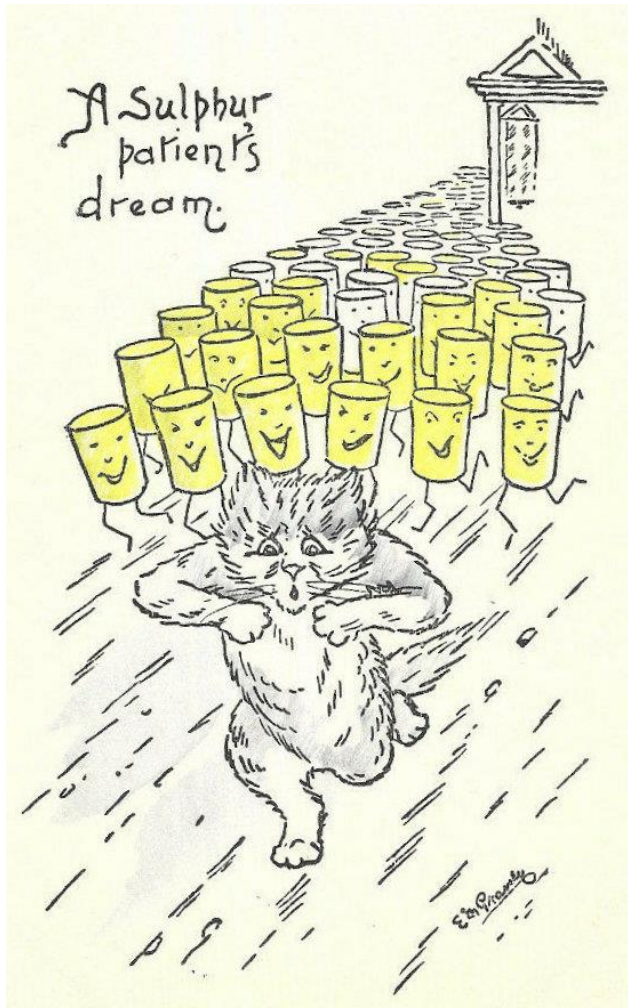
I'll stick to golf - FORE!

Dear me! Sulphur Water again!



Dear me! Sulphur water again



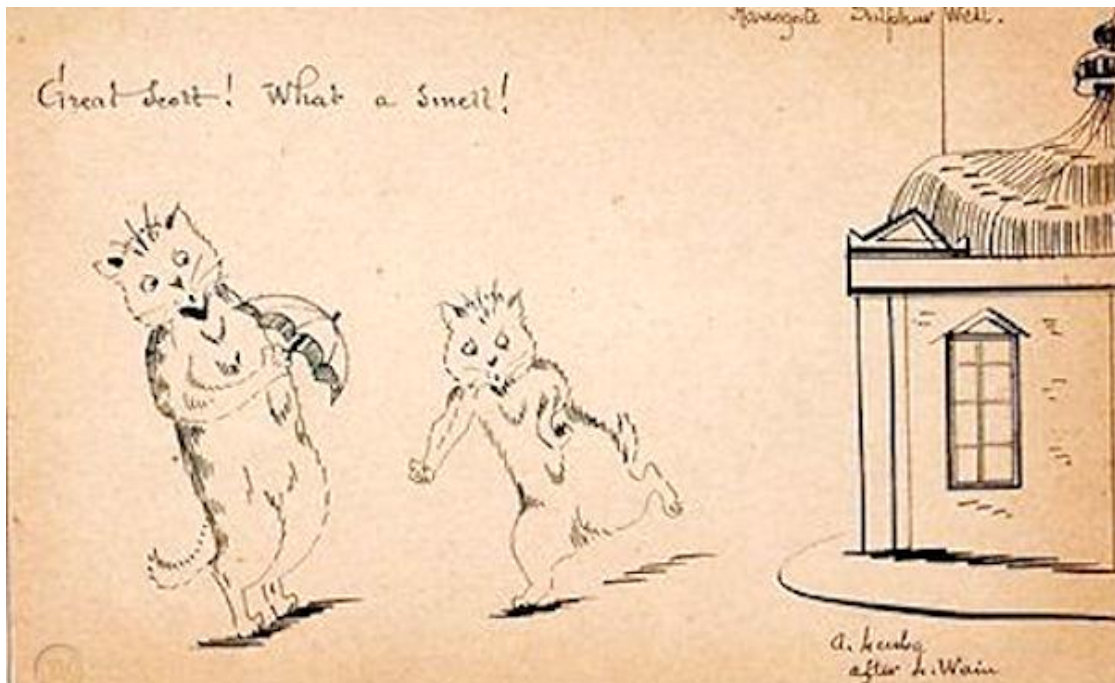
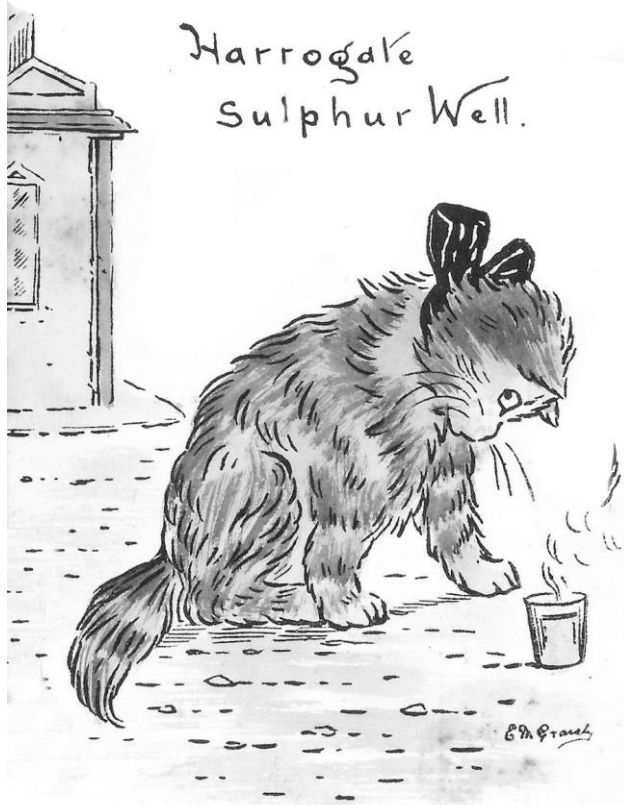


Great Scott! What a smell!

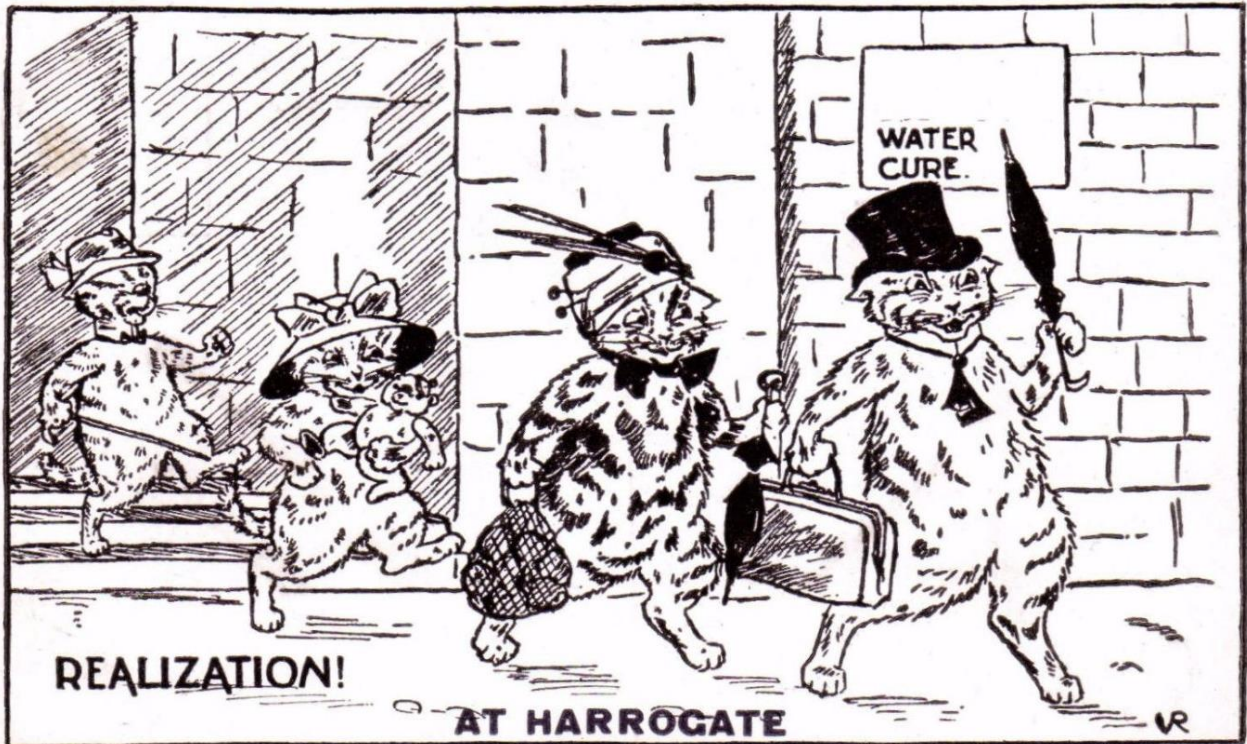
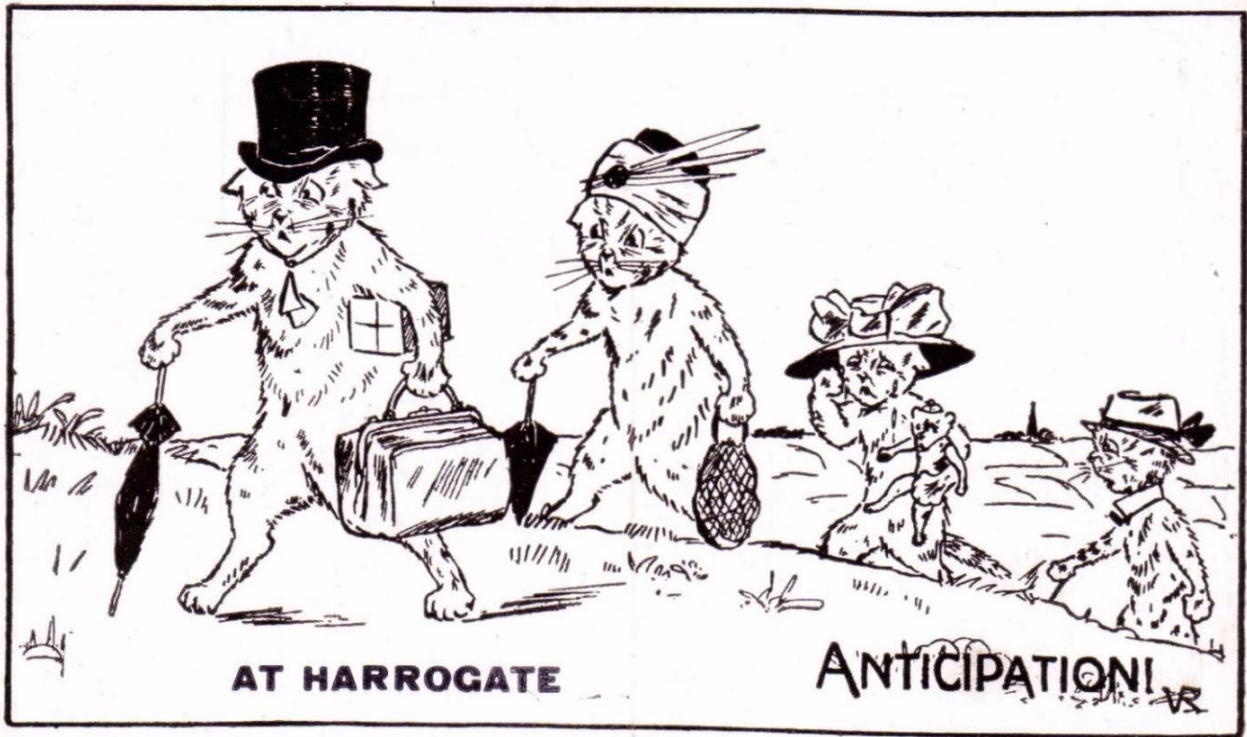


