

Acquisitions to the Mosher Press Collection

It's been more than a year since I last reported on new acquisitions to the Mosher Press Collection—July 2016 to be exact. This was partly because I decided to no longer post essays to the Delaware Bibliophiles' newsletter, but that shouldn't have been enough to stop my postings. Be that as it may, the following is a brief set of snippets overviewing of some of the acquisitions since then. There have been many more than here given, like the Milwaukee, Wisconsin book collector, Isadore Bailey Osborne's lovely copy of *The Germ* (1898), but I'm picking the more salient ones from the basket.

BOOKS FROM MOSHER'S LIBRARY

There have been a number of books from Mosher's library added to the 500+ others already in the collection. Finding these two was really a fluke. While at a Wonder Books in Maryland, surrounded by thousands of books, I happened to look up at two volumes on the top shelves, both by Austin Dobson:

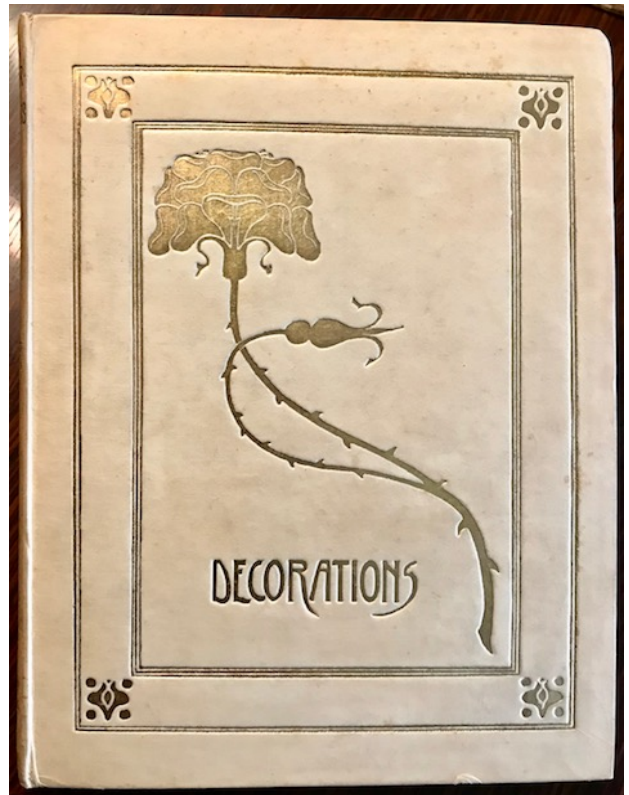
Eighteenth Century Vignettes. Third Series. London: Chatto & Windus, 1896

Sidewalk Studies. London: Chatto & Windus, 1902

What was astounding, at least to me, was the fact that when I spied the first one of them on the high shelf, I was saying to myself “wouldn't it be something if this was Mosher's copy?” When I got it down and first opened the book, to my amazement there on the front pastedown were the partial remains of Mosher's bookplate. Someone had tried to tear it out and partially succeeded. I was so stunned that I immediately took the book to the front desk and told them I was adding it to my small pile of books for purchase. Then I went back to the shelf and took down the other volume thinking one “hit” was all I could expect, but “glory be” the second volume too had a remnant of Mosher bookplate. It's like those two volumes had waited there for me to discover them. Added to the pile as well. No other such finds occurred.

One of my favorites is an absolutely stunning copy of the first edition of Ernest Dowson's ***DECORATIONS: IN VERSE AND PROSE*** (London, Leonard Smithers and Co. [Chiswick Press], 1899. I have always said that part of the fun in gathering books from Mosher's library, most with his bookplate, allows me to collect other private press or beautifully produced books of the period. Dowson's *Decorations* certainly fit that bill and I very much appreciate getting this copy from Joseph Phillips of Commonwealth Books in Boston.

The ultra-handsome cover design is by Althea Giles (not Beardsley as it is sometimes identified). This is an extraordinary copy. When found, it's usually in deplorable condition. Not this copy! Right now it is displayed on a shelf alongside Mosher's copy of the first edition of Dowson's *VERSES* (Smithers, 1896) with its Beardsley designed cover and inscribed by Mosher to Emilie B. Grigsby. What a handsome pair. Mosher reprinted poetry from both volumes.



I also bought a couple books from Mosher's library on Marcus Aurelius. Nothing earth-shattering, but since I had his copy of Marcus Aurelius from the 18th century, why not these as well:

Graves, Rev. R., trans. *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus...* Halifax, England: N. Whitley, 1826

Marcus Aurelius' Golden Book—Selections (NY & Boston: H. M. Caldwell Co., [1901])

There was a little set I came across which was a terrific find and the condition quite astounding. It was a set of three little books, all contained in the intact slipcase with label, covering the poetical works of Bliss Carman with Richard Hovey: *Songs from Vagabondia*, *More Songs from Vagabondia*, and *Last Songs from Vagabondia*, all from Small, Maynard and Company of Boston and dated 1903. They are bound in flexible olive colored suede with designs by Tom B. Meteyard, and each contains the Mosher bookplate. Simply charming. Mosher was a friend of Bliss Carman, and the Mosher collection also contains a book with a wonderful inscription by Bliss Carman to Mosher.

