

## THE LIBRARY OF A CANADIAN ARTIST BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY OF ROBERT HOLMES

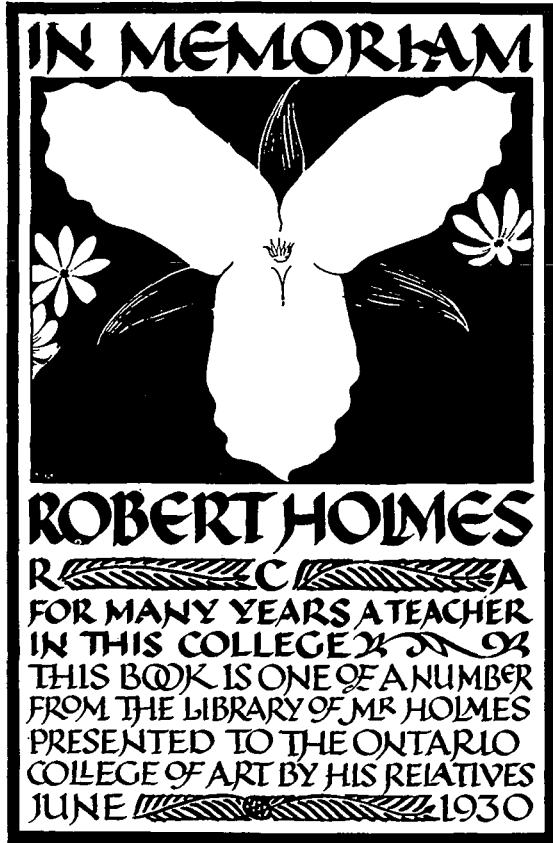
Robert Holmes (1861-1930), R.C.A. is best known for his studies of Canadian wild flowers, a considerable number of which are in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario.<sup>1</sup> From 1891 to 1920 he was the drawing master at Upper Canada College and from 1912 to his death he taught Design and Applied Arts (and also gave a summer course on art history) at the Ontario College of Art. After his death a book-plate designed by Thoreau MacDonald was placed in a number of books now in the library of the Ontario College of Art. It represents a trillium and contains the following text: "In Memoriam Robert Holmes R.C.A. for many years a teacher in this college. This book is one of a number from the library of Mr. Holmes presented to the Ontario College of Art by his relatives June 1930". (Fig. 1)

No record has survived of the number of books given nor of their titles and therefore it is not known how many have been lost or discarded during the forty-five years which have elapsed since the gift was made.<sup>2</sup> However, the book-plate makes it possible to reconstitute a portion (126 volumes) of Holmes's library which was donated to the College.

So far the only published record of the library of a Canadian artist is the official inventory of Paul Kane's books (over 100 volumes) made after his death in 1871.<sup>3</sup> A list of the books of Robert Holmes, whose artistic career began a decade after Kane's death, may therefore be of interest, especially as the use of his library by students extends its influence to the next generation.

Holmes was an active member of the Toronto Art Students League and eventually became its president. Like other members of the League, such as A. H. Howard, C. M. Manly and R. Weir Crouch, he designed magazine covers, book-plates and illustrations. To what extent his library was typical of that of an artist of his generation in Toronto cannot be judged but it reflects his interests and taste as an artist and botanist as well as his professional needs as a teacher of design and applied arts.

Holmes's interest in botany and other sciences are represented by two text-books on botany (36, 121),<sup>4</sup> a French encyclopaedia of plants (17), a guide to wild flowers (118), a pamphlet of the poisonous plants of Canada inscribed by the author (35) and text-books on geology (114) and astronomy (52).



To  
O.C.A.

R. Holmes

Fig. 1. Thoreau MacDonal, book-plate (4½" x 3"); presentation inscription by Robert Holmes.

Among the books on design are a well-known manual on the application of plant forms to design (50), a collection of articles on nature drawing (1), a work on the evolution of decorative art (2) and a text-book on decorative design (47). Copies of Christopher Dresser's *Principles of Decorative Design* (inscribed in pencil "A. H. Howard") (24), of Walter Crane's *Claims of Decorative Art* (20), with some annotations by Holmes, and of Joseph Pennell's *The Illustration of Books* (106),<sup>5</sup> three works by authors who exerted considerable influence on late nineteenth century design, were also in the Holmes library.