More of Harrogate sulphur water

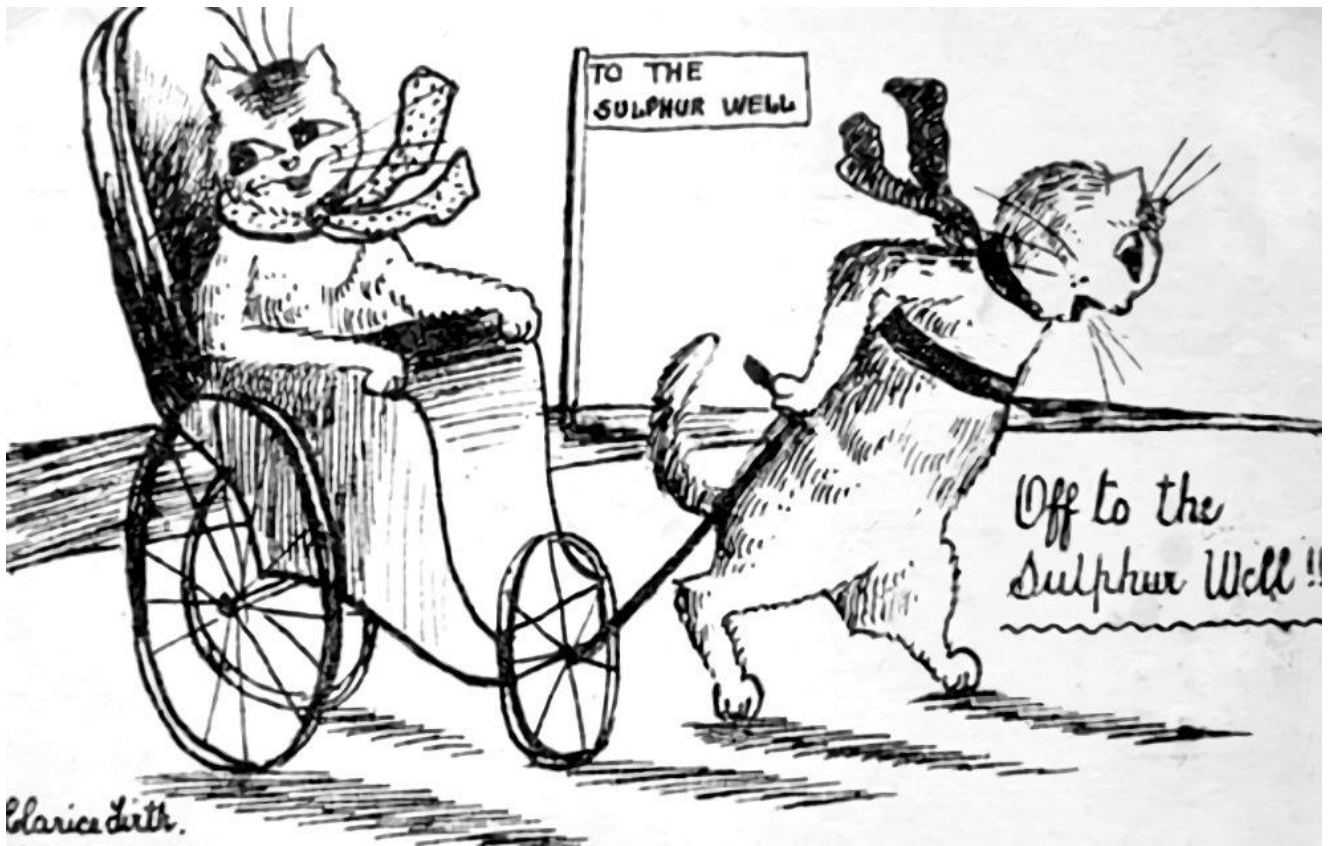




Great Scott! What a smell!

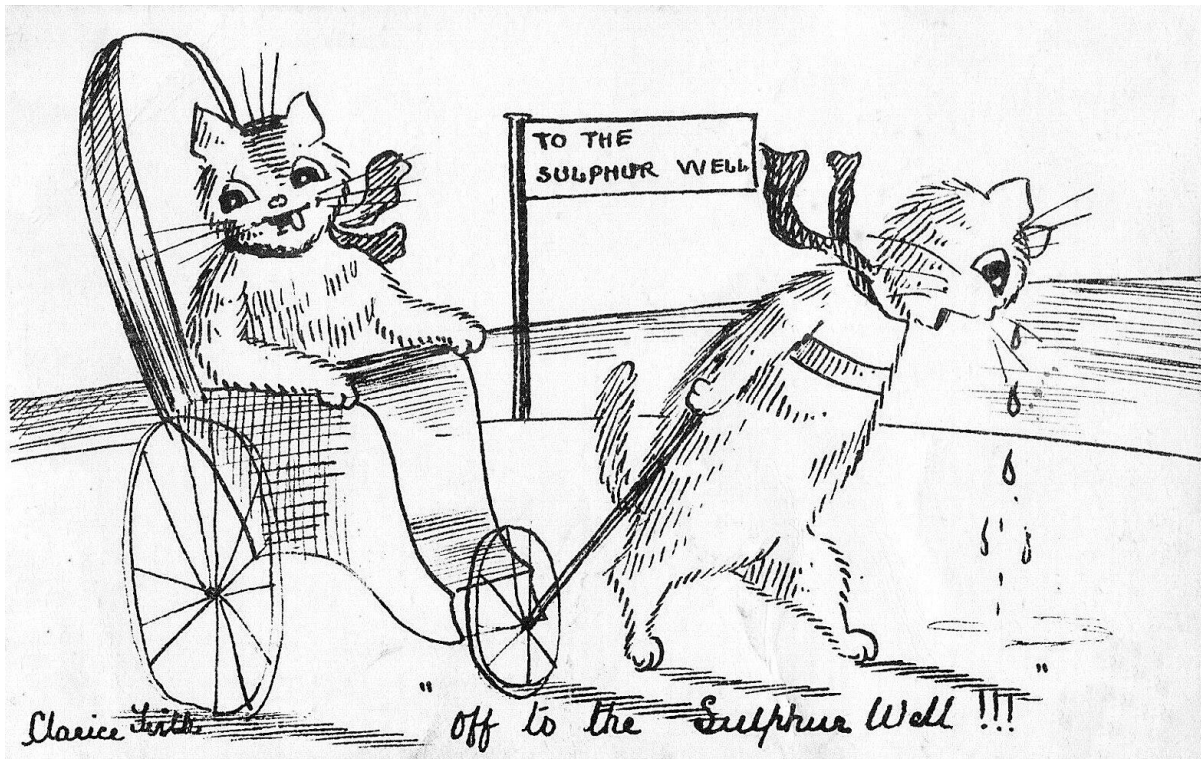






Clarice Luth.