LETTERS, LETTERS, AND MORE LETTERS

Along with a Japan vellum copy of *TU-FU—Wanderer and Minstrel Under Moons of Cathay* (Mosher Press, 1929) yet another letter arrived, this being from Flora M. Lamb (Mosher's erstwhile assistant) to Charles H. Sloan about the later Mosher Press and some of her memories of Thomas Bird Mosher. A two page TLS from Mosher to Roswell Field, is firmly attached to Field's copy of *The Poems of Master Francois Villon of Paris* (Mosher, 1900). Roswell Field was the father of Eugene Field. Mosher discusses a meeting between himself, W. Irving Way, and Nathan Haskell Dole, and writes to Field, "Had you been there I think we should have made a very delightful quartet."

Another great find was Mosher's edition of Fiona MacLeod's *The Hour of Beauty* (1907) with a Nov. 11, 1907 typed/signed letter and a two-line handwritten postscript from Mosher to its new owner discussing Wm. Sharp's "Rune of the Passion of Women" among other things. However, this pales in comparison to what was to become one of the more important collections of letters in the past few years.

A friend of mine from the Delaware Bibliophiles days, Ian Schoenherr, alerted me that there was a file of letters coming up at auction which contained 20 letters from Thomas Bird Mosher. These letters totaled 33 pages of typed correspondence from Mosher to a Mid-West collector, Mr. A. J. Marks of Toledo, Ohio with the letters ranging from May 9, 1910 to Sept. 9, 1919. They include a good bit on their shared interest in an Arthur Symons and on a proposed bibliography of Symons works, including all Symons's contributions to periodicals.

I almost lost the letters. Another dealer attended the same auction and, unbeknownst to me, the thick file of letters from all sorts of authors actually turned out to be the highest bid lot of the whole auction. My paltry bid fell well under of the ca. \$10,000 price the thick file of over 200 letters brought. But there was one saving tidbit of information following the auction. I learned from another friend of mine that he and the under-bidder shared a cab ride after the auction, and the under-bidder was really pissed that after all his research he didn't get the lot, and complained about who did and named the purchaser. Bingo! With that source provided by my friend, I was set on the trail so I could request separate purchase of the Mosher letters contained in the lot. I found the owner who agreed to sell, but had a pretty high price in mind. We finally arrived at mutually agreeable terms and the Mosher letters were shipped. Yes!

One of the things I like about the letters is that they are all to one correspondent. That has its advantages in piecing together a story. I also like the fact that there is so much about Arthur Symons, and it shows just how highly Mosher and Marks mutually thought of Symons (Princeton University has the original copy of the bibliography that was being worked upon as discussed by Mosher). There is also mention of

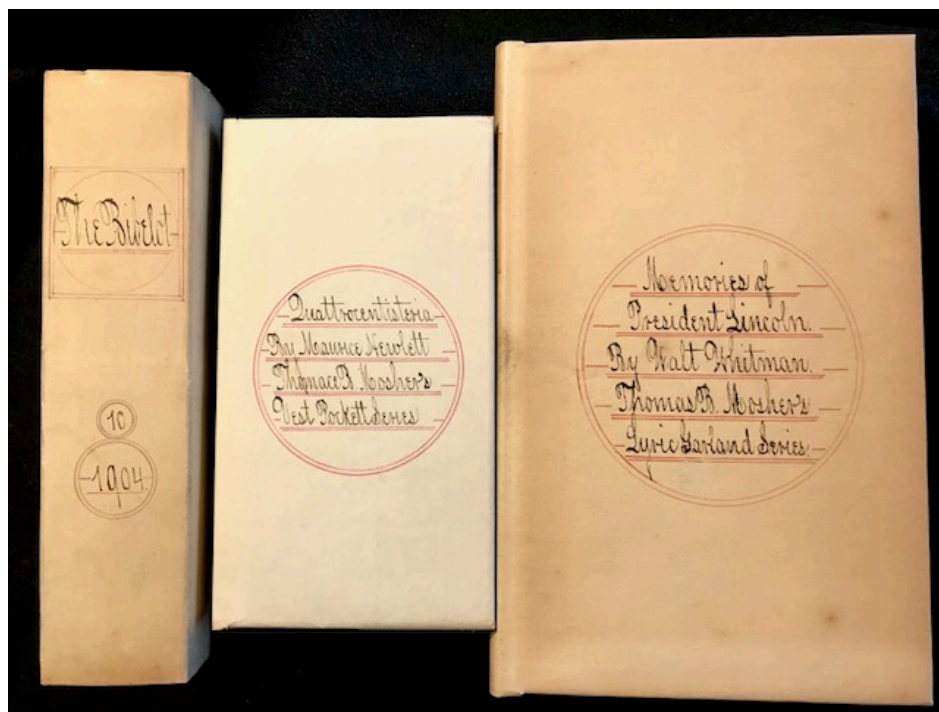
a book in Mosher's library which was inscribed by Symons for Robert Browning, and then re-inscribed by Symons for Mosher. That book in my Mosher collection, so that's rather nice, in fact, really nice! There are some other important revelations that please me, and now that I can assign the Bishop Collection as the holding location of these letters. I know, that's sort of a smug, prideful thing to say. I already transcribed everything into the book I'm compiling of Mosher's correspondence.