Holmes was obviously aware of the strong tendency to stylize plant forms which was typical of *Art Nouveau*, yet his own flower studies are literal and accurate depictions untouched by decorative stylization. His few known attempts in the decorative genre for the Calendars of the Toronto Art Students League are stilted and lack the freedom and imagination of similar designs by Howard or Manly. The three known cover designs by Holmes<sup>6</sup> are in a compact and robust vertical style closer to Arts and Crafts than to the sinuous line of *Art Nouveau*. Nevertheless, although he did not assimilate the dominant contemporary style in his flower studies, Holmes's taste in book design was exceptionally up to date and discriminating. Indeed his library contained examples of the work of a number of the best illustrators of the eighteen-nineties and the following decade.

Among them were four volumes in Bell's attractive Endymion Series of poets, illustrated respectively by Robert Anning Bell, Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, Alfred Garth Jones and Byam Shaw (27-30), two volumes, with floral decorations by Harold Nelson, in the Early English Prose Romance series (107, 109), *Sartor Resartus* illustrated by Edmund Sullivan (13), *The Book of Job* with designs by Herbert Granville Fell (7) and Jane Barlow's *End of Elfintown* illustrated by Laurence Housman (4). Wordsworth's poems with delicate floral initials by Alfred Parsons (126), *The Ingoldsby Legends* (3) illustrated by Arthur Rackham, *Princess Badoura* (45) with illustrations by Edmund Dulac and *The Rubayat of Omar Khayyam* (112) illustrated by Frank Brangwyn are further examples of British book illustration in his library.

Children's books of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain some of the most attractive and original illustrations of the period. Three outstanding examples were among Holmes's books: Walter Crane's *Baby's Own Aesop* (19) Maurice Boutet de Monvel's *Jeanne*

*d'Arc* (8) and *Oncle Hansi's Mon Village* (39), the latter contains a pencilled list of French words and idioms in Holmes's hand.

American book illustration is represented by only three books: Elihu Vedder's *Rubayat of Omar Khayyam* (111), a gift from C. W. Jefferys in 1894, *The One Hoss Shay* (44) illustrated by Howard Pyle and *A Book of Old English Love Songs* (53) decorated by George Wharton Edwards. The first of these is a particularly striking and original example of American book design, while Howard Pyle is recognized as one of the outstanding American illustrators of his period.

A little known example of book illustration by J. E. H. MacDonald, Roy Mitchell's *Shakespeare for Community Players* (104), which is inscribed "R. Holmes to OCA Library", and Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* (48) with illustrations by Norman Price (1877-1951) are the only two books illustrated by Canadian artists. The latter volume was presented to Holmes by the illustrator, by A. A. Turbayne (who designed the cover), A. A. Martin and W. T. Wallace. Price, Wallace and Martin, former students at the Ontario College of Art, were the founders of the successful Carlton Studio in London. The four signatures are dated "Christmas 1905".

A small group of books dealing with ancient and classical art and architecture include *A Pictorial Atlas to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey* (31), a work on Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian costume and decoration (46), Jane Harrison's *Art and Ritual* (40), Gardner's *Handbook of Greek Sculpture* (37) as well as general surveys such as Elie Faure's *Ancient Art* (32) and Margaret Bulley's *Ancient and Mediaeval Art* (10). Also present are the third volume, "The Fine Arts", of J. A. Symonds' *Renaissance in Italy* (117) and Banister Fletcher's indispensable *History of Architecture* (34). Books on Japanese (9) and Russian painting (5) are included in the collection.

Works on heraldry (122), miniatures (21), enamels (22), engraving (23) and a number on the history of furniture and interior decoration, such as Walter Hyer's *Handbook of Furniture Styles* (25), Hayden's *Chats on Cottage and Farmhouse Furniture* (41) and *The House Beautiful and Useful* by J. H. Elder-Duncan (26) were no doubt used by Holmes to prepare his courses on the applied arts. Several of them are annotated.

Laurie's classic work *The Painter's Methods and Materials* (49) and *Notes on the Science of Picture-Making* by C. J. Holmes (43)<sup>7</sup> as well as a manual on perspective (115) are among the works on the technique of painting.

Critical essays on art appreciation include works by Caffin (12),

Clausen (16), Kenyon Cox (18), C. Lewis Hind (42), Sturgis (116) and Thurston (119). Strangely enough, only one work dealing with Canadian art and artists is among Holmes's books: Jean Chauvin's *Ateliers* (15). A bound volume (105) of clippings from such periodicals as *Century Magazine*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *The English Illustrated Magazine* and *The Pall Mall Magazine* reflects Holmes's particular interest in British art. The articles deal with the Royal Academy, the National Portrait Gallery, artists and studios in London, the Chantrey bequest, the aesthetes, Christie's and such individual artists as Alma-Tadema, Poynter, Leighton, Burne-Jones, Millais, Watts and others.