Off to the Sulphur Well

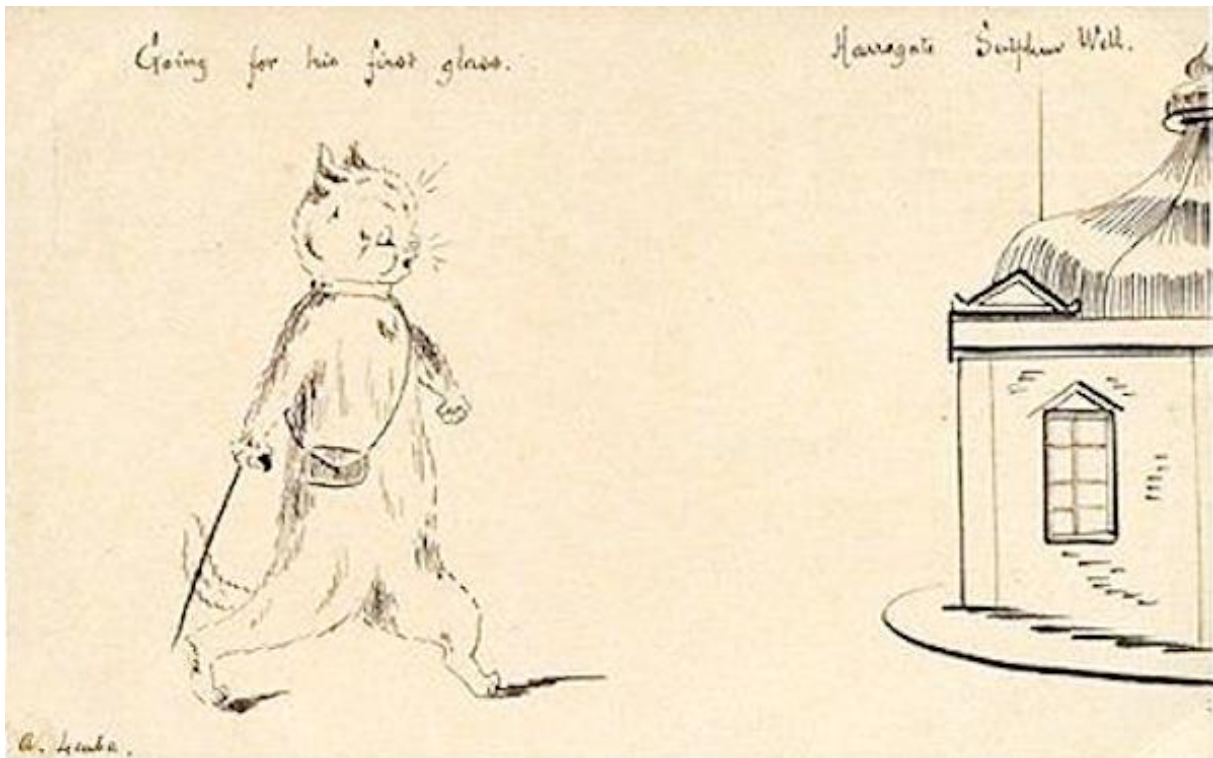


Clarice Luth.

Off to the Sulphur Well



*More sulphur water*



*Going for his first glass*





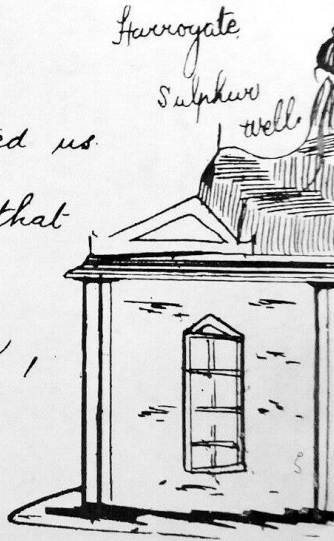
Don't bother me with Sulphur  
Water this morning 'can't  
you see, I'm sleeping'

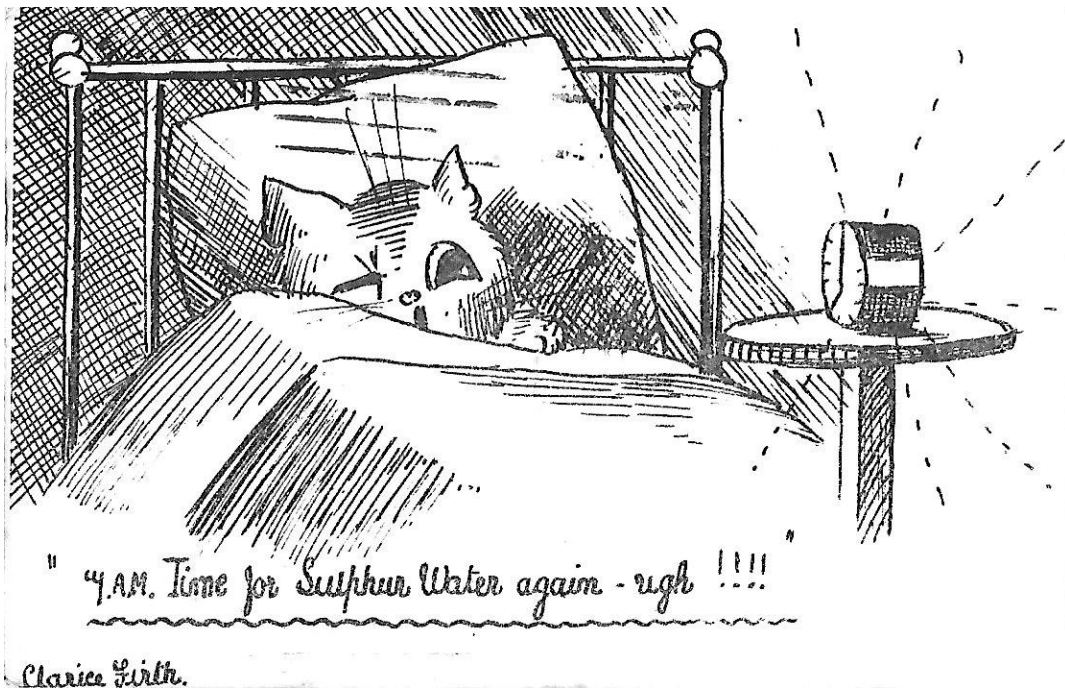
after L. Wain



after Louis Wain

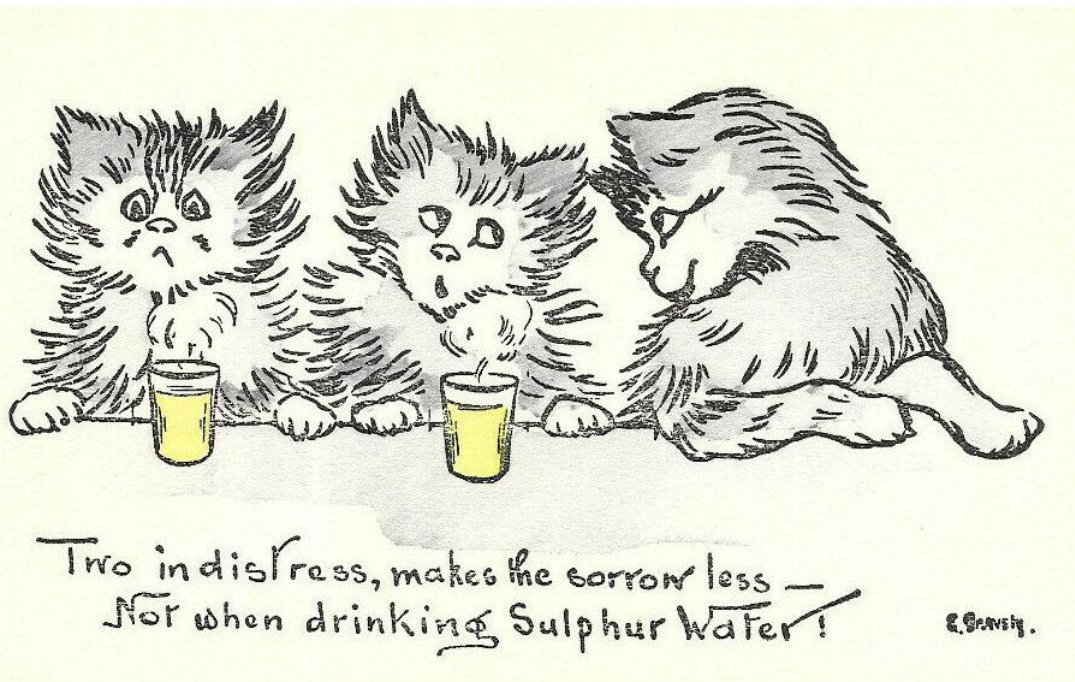
They wanted us  
to taste that  
dreadful  
Sulphur  
Water





" 4 A.M. Time for Sulphur Water again - right !!!!! "

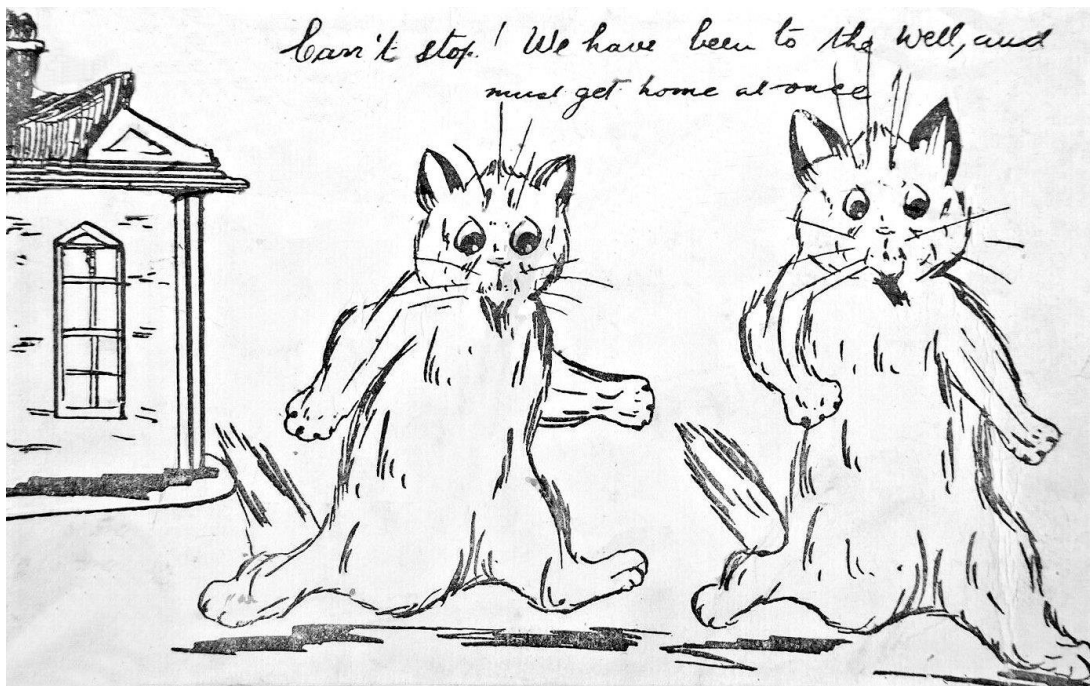
Clarice Firth.



Two in distress, makes the sorrow less —  
Not when drinking Sulphur Water!

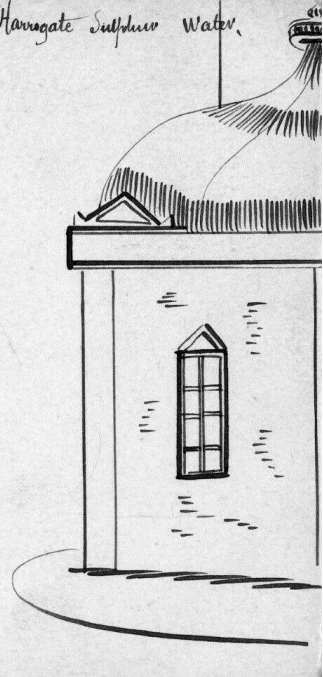
E. Savvy.





after taking the Water.

Harrgate Sulphur Water.



d. keba.



# Cats – by Louis Wain

Louis Wain was an artist best known for his drawings, which consistently featured anthropomorphised large-eyed cats and kittens. A number of his works were used to illustrate aspects of the “taking of the waters” at Harrogate and other spas.

There are two of his “Kissingen” pictures below, both of which were posted from Harrogate, one even with “Harrogate” written over the printed Kissingen.



*Be brave dear, it's all for your own good*



*You'll like it better as you go on, dear!*

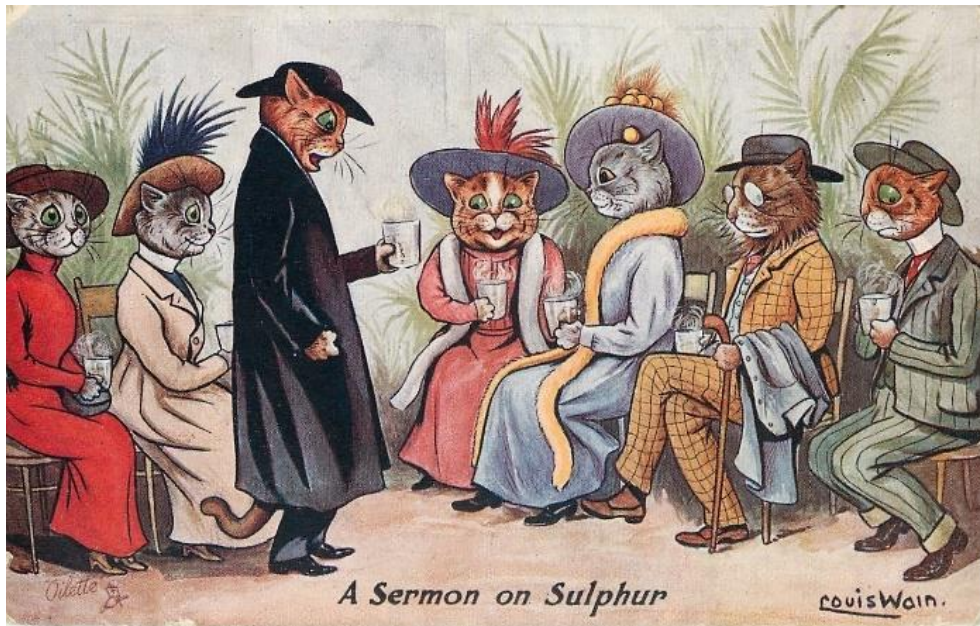




*Down it!*



*That awful clock again!*



*A Sermon on Sulphur*

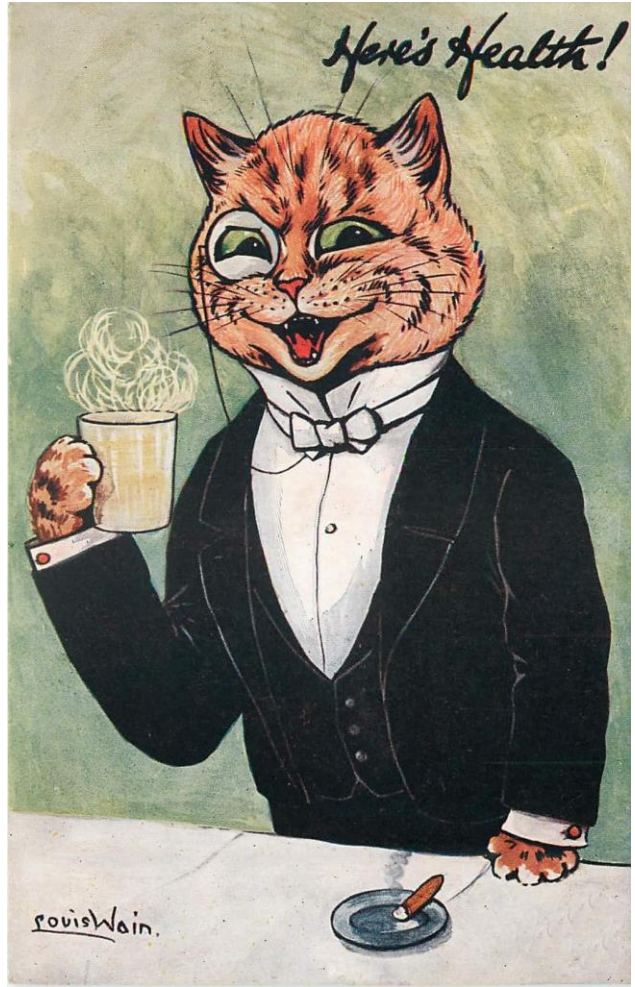




*rouisWain.*

A PERFECT CURE  
*Fit for anything!*

*Fit for anything!*



*Here's Health!*

*rouisWain.*

*Here's health!*

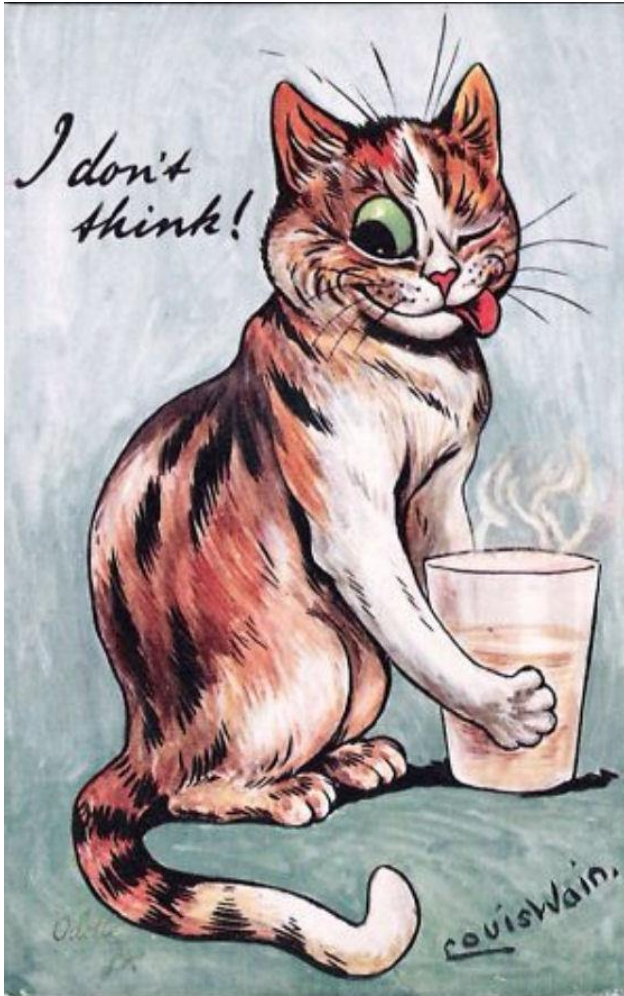


*Between Drinks*

*rouisWain.*

*Between drinks*





*I don't think!*

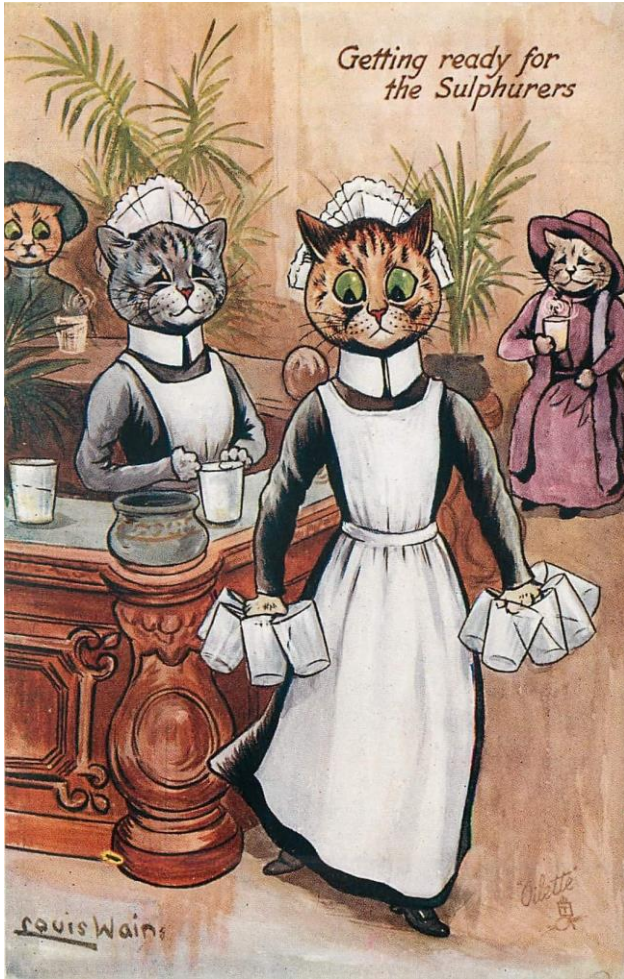


*They'll take the smell away, Sir!*



*A line of Sulphurers*





*Getting ready for the Sulphurers*

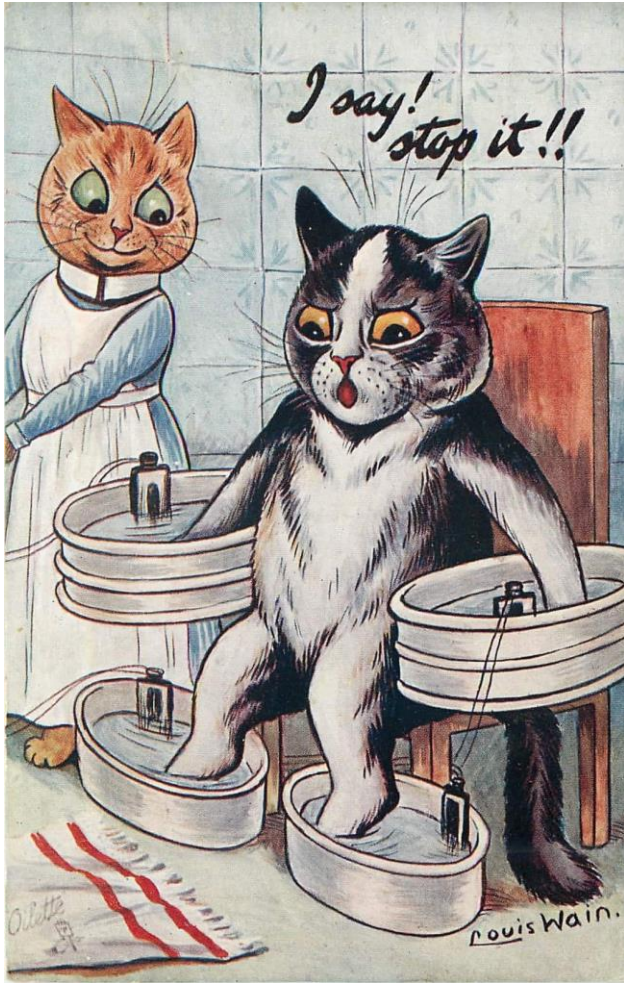


*How long am I expected to stand this?*

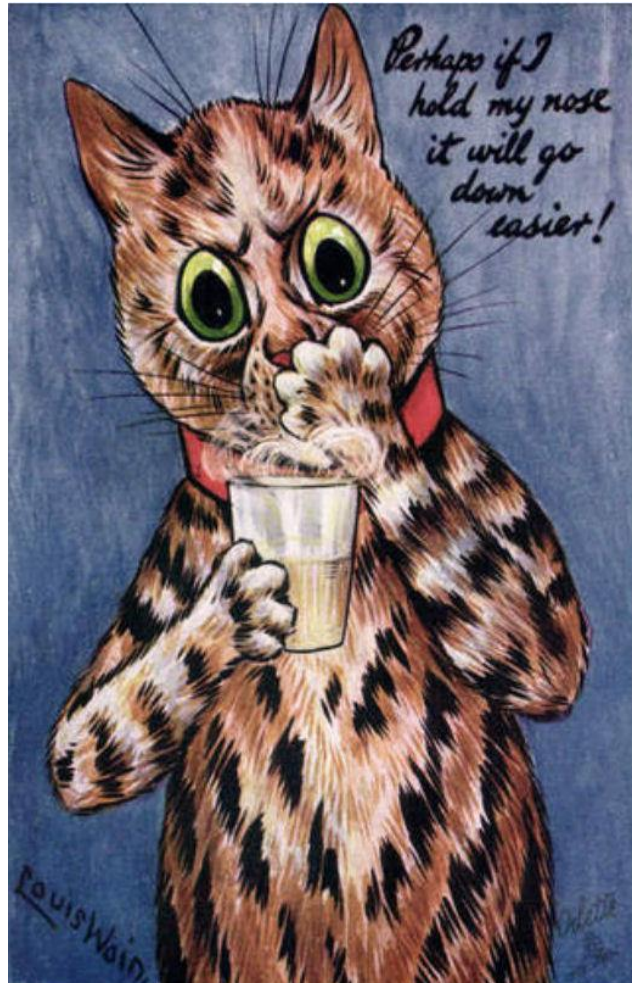


*No more sulphur today!*





*I say! Stop it!!*