The last of the letters obtained was a two-page TLS dated Sept. 30, 1913 from Mosher to "dear Annie" which also contains a hand-written note from Mosher. It discusses caring for an ill mother and its affect on the caregiver, and that Mosher was willing to see Annie's nephew after a previous thwarted effort. He also discusses his own infirmity with his left hand, and briefly mentions delays in sending out the Mosher Books for the season.

SOME UNUSUALS

Some more unusual things were added which I'd find difficult to put under the same title. I found a set of twenty-three unused case bindings for a variety of titles in Mosher's Old World Series. I already have a number of unfolded, die cut, papers used to fold around the boards of Mosher's publications, but only had a couple of the Old World Series covers. Mosher had the covers prepared to be eventually married to their corresponding text-blocks, but until that happened, he'd store the covers in separate piles. After the sale of the Mosher Press, most of this kind of material was pitched, but several years ago there was a sale of the remaining contents of the Williams Book Store in Boston. Mosher's stock had been sold by his wife to the Williams folks, including the woman some called Crazy Harriet Williams! Tom Boss had picked up the supply of the remaining covers, and these were sold to me except for a few on which I passed. How these smaller Old World Series covers managed to find their way to Rochester, New York, is beyond me, but I saw them advertised by Jeff Marks Rare Books and I called and ordered them all. They're in fine condition, for various Mosher titles in the Series, and I'm pleased to have added them to the collection. The titles covered are for: *Pippa Passes* (3 covers dated 1908), *Aucassin & Nicolette* (4 covers, one dated 1895, two for 1922, and one 1929), *The Story of My Heart* (1 cover, 1909), *The Isle of Dreams* (3 covers, 1909), *Ariadne in Mantua* (1 cover, 1912), *Dierdrê* (2 covers, 1903), *The Kasidah* (3 covers, 1917), *The Divine Adventure* (1 cover, 1907), *A Child's Garden of Verses* (3 covers, 1907), and *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (2 covers, 1909).

Speaking of unusual, perhaps the strangest accumulation is a group of material all from the same



location, all at one time lovingly treated, and all deaccessioned. This "lot" of books with calligraphed wraps around each, was from the estate of Robert Byron Robinson and given to the Westfield Athenaeum "in Memory of his Wife, Mary Standish Robinson, Who Died August 12, 1892" (bookplate). There are four Mosher books so covered, 16 volumes of *The Bibelot* in original parts, and two boxed sets of Brocade books. Examples appear to the left. Who did the calligraphy? It wasn't Mary. Her husband?

AN ARTICLE AND WORKING WITH SCHOLARS

I wrote a seven-page article for the *Journal* of the Richard Jefferies Society which will soon be published, in fact my three advance copies are already in the mail from Norfolk, England. The title of my entry is “Richard Jefferies launches an American Collector’s Passion” in which I explain the role of the Jefferies title *The Story of My Heart—My Autobiography* (Mosher, 1898) in starting my Mosher Press collecting. It also covers the publication history of Mosher’s selections from Jefferies (often equated with our own Henry David Thoreau), gives some explanation of my connection to Norman Strouse, and publishes for the first time a manuscript poetic tribute to Jefferies by a mysterious “J.M.B.” which appears in one of Mosher’s scrapbooks in the Mosher Collection.

Another appearance is a picture of one of the Ellen Gates Starr bindings in the collection. The article with the picture appears in the latest issue of the *Journal of Design History* (Vol. 30, No. 3, Sept. 2017) in the section “Ellen Gates Starr and Frank Lloyd Wright at Hull House: The Machine as the Will of Life” by Sarah Alford, doctoral candidate in Art History at Queen’s University in Ontario, Canada. She has two Master’s degrees from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, one in studio practice and the other in Visual and Critical Studies in which her subject was Ellen Gates Starr.

I received a package from Professor Roark Mulligan containing a copy of Theodore Dreiser’s *The Titan* (Winchester University Press, 1916) edited and annotated by him along with a nice hand-written note from Jude Davies, the general editor. The book contains a generous acknowledgement for the pictured painting of Emily Grigsby (a.k.a., Dreiser’s Bernice Fleming) by Jan van Beers which is in the Mosher Collection. Mulligan is an associate professor of English at Christopher Newport University.

During this time I also have had the pleasure of working on a project with the independent London scholar, John Aplin, the editor of *The Letters of Philip Webb* (4 vols., 2016), *The Correspondence and Journals of the Thackeray Family* (5 vols., 2011), and author of *A Thackeray Family Biography* (2 vols., 2010-11). We compared our transcriptions of the correspondence between Thomas Bird Mosher to Gordon Bottomley, the English poet and verse dramatist whose influences included the Romantic poets, the Pre-Raphaelites and William Morris. Eventually Aplin hopes to either publish the exchange of letters between the two men, or use it for a greater work on Gordon Bