



Fig 4: Edward Ardizzone's original illustration for *The Lily*. £450



## Pick of the week

A July book, manuscript and map sale at Bellmans, near Wisborough Green, West Sussex, included many lots of theological interest, which seemed to find a market, although without making dramatic prices. Bellmans has been handling property from the estate of Prof Bernard Nevill (1930–2019), the skip-diving designer who made Liberty's an essential element of Swinging London in the 1960s, and here was part of his library.

A first edition of *Ses Peintures, ses Objets, ses Tissus Simultanés, ses Modes*, 1925, textile and costume designs by Sonia Delaunay, was inscribed by her to Nevill and sold for £2,440. Another intriguing inscription was in a first edition of *The Tower*, 1928, poems by W. B. Yeats. It had the bookplate of Mary L. Clode and an inscription to her of lines from a poem by Rabindranath Tagore. Yeats contributed an introduction to a 1913 edition of Tagore, but this was not his writing. The volume had a handsome binding designed by Thomas Sturge Moore and sold for £512. Alas, for lovers of *Withnail & I*, the copy of Harry Craddock's 1930 *The Savoy Cocktail Book* that made £345 had not belonged to Nevill.

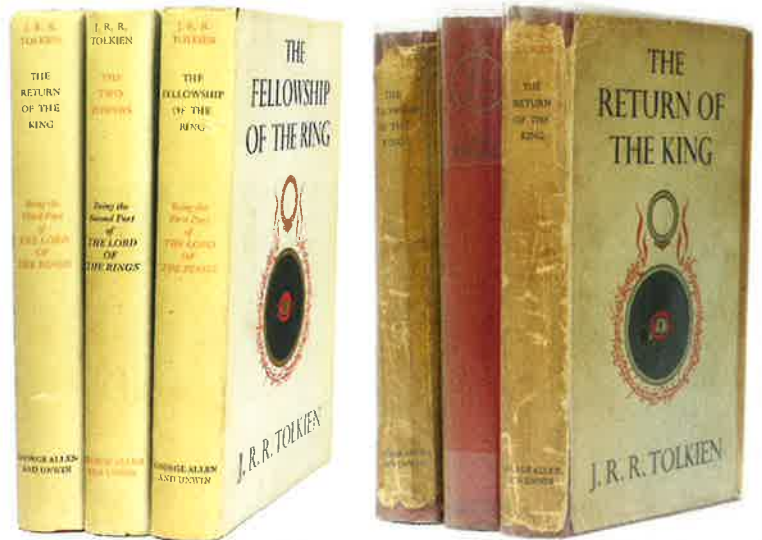


Fig 5: Two sets of signed first editions of Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy, one in 'fine' condition (left). £32,500 and £10,625

painter. Most notable in the sale was a copy of the first edition of Plath's first collection, *The Colossus and Other Poems*, published on October 31, 1960, but inscribed by Plath: 'October 27th, 1960. A birthday book dedicated to the source of my birthdays with love—Sylvia.' This was because she had hoped that it would appear on her actual birthday, but Heinemann could only publish on Mondays. Birthdays, especially hers, had great significance for Plath and her husband, Ted Hughes, a student of astrology; on an earlier occasion, she had written to him that 'I am living only for next Saturday—birthday, day of being born again with you—my love'. One wonders, however, whether the inscription might not also include the birth of Frieda the previous April.

There were 500 copies in the edition, of which the author received and gave away 18. The whereabouts of three are unknown, but, should they reappear, they would be unlikely to equal the £94,500 achieved by this one with its particularly personal association (Fig 2).

Swords of Stansted Mountfitchet held an August book sale and an interiors auction that included a pair of original illustrations by Edward Ardizzone (1900–79). These were 11in by 8½in pen and ink drawings for two of the short stories, *The Lily*

and *The Wedding* in that most COUNTRY LIFE of books, *My Uncle Silas* by H. E. Bates (1939); *Ssshhh! she says again* made £450 (Fig 4) and *We all drove over for the Wedding* £475. Bates described Silas as 'the original Adam, rich and lusty and robust... To those who find these stories too Rabelaisian, far-fetched, or robust, my reply would be that, as pictures of English country life, they are in reality understated'. Ardizzone was the perfect illustrator.

The Swords book sale was dominated by Norfolk and Fenland material. It was headed at £67,500 by two manuscript registers of Wisbech and Ely swan owners dating from 1566 and 1834 (Fig 1), the first illustrated with more than 600 marks and the second more than 900. Swan-uppers in those parts must have looked disdainfully on those of the Thames recording a mere three owners.

Also in this sale were two sets of signed firsts of Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy (1954 and 1955) (Fig 5). They were an object lesson in the importance of condition. The first was in well-read condition with tattered dust jackets, the second had hardly had a finger laid on it; indeed, it was described as a 'fine and unread set': thus £10,625 and £32,500. ↪

**Next week** Art on the Arno