*Perhaps if I hold my nose it will go down easier!*

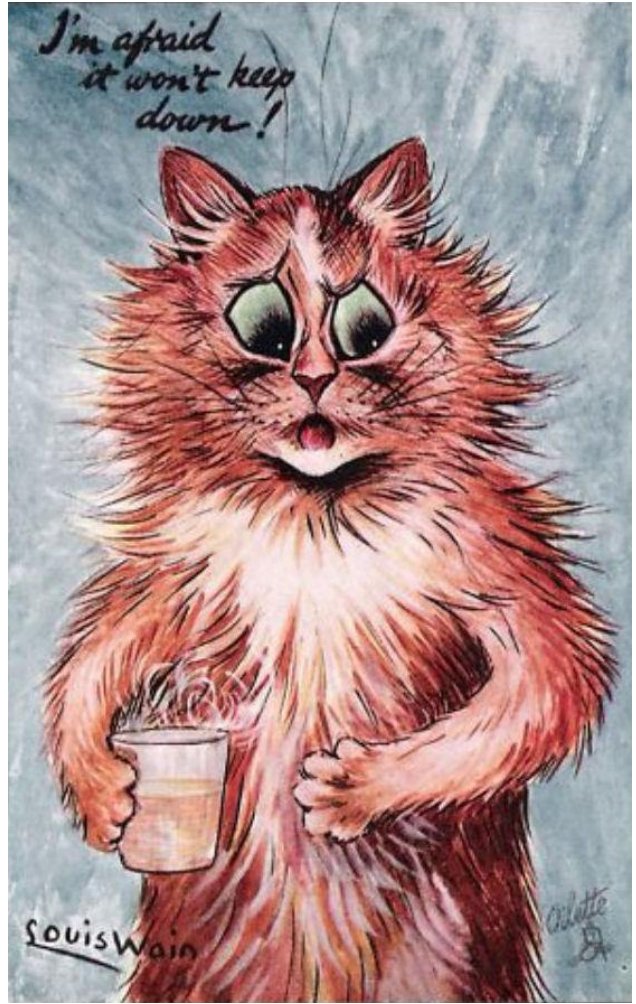


*I say, I didn't ask for an Irish Stew!*

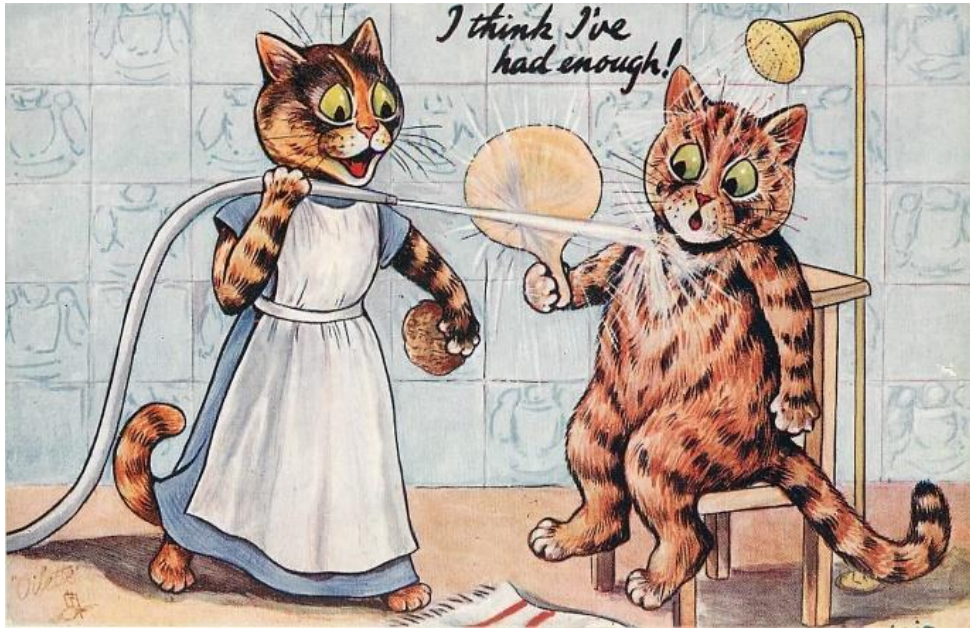




*Keep it down that's the thing*

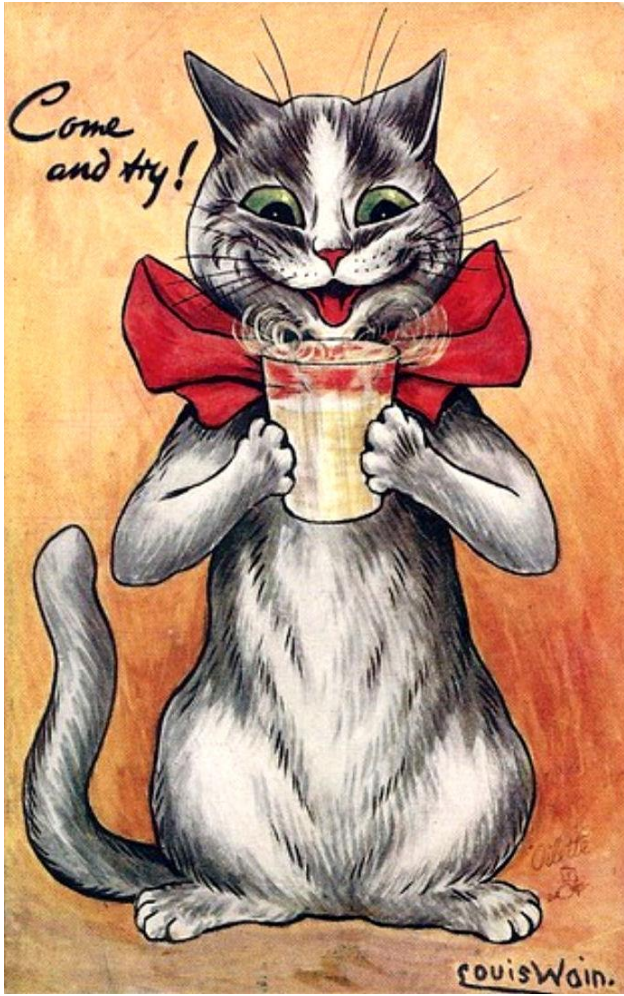


*I'm afraid it won't keep down!*



*I think I've had enough!*





*Come and try!*



*Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt*

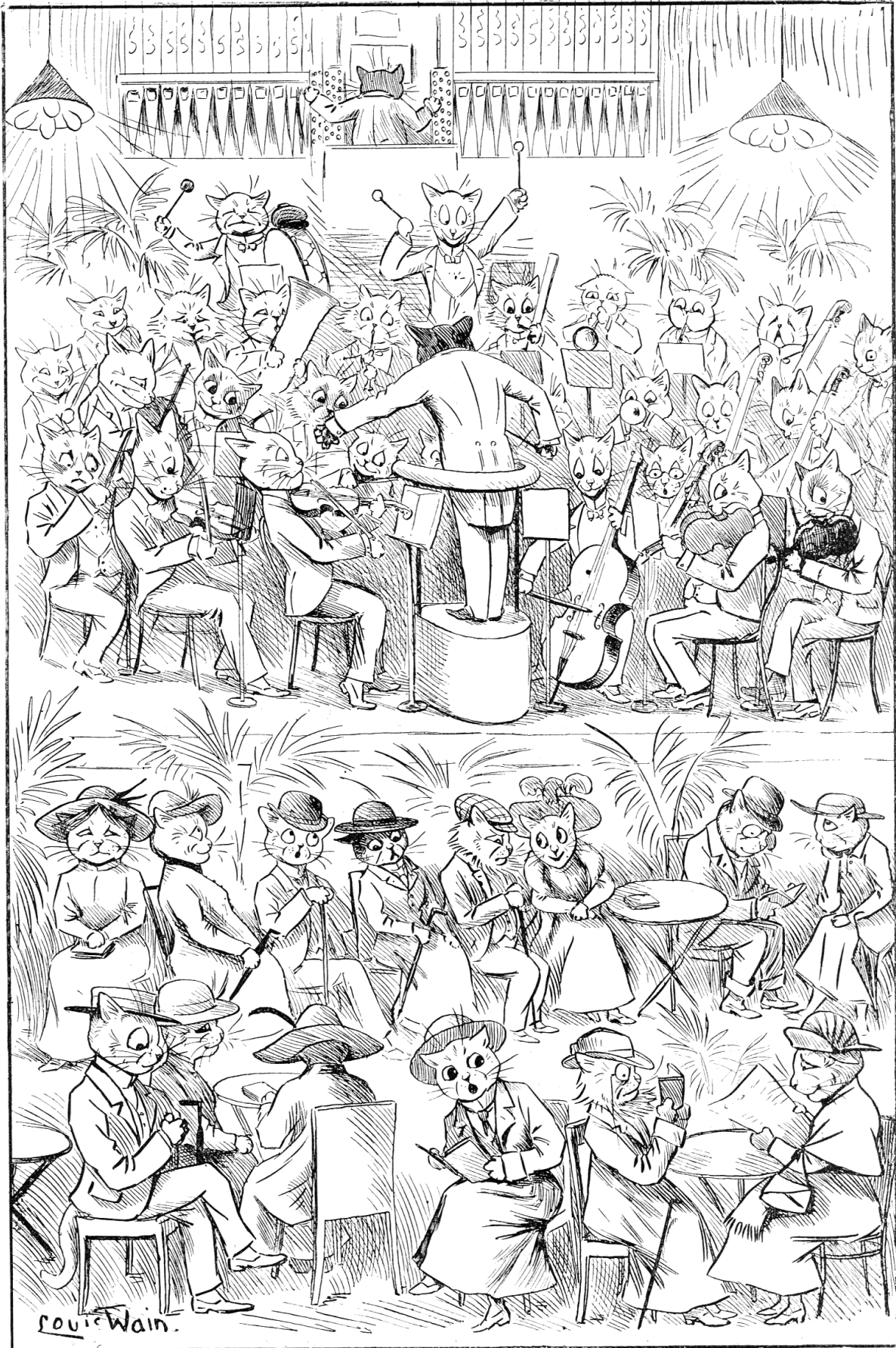


*The Kissingen Wink*  
*The Kissingen Wink*





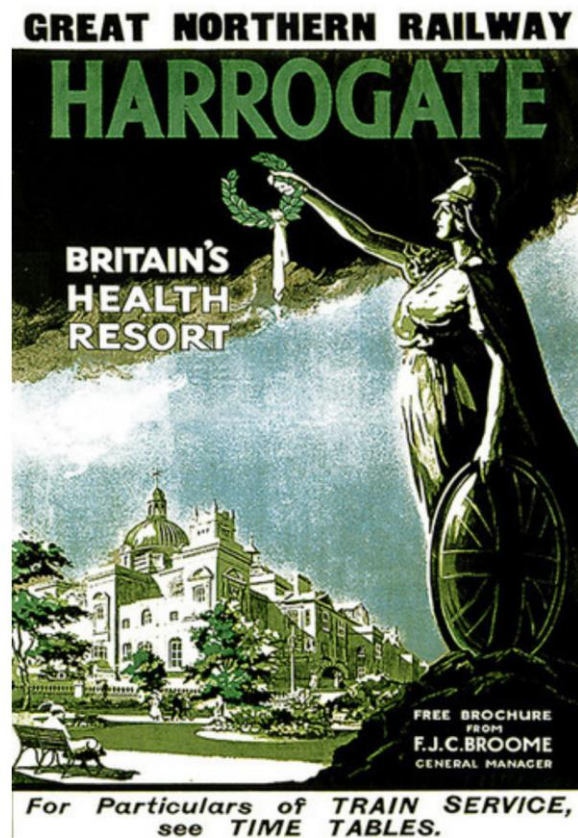
THREE OF KISSINGEN  
*Three of Kissingen [Harrogate]*



THE HARROGATE CURE.  
The musical stage of the cure.



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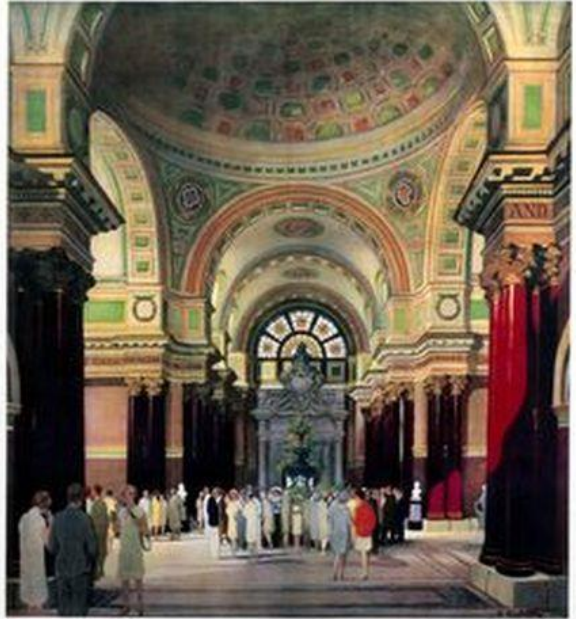
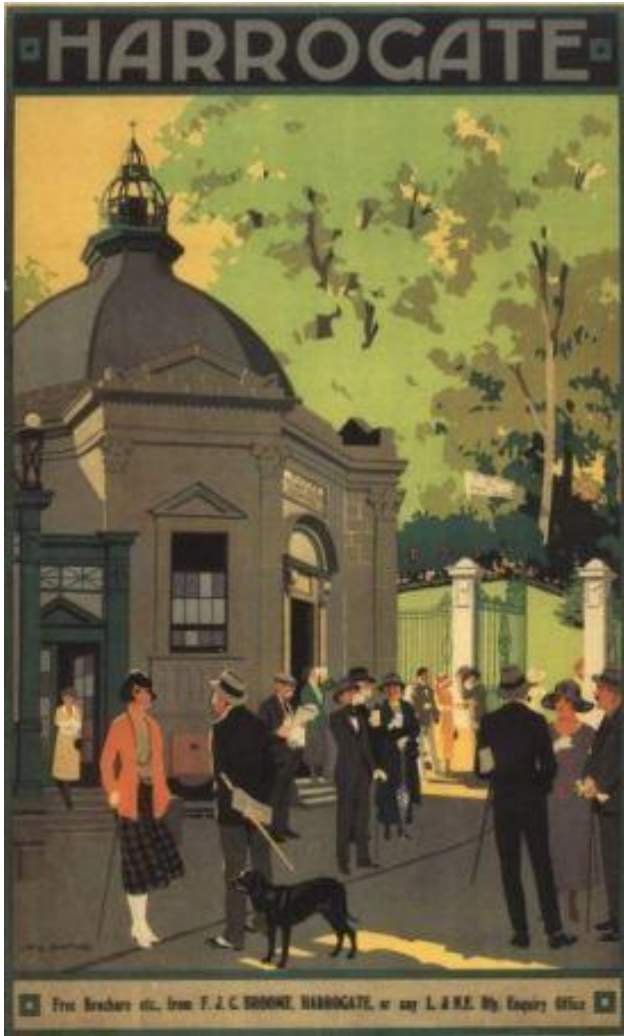
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**L M S**