In 1929 Holmes presented forty-eight volumes (54-101) in the series *Masterpieces in Colour* to the OCA library. He inscribed each volume "presented R. Holmes" and with the date "5. 8. 29". Issued during the first two decades of the twentieth century, this series of monographs on individual artists, each with eight colour plates, was published by T.C. & E.C. Jack in Edinburgh. Inserted in one of the volumes is a prospectus, issued by the T. Eaton Co., which claims that it is "the first series at a popular price to reproduce these treasures of art in full colour"; forty-seven titles are listed at thirty-five cents each. The artists included in the series ranged from Bellini and Mantegna to Whistler and John Singer Sargent. The texts are for the most part by art critics forgotten today by all but art librarians. Two exceptions are the volumes written by artists on artists: *D. G. Rossetti* by Lucien Pissarro and *Rembrandt* by Josef Israels.

Two volumes (II & III) of another popular series of illustrated monographs on artists, published in Boston at the turn of the century, entitled *Masters in Art* (102, 103) were also given to the OCA library by Holmes. The illustrations are in black and white and the artists range from Praxiteles and Phidias to Burne-Jones. Issued in parts, this series was also sold bound in volumes, each volume containing twelve monographs.

Judging by the group of books just described it seems that Holmes acquired books for their utility and instruction and for the quality of their illustrations. However, the careful and loving depiction of books introduced into one of his illustrations for S. T. Wood's *Rambles of a Canadian Naturalist* (1916) suggests that he was also a bibliophile. Among the six colour illustrations contributed by Holmes to this book (the black and white decorations were provided by his OCA students) is one depicting the "Promethea Moth". In the background is a row of seven books and

another book is placed in the foreground. Hanging on the wall above the books are pictures of a heraldic lion, of a sphinx and a reproduction of *Hope* by Watts. The books are Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Germany and the Next War*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Ouida's *Moths*, an unidentifiable volume from Dent's Everyman series, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and Leacock's *Literary Lapses*. The allusions in three of the titles portrayed, the Ovid, the Shelley and the Ouida, are obvious. Leacock was a close friend of Holmes's (they were house-masters at Upper Canada College at the same time) and the inclusion of the title of his book may also allude to Holmes's own "literary lapse" in introducing books in the illustration of a moth. The presence of *Hope* by Watts may indicate Holmes's admiration of the artist (there are two monographs and several articles on Watts among his books) as well as his optimism. Finally, the book on Germany and the War reminds us that Holmes was preparing the illustrations at the outbreak of World War I.

It is likely that the books portrayed in the illustration actually belonged to Holmes as there are other indications that he did not confine his reading to art and scientific subjects. Colgate, for example, refers to him as the Latinist of the Toronto Art Students League who provided them with their motto *Non Clamor sed Amor*,<sup>8</sup> and in a speech at his memorial service, Holmes's friend Professor De Lury mentioned his love for Milton. It seems therefore that Holmes's library as a whole was that of an artist with catholic tastes and a wide culture.

Sybille Pantazzi  
 Librarian  
 The Art Gallery of Ontario  
 Toronto, Ontario.

#### LIST OF BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY OF ROBERT HOLMES IN THE LIBRARY OF THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART

1. Baily, Henry Turner, ed. *Nature Drawing from Various Points of View*. New York, [1910]. (Papers from [the magazine] *The School Arts Book*).
2. Balfour, Henry. *The Evolution of Decorative Art: An Essay upon its origin and development as illustrated by the art of modern races of mankind*. New York, 1893.
3. Barham, R. H. *The Ingoldsby Legends*. Illustrated by Arthur Rackham. London, 1919.
4. Barlow, Jane. *The End of Elfintown*. Illustrated by Laurence Housman. London, 1894.
5. Benois, Alexandre. *The Russian School of Painting*. New York, 1916.

