

Some Additional Finds Prior to Year's End to the Present

Perhaps one can attribute good fortune to having had an Internet presence over the last few years. It's gotten to the point where I don't necessarily have to search for things as much as I just have to answer some queries or follow-up on offers. On the flip side there certainly are instances where one can attribute some wonderful finds to persistent spelunking within the ether-caverns of the Internet and various databases, at book shows, and by continuing to keep in touch with my established contacts. No matter which avenue, the following finds have substantively added to the Mosher Collection, a few of which I'm pleased to report here. However, there are two rather large acquisitions looming on the horizon which I'm ever so eager to announce, but am not at liberty to report on either until the deals are sealed and delivered. One doesn't want to jeopardize what's presently in motion, so we'll just have to settle for the few items which I've recently been pleased to enter into the collection:

1. After searching for over twenty years, I finally.... I mean F-I-N-A-L-L-Y nailed it, but what a bizarre acquisition. For months I had been trolling the databases or pacing the floors with nothing exciting showing. Then something occurred on November 21 which totally blew me away. In the wee hours of the morning (usual sleeplessness problem) I checked my email and received notification from one of the book search websites that they found something for which I was looking.

Now I can't begin to count just how many of these notifications prove to be nothing more than vacuous nuisances, but after hundreds for 2010 here was finally one that rang my bell. Could it really be that he had uncovered a copy of the Bruce Rogers designed A.E.'s (George Russell) *Homeward Songs by the Way* (Mosher, 1895) but this one printed on Japan vellum? You know, for the longest time I almost doubted the existence of this Japan vellum state of *Homeward Songs* limited to 50 copies. I never saw a copy in all the Mosher collections I visited across the country. Benton Hatch indicated there were 50 printed on Japan vellum, and thankfully I found confirmation of that in two auction house catalogues from the early 1900s. Both were listed as having been placed in fine leather bindings by notable American binders, but I never located one. However, here, right in front of me, was a listing of one for sale. I immediately ordered the book on-line, and then did a Google search of the bookseller. I found different listings for him and different phone numbers which later in the day I telephoned and left a message at each. I customarily follow-up

immediately with any new dealer advertising good Mosher material if for no other reason than to see if there are more goodies where that one came from. My call might lead to something else which has happened in the past.

So I left my phone messages and which probably carried with them a hint of excitement. I also have to add that during this same morning I received notification from my Internet server that they were having difficulties with sorting emails and begged forgiveness until they were able to rectify the problem. Nothing was happening. I received no follow-up call in the afternoon, nor any email since that was down for the day. The next day the email problem had been resolved and I received a notice that the owner of the book had packed it for shipping but declined to ship so they would be refunding my credit card. What?! I never heard of such a thing. I called the folks at the book search site and asked what's up? They simply reiterated that the order had been rescinded by the bookseller and that I could email him if I wanted to find out the reason. I did right then and there, and received the following bewildering reply:

Sorry, what I consider to be importune haste on your part, two phone calls while I was at lunch, and the fact that I had thanked you for the order some 2 hours earlier by email made me lose interest in the transaction. After selling books mostly by mail for 20 years or so, I don't move at warp speed any more. I prefer not to deal with patrons who are impatient before I even get the book packed.

Good lord. As you might expect, I certainly wasn't going to leave it at that, even if I'd have to eat a little crow (sorry all you crows out there). I fired off this reply:

Thanks for the reply. In my defense, I was not only excited to order and get the book, but as I always do, I follow up to find out if the dealer has any other Mosher material which had not yet been advertised. Exuberance on my part. Nothing more. I certainly apologize for what seemed to be pestering. Sorry about that. I should also mention that my computer server, PennTeleData, had done a conversion in the morning and everybody's email was backed up or lost. That was out of my control and I never got your email message.

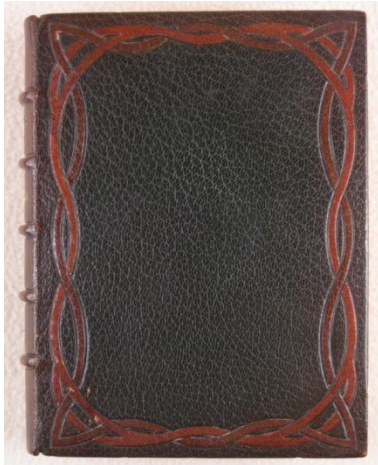
I'd still like to accomplish the transaction and add another \$20 on top for your troubles. So, if you're feeling OK about that, I'd send you a check for what I would have paid plus \$20 more. Let me know.