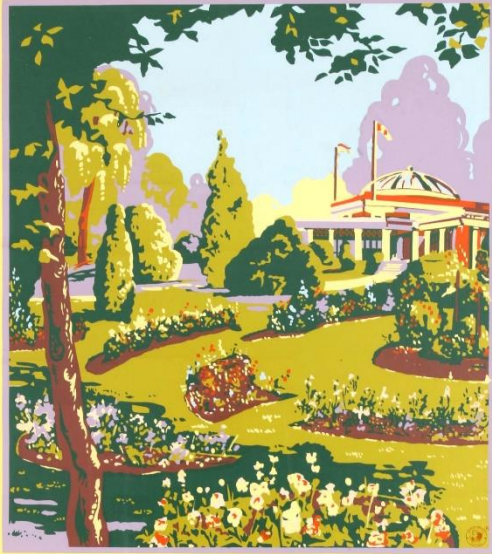


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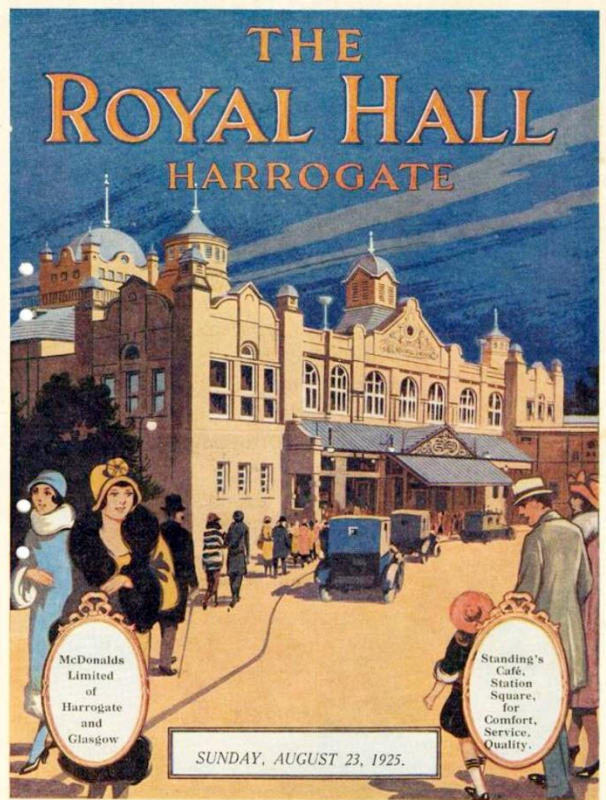


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**HARROGATE**  
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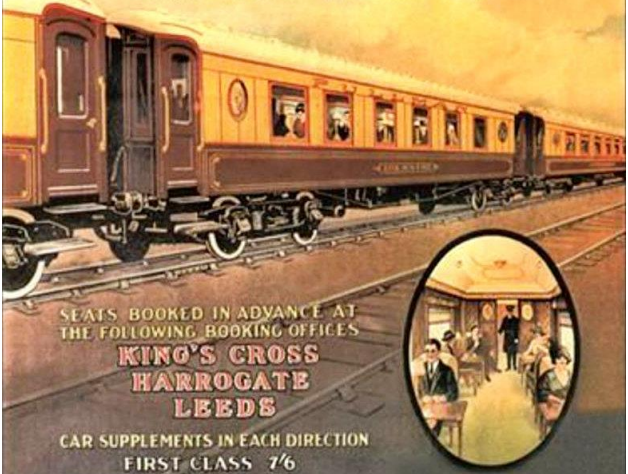
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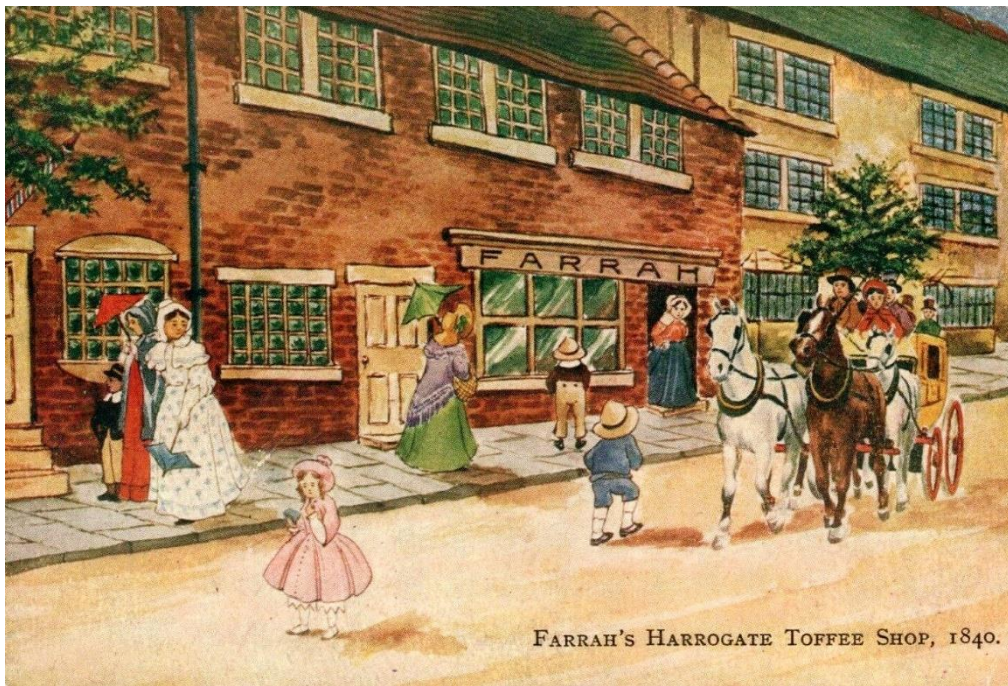
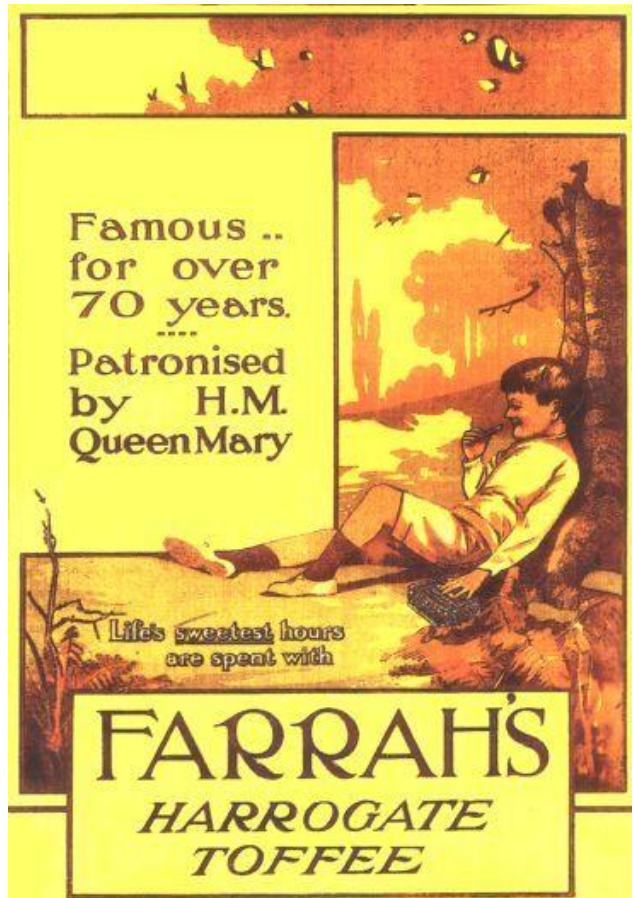
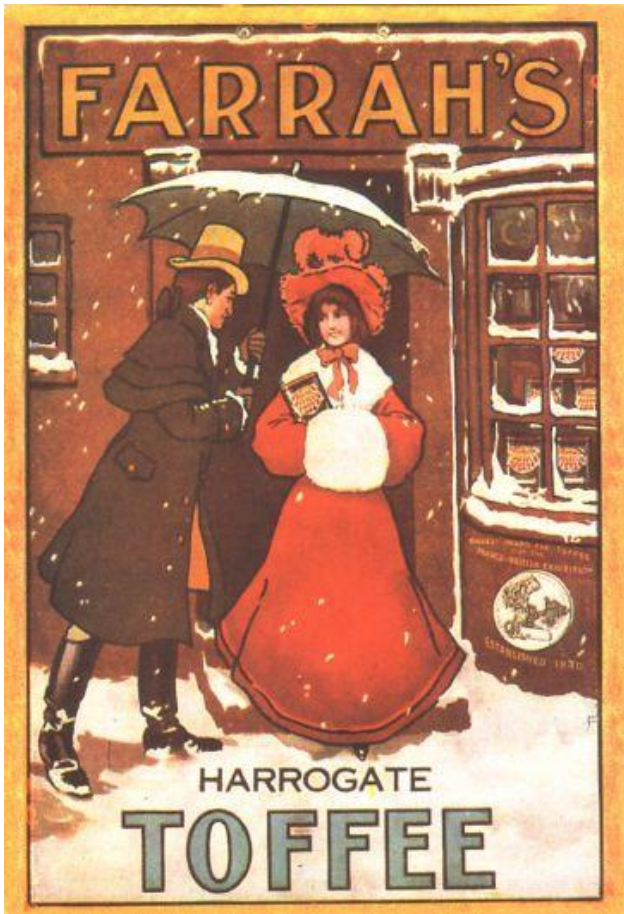
**HARROGATE**