6. Blake, J. P. and A. E. Reveirs-Hopkins. *Tudor to Stuart*. Little Books about Old English Furniture. New ed. London, 1916. Annotated.
7. *The Book of Job*, with designs by Herbert Granville Fell and an introduction by Joseph Jacobs. London, 1896.
8. Boutet de Monvel, Maurice. *Jeanne d'Arc*. Paris, n.d. [1st ed. 1893].
9. Bowie, Henry P. *On the Laws of Japanese painting: an Introduction to the Study of the Art of Japan*. San Francisco, [1911].
10. Bulley, Margaret H. *Ancient and Mediaeval Art; a Short History*. New York, 1914.
11. Caffin, Charles H. *American Masters of Sculpture*. Toronto, Musson, n.d.
12. Caffin, Charles H. *How to Study Pictures*. New York, 1912.
13. Carlyle, Thomas. *Sartor Resartus*. Illustrated by Edmund J. Sullivan. London, 1898.
14. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Prioresses Tale*. Guildford, Astolat Press, 1902.
15. Chauvin, Jean. *Ateliers*. Montreal, 1928.
16. Clausen, George. *Aims and Ideals in Art: Eight Lectures*. 2nd ed. London, 1907.
17. Constantin, J. and F. Faideau. *Les Plantes*. Histoire Naturelle Illustrée. Paris, [c. 1922].
18. Cox, Kenyon. *The Classic Point of View: Six Lectures on Painting*. New York, 1911.
19. Crane, Walter. *Baby's Own Aesop*. London, n.d.
20. Crane, Walter. *The Claims of Decorative Art*. Boston, 1892. Annotated.
21. Davenport, Cyril. *Miniatures, Ancient and Modern*. Little Books on Art. London, [1913].
22. Dawson, Mrs. Nelson. *Enamels*. Little Books on Art. 2nd ed. London, [1912].
23. Delaborde, Henri. *Engraving: its Origin, Processes and History*. London, 1886.
24. Dresser, Christopher. *Principles of Decorative Design*. 3rd ed. London, n.d. [First appeared in 1871/2].
25. Dyer, Walter A. *Handbook of Furniture Styles*. New York, 1918. Annotated.
26. Elder-Duncan, J. H. *The House Beautiful & Useful: Being Practical Suggestions of Furnishing and Decoration*. New ed. London, 1911.
- 27-30. Endymion series. London, George Bell. *Poems by Robert Browning*. Illustrated by Byam Shaw. 1913. *Poems by John Keats*. Illustrated by Robert Anning Bell. 1897. *Minor Poems of Milton*. Illustrated by A. Garth Jones. 1898. *Poems by Alfred, Lord Tennyson*. Illustrated by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale. 1905.
31. Engelman, R. and W. C. F. Anderson. *Pictorial Atlas to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey*. 36 plates (containing 225 illustrations from works of ancient art) with descriptive text. London, 1892.
32. Faure, Elie. *Ancient Art*. New York, 1921.
33. Faure, Elie. *Modern Art*. New York, 1924.
34. Fletcher, Banister. *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. London, 1896.
35. Fyles, Faith. *Principal Poisonous Plants of Canada*. Department of Agriculture, *Bulletin*, Second Series, No. 39. Ottawa, 1920.
36. Ganong, William F. *A Text-Book of Botany for Colleges*. New York, 1927.
37. Gardner, Ernest Arthur. *A Handbook of Greek Sculpture*. London, 1915.
38. Gregory, Edward W. *The Furniture Collector. An introduction to the Study of English Styles of the 17th and 18th centuries*. London, n.d. Annotated.
39. Hansi, Oncle (pseud. of Jean Jacques Waltz). *Mon Village: Ceux qui n'oublient pas. Images et commentaires par l'Oncle Hansi*. Paris, [1920?] (pencilled list of French words and idioms by R. H.).
40. Harrison, Ellen. *Art and Ritual*. Home University Library of Modern Knowledge. London, n.d.
41. Hayden, Arthur. *Chats on Cottage and Farmhouse Furniture*. London, n.d. Annotated.
42. Hind, C. Lewis. *Art and I*. New York, 1921.
43. Holmes, C. J. *Notes on the Science of Picture-Making*. London, 1911.
44. Holmes, Oliver Wendell. *The One Hoss Shay*. Illustrated by Howard Pyle. Boston, 1893.
45. Housman, Laurence. *Princess Badoura. A Tale from the Arabian Nights*. Illustrated by Edmund Dulac. London, n.d.
46. Houston, Mary G. and Florence S. Hornblower. *Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian Costumes and Decorations*. London, 1920.
47. Jackson, Frank G. *Lessons on Decorative Design: An elementary text-book of principles and practice*. London, 1897.
48. Lamb, Charles and Mary. *Tales from Shakespeare*. Illustrated by Norman M. Price. London, 1905.

