**W. Heath Robinson** [From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia]

William Heath Robinson (31 May 1872 – 13 September 1944) was an English cartoonist and illustrator, who signed himself W. Heath Robinson. He is best known for drawings of eccentric machines and “Heath Robinson” has entered the language as a description of any unnecessarily complex and implausible contraption.

**William Heath Robinson (1872-1944)**
[http://www.heathrobinson.org]

Portrait of William Heath Robinson in 1916
In the 1930s Heath Robinson was known as “The Gadget King” and he is still most widely remembered for his wonderful humorous drawings. But humorous art was only his third choice of career, and one that he turned to almost by accident. On leaving the Royal Academy Schools in 1895 his ambition was to become a landscape painter. He soon realised that such painting would not pay the bills, so he followed his two older brothers into book illustration. He rapidly established himself as a talented and original practitioner in his chosen field, and in 1903 felt sufficiently secure to marry. However, the following year a publisher who had commissioned a large quantity of drawings was declared bankrupt. The young Heath Robinson, who had just become the father of a baby girl, had quickly to find a new source of income. He turned to the high class weekly magazines such as The Sketch and The Tatler who paid well for large, highly finished humorous drawings, and within a year was being acclaimed as a unique talent in the field of humorous art.

For a number of years, he combined his careers as illustrator and humorist with equal and growing success, but by the end of World War One the market for lavishly illustrated gift books, which had flourished during the first decade of the century, had all but disappeared. The resulting gap was readily filled since his talents as a humorist were in ever increasing demand, especially for advertising. For the remainder of his career his main employment was in providing his unique brand of humour to magazines and advertising, supplemented by occasional commissions for fantasy illustrations. For his own pleasure, he continued to paint in watercolours, experimenting with effects of light and colour.

His importance, as an innovator in the fields of illustration and advertising, and perhaps more importantly as the heir of Rowlandson and Cruikshank in the British humorous tradition, has yet to be fully appreciated, and his work is poorly represented in public collections.
The unending flood of mechanical inventions, devices and contraptions that poured from Heath Robinson’s nonsensical pen during the last 40 years of his life included many drawings of industrial processes made for advertisers who wished to harness his gentle art to their own commercial purposes. An enormous variety of different trades and manufacturers employed him—among them cement works, cutlers, tailors, printers, publishers, makers of soap, clocks, safety matches, whisky, sherry and boot polish—and his determination to achieve his own kind of wild verisimilitude let him in for a personal visit to each, so that he knew what he was doing. It is a selection from his multifarious output for these commercial clients that has been rescued for release again in this book. Some of the drawings are graced with a text written by the artist himself, in a style of deadpan humour which matches the pictures exactly and was highly characteristic of the man himself. The whole adds up to an unexpected bonus of vintage Heath Robinson for all his admirers.

[The gentle art of advertising, Duckworth Press, London, 1979]
The following images are taken from this book!
Even when it rains cats and dogs you’ll find our waterproofs a complete protection against claw and paw (and, of course, down-paw).

Our hens used to dread a trunk-call, but now they have learned to have complete confidence in our wares.
In the Filtering Vaults at Kilmarnock
In the ‘Johnnie Walker’ Filling Cellars
Taking a proof
An old and somewhat laborious method of refrigerating a fresh herring
Efficient plant for the successful mixing of treated asbestos fibre with cement
Some tests for drawn wire
A patent double-action grinder for mashing the asbestos fibre