To this I got the following response assuaging my fears:

Sorry about the misunderstanding - you caught me at a bad time. Thanks for the generous offer, but the \$55 would do the trick, and the postage is on me. Returnable, of course, if for any reason it proves less than satisfactory. Since you're the expert, I've always wondered if a "first" Mosher edition

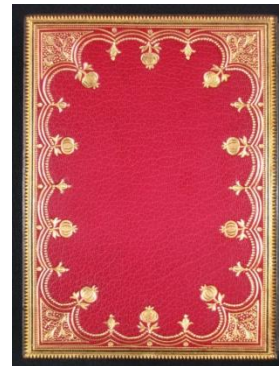
was ever printed, or was Mosher referring to the Irish edition as being "first"? Thanks again,

OK then, we simply got off on the wrong foot and I was willing to do what I could to salvage the purchase. Glad I did. The book was sent and it's about as fine a copy as one could anticipate. Now I finally have a Japan vellum copy of *Homeward Songs* after all these years and I gleefully took it off my Wants List. Phew... that was a hairy one. Now on to the next find!



2. This second item was purchased on November 29, 2010 through eBay by using the Buy it Now option, but first I placed a call to Onno van Seggelen / Fine Arts & Antiques in the Netherlands to be sure there were no major defects. It's an American art binding done around 1908 placed on a copy of Mosher's edition of *The Poetical Works of Oscar Wilde including Poems in Prose with Notes Bibliographical...and Facsimilies of Title-Pages* (1908) bound

in full green crushed morocco (now partly mellowed to brown) with inlays of light and dark brown Celtic strap work surrounding each cover, five raised bands with title and author in gilt on second and third panels respectively, and with richly gilt-tooled red morocco doublures designed by using curved gouges to create a swag design around the doublure and with gilt-stamped pomegranates at each swag; green moiré silk endpapers; and all page edges gilt. This lovely binding carries



a one-time exhibition sign with the penned notation: "33 / *Poems – by Oscar Wilde / Bound by Ada M. Garretson, N.Y.*" Garretson was one of the charter members of the newly formed Guild of Book-Workers in 1906/07 and was listed under "Bookbinders (Amateur)" as being from New York City (*GBW-First Year Book & List of Members*. 1907, p. 15). Other than this listing I have not been able to find further references to her in the bookbinding literature. The antiques & fine arts dealer from the Netherlands liked it so much he requested permission to have its picture and description highlighted on his "Sold Works of Art" page where it can now be seen.

3. Two books from Mosher's library: (a) Duke de la Rochefoucauld's *Maxims & Moral Reflections...With Some Remarks on his Life and*

Writing, and a Copious Index [engraved title page reads London: Charles Daly]. London: J. W. Southgate, 1839, and (b) a rather sizeable 14" x 11" book on paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite Sir Edward Burne-Jones, *Pictures of Romance and Wonder*. NY: R. H. Russell, 1902. The curious things about these two books is that each carries an additional bookplate of a one-time worker assistant at the Mosher Press office, Oliver C. Sheean. The bookplates are very different from one another and were designed and engraved by different artists. Of all the hundreds of books I've assembled from Mosher's library, I previously had only one with Sheean's bookplate (his Robert Burns portrait plate designed by Will Simmons), but now for some strange reason I suddenly have two more--one designed by Arthur Nelson Macdonald and the other by Julius John Lankes. Having these two appear in short order seems to be an unusual coincidence, yet they were purchased from widely separated dealers so I don't think they come from the same present-day source. I also have a separate Sheean bookplate designed by Charles Reginald Capon to commemorate a gift of books of Thomas Bird Mosher's which were presented by Sheehan to Harvard (*vd.* William Butler's *American Bookplates*. London: Primrose Hill Press, 2000, p. 60). Sheean was well known as a bookplate collector, and this obviously explains why I'm finding a number of different bookplates in some books from Mosher's library which Sheean got his hands on. He commissioned a number of bookplates for himself.

4. On October 18, 2010 I purchased a copy of Compton Leith's *Sirenica*. With an Introduction by William Marion Reedy. Portland, Maine: Thomas Bird Mosher, 1915, this being an association copy, inscribed on the front free endpaper: "*With love and Greetings / to / Horace Traubel, / from his friend, / William F. Gable, / December 1915, / Altoona, Pa.*" As noted by David Holmes from whom I purchased this book:

"W. Compton Leith" was the pseudonym of Ormonde Maddock Dalton (1866-1945); English classical scholar, medieval archaeologist, and keeper of British and medieval antiquities at the British Museum. William F. Gable (1856-1921); American (Altoona, Pennsylvania) businessman and prominent book collector. "He was a good customer of the antiquarian book trade... Although his tastes were eclectic, he favored association books, autographed manuscripts and, and letters from important literary and historical figures... Among the many volumes in his library, Gable particularly enjoyed the poetry of Walt Whitman..." [Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors* (New York, 1986, [131]-2). Horace Traubel (1858-1919); American journalist, editor, and author, best known for his multivolume, *With Walt Whitman in Camden: A Diary*, a detailed account of his close association with the poet between March of 1888 and January of 1889. A friend of Whitman's from 1873 until his death, Traubel became one of Whitman's literary executors and subsequently an editor of *In Re Walt Whitman* (1893) and the ten-volume *Complete Writings of Walt Whitman* (1902). In 1890 Traubel founded and

edited a monthly magazine, the *Conservator*, which promoted Marxian socialism and reflected Whitman's substantial influence. From 1903 to 1907 he served as editor of the *Artsman*, a publication of the Rose Valley Movement, a communal enterprise located southwest of Philadelphia. Traubel also wrote prose verse and published two volumes, *Chants Communal* (1904) and *Optimos* (1919).

5. Although I'm currently in the midst of securing this, I'm adding to the collection another copy of Otto Zahn's monograph *On Art Binding* (Memphis, TN: S. C. Toof & Company, 1904. I already have one copy in its original wrapper which is now housed in a clamshell box along with a vellum copy of the two-volume *Marius the Epicurean—His Sensations and Ideas* (Mosher, 1900) by Walter Pater. The book was bound by Zahn and is pictured in his monograph. This second copy of Zahn's *On Art Binding* will likewise be mated to a book pictured in the monograph. I had been searching for an unusual copy of *On Art Binding* and found one both signed by Otto Zahn on the limitation page and also inscribed by him on the half-title page: *To / Miss / Esther Griffin White / by / the Author / Memphis, 1905*. Esther Griffin White of Richmond, Indiana, was a noted feminist, suffragist, journalist, politician, art critic, and collector and writer on bookplates. Most importantly—at least for my present purposes—she curated an exhibition of fine bindings as part of the Richmond Art Association's seventh annual exhibition held from June 16-June 30, 1903 which included the bindings of Otto Zahn. Many of these bindings, again under White's direction, were placed on exhibition in late November 1903 only this time in Indianapolis, Indiana. As Esther Griffin White noted in her article "Some American Art Bookbinders" the "writer of this article has, within the past year and a half, had the pleasure of arranging three exhibitions of the work of American 'art' bookbinders, two in Richmond, Indiana, and one recently in Indianapolis, the latter placed with the annual exhibition of the art-crafts given by the Indianapolis Sketching Club. The aim has been in all three to make the exhibitions comprehensive and representative of the best that is being done in the art of bookbinding in this country." (*Pencil and Brush*. Chicago: Phillips & Co., 1904. Vol. 13, p. 373). Her six-page article includes a statement on Zahn: "The work of Otto Zahn, of Memphis, is of course too well known to be descanted upon at length, he having an international reputation as one of the most distinctive workers in his art..." (pp. 377-78). Another binding in the Mosher Collection will have this inscribed copy married to it inside an enclosure designed to house both the binding and the monograph. It's a fitting match for posterity uniting book binder and a patron / promoter of art bindings in the early 1900s.

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