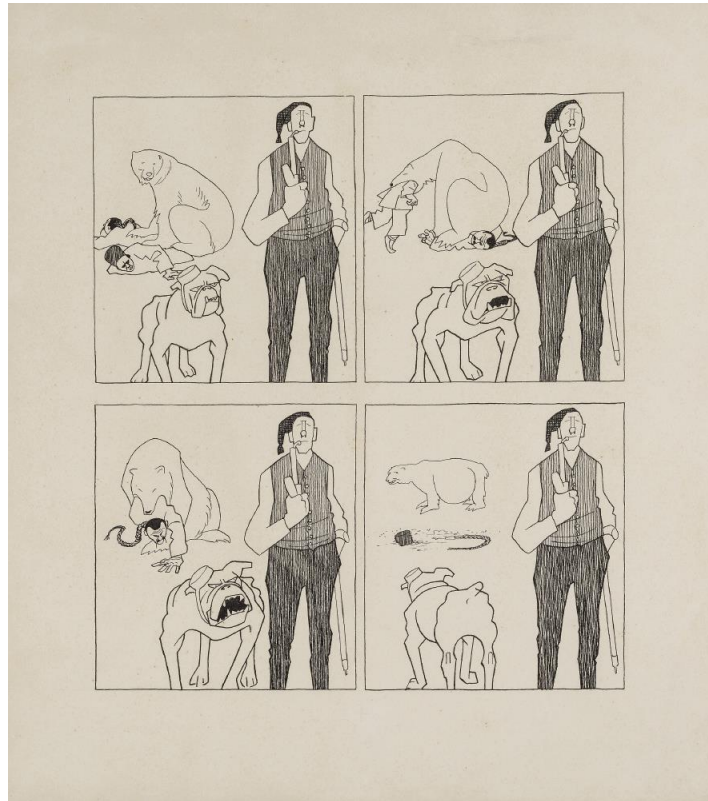


KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts



OLAF GULBRANSSON

(1873 Oslo - 1958 Tegernsee)

England's politics, 1912

Black ink on paper, laid down on cardboard

36.5 : 33 cm

Reproduced in:

'Simplicissimus', 16/45 (1912), p. 799 with the following caption:

"(I) Wie fletscht und knurrt das dumme Biest; (II) Wenn Michel seine Ruh genießt! (III) Derweil hat sich der Bär gestärkt; (IV) Bis es das dumme Luder merkt."

Provenance:

Estate of the artist

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Olaf Gulbransson joined *Simplicissimus* in 1903 and soon became one of its most popular contributors. His pen-and-ink drawings, executed with a smooth, soft stroke, avoid excessive distortion and amusingly reveal the character and self-image of the people depicted. Many of his caricatures were created at the suggestion of his friend and fellow *Simplicissimus* author Ludwig Thoma, who probably also provided the text for the illustrated history of *England's politics*.

At the time of publication, the political balance on the European continent had already begun to totter. The situation was exacerbated by the increasing cooling of German-British relations, which suffered particularly from the German Empire's expansive claims to power (naval building programme and expansion of the colonial empire) and Wilhelm II's often ill-considered foreign policy statements (Daily Telegraph affair). At the same time, trouble spots were smouldering in the Balkans (separatist movements within the Ottoman Empire) and in the Far East (the collapse of the Chinese Empire), which provided additional dynamite among the major European powers.

In his four-part pictorial history *England's politics*, Gulbransson thematises the German-British rift against the backdrop of Russian expansionist ambitions. In the form of a bear, the Tsarist Empire subjugates and devours a Turk and a Chinese one after the other until all that remains of them is a feez and a plait of hair. However, the self-centred English and Germans remain oblivious to all of this until the very end. While the German Michel stoically pulls on his pipe, the British Great Dane barks at him with increasing aggression, seemingly without reason, instead of putting a stop to Russia.

Even if, from a historical perspective, this interpretation can only be agreed with to a limited extent, the picture story shows that the major European powers had far less influence on the development of world politics than they thought. Two years later, the outbreak of the First World War would dramatically confirm this.