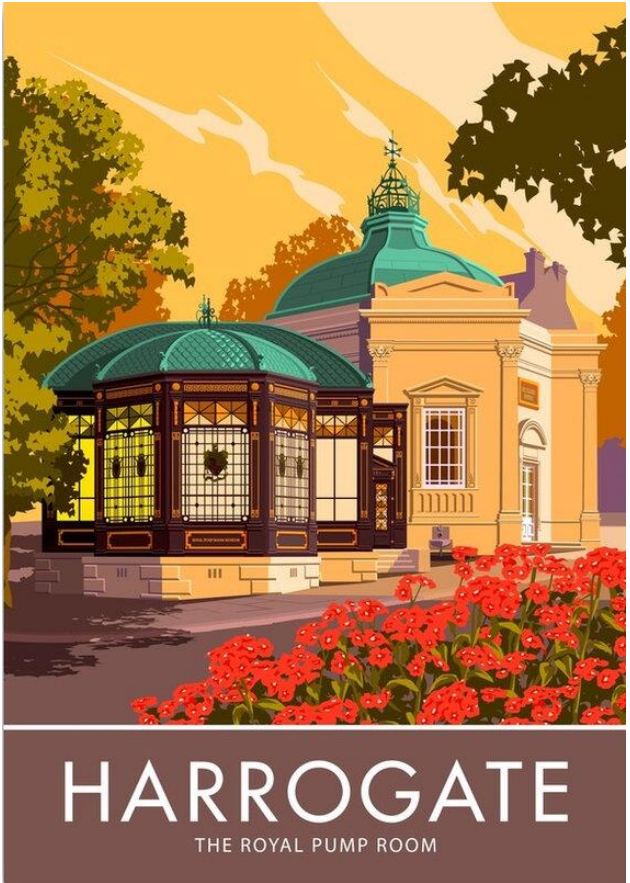
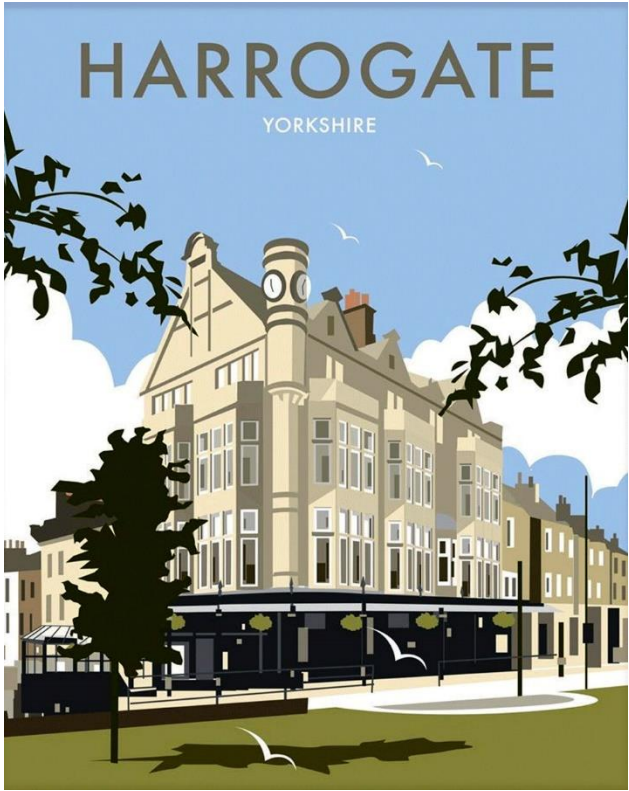
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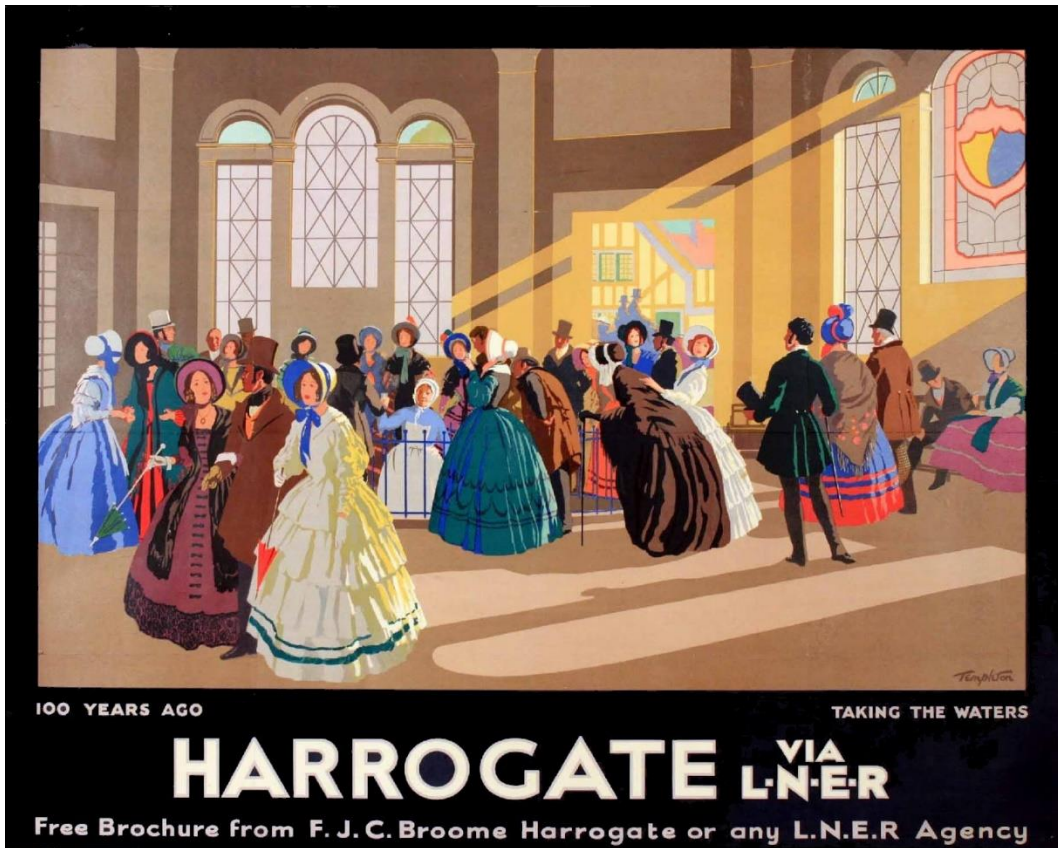
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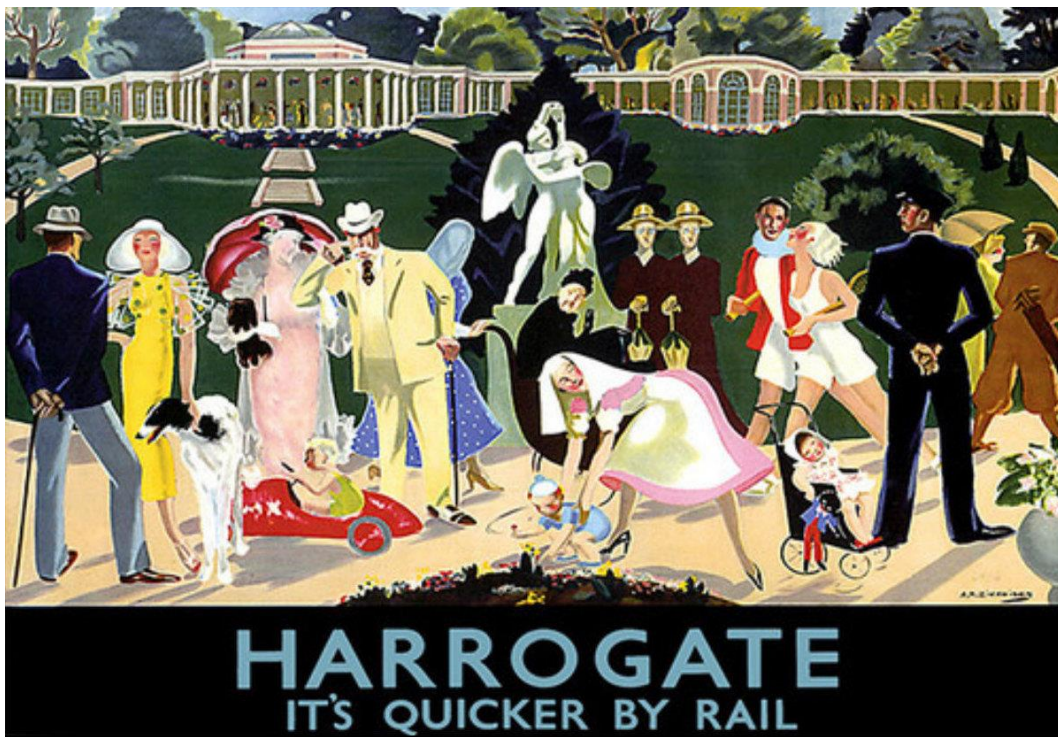




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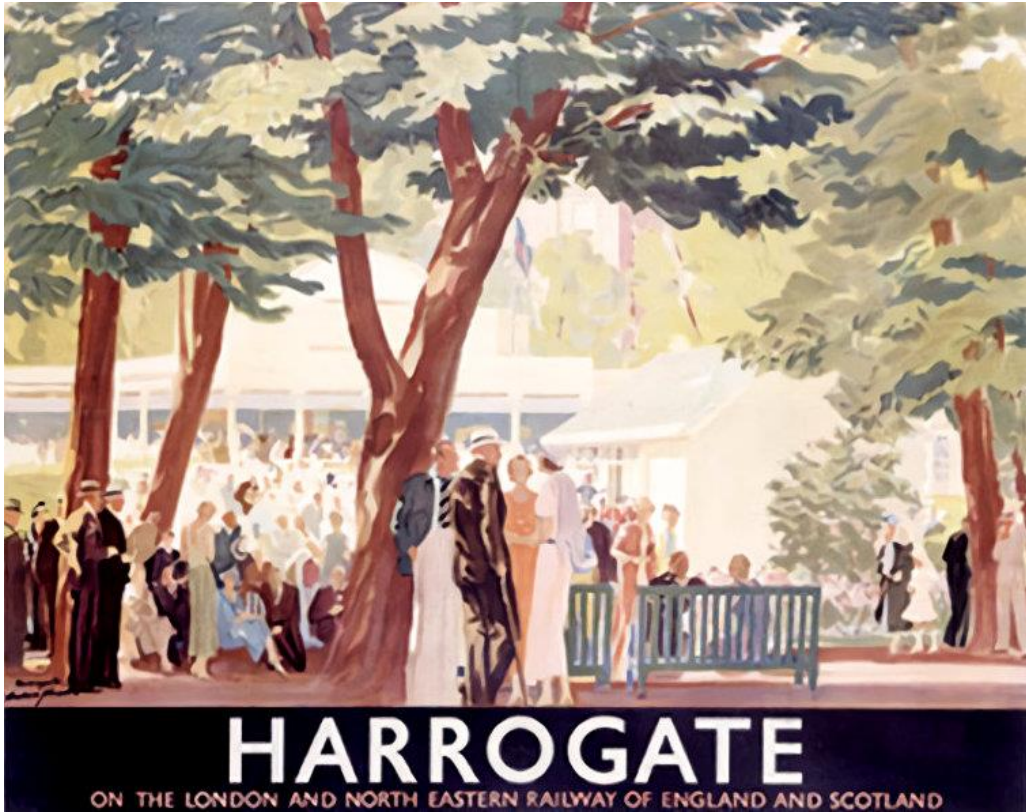
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