49. Laurie, A. P. *The Painter's Methods and Materials*. New Art Library. London, 1926.
50. Lilley, A. E. V. and W. Midgley. *A Book of Studies in Plant Form with some Suggestions for their Application to Design*. New York, 1896.
51. Litchfield, Frederick. *How to Collect Old Furniture*. London, 1906.
52. Lockyer, J. Norman. *Elementary Lessons in Astronomy*. School Class Books. New ed. London, 1881.
53. Mabie, Hamilton Wright, ed. *A Book of Old English Love Songs*. Decorative drawings by George Wharton Edwards. New York, n.d.
- 54-101. *Masterpieces in Colour*. Edited by T. Leman Hare. London, c. 1907-1914. 48 vols.
- 102-103. *Masters in Art*. Vol. II, III. Boston, [c. 1901-02].
104. Mitchell, Roy. *Shakespeare for Community Players*. Illustrated by J. E. H. MacDonald. London & Toronto, 1919.
105. *Nineteenth Century English Artists and a few other noted people*. Clippings collected by Robert Holmes.
106. Pennell, Joseph. *The Illustration of Books. A Manual for the use of Students. Lectures delivered at the Slade School, University College*. New York, [1895].
107. *Robert the Devyll: a Romance*. Illustrated by Harold Nelson, Early English Prose Romances, I. Edinburgh, 1904.
108. Robie, Virginia. *Historical Styles in Furniture*. 2nd ed. Chicago, 1910.
109. *Robin Hood*. Illustrated by Harold Nelson. Early English Prose Romances, II. Edinburgh, 1904.
110. Roe, Fred. *A History of Oak Furniture*. Connoisseur Series of Books for Collectors. London, 1920.
111. *Rubayat of Omar Khayyam*. With an accompaniment of Drawings by Elihu Vedder. Boston, 1894.
112. *Rubayat of Omar Khayyam*. Illustrated and decorated by Frank Brangwyn. London & Edinburgh, [1919].
113. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Decorated by R. Anning Bell. London, 1901.
114. Shaler, M. S. *A First Book in Geology designed for the use of Beginners*. Boston, 1898.
115. Spanton, J. Humphrey. *Complete Perspective Course*. London, 1900.
116. Sturgis, Russell. *The Appreciation of Sculpture*. New York, [1904].
117. Symonds, John Addington. *Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts*. London, 1914.
118. Taylor, Norman. *A Guide to the Wild Flowers East of the Mississippi and North of Virginia*. New York, 1928.
119. Thurston, Carl H. P. *The Art of Looking at Pictures*. New York, 1917.
120. Van Dyke, Henry. *The Blue Flower*. New York, 1916.
121. Vines, Sydney H. *A Student's Text-book of Botany*. London, 1895. (v. 2 only).
122. Wade, W. Cecil. *The Symbolisms of Heraldry*. London, 1898.
123. Warrack, John, ed. *The Cathedrals and other Churches of Great Britain*. 100 illustrations. London, n.d.
124. Woodward, G. R., ed. *The Adoration of the Kings depicted by the Great Masters*. London, [1924].
126. Wordsworth. Ed. Andrew Lang. Illustrated by Alfred Parsons. Selections from the Poets. London, 1897.

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Notes:

- 1 Art Gallery of Toronto, *Water Colours by Robert Holmes . . . in the collection of the Art Gallery of Toronto*, exhib. cat. by Nancy Robertson (Toronto: 1964); and Art Gallery of Ontario, *The Canadian Collection*, cat. by Helen Bradfield (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 178-94.
- 2 Some of Holmes's books, formerly in the OCA library, have appeared in antiquarian bookshops in Toronto, e.g. R. H. Cust, *The Pavement Masters of Siena* (London: 1901) [annotated] and Christopher Dresser, *Unity in Variety as deduced from the Vegetable Kingdom* (London: 1859).
- 3 J. Russell Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier* (Toronto: 1971), pp. 325-26. A list of books belonging to the etcher Frank Armington (1876-1941) is in his file in the library of the Art Gallery of Ontario.
- 4 The bracketed numbers following the mention of books or authors refer to the numbered list of Holmes's book placed at the end of this article.
- 5 According to Colgate, Pennell's *Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen* (1889) was closely studied by the members of the Toronto Art Students League. Cf. William Colgate, *Canadian Art* (Toronto: 1967), p. 46.
- 6 Victorian Jubilee Ball Dance Program, 1897; Upper Canada College, *The College Times*, Christmas Number. (1899); *St. Andrew's College Review*, Memorial Number (June, 1919).
- 7 Holmes was evidently interested in his namesake as a clipping on the appointment of the author to the directorship of the National Gallery in London and a handwritten note on his career are pasted in this copy.
- 8 Colgate, p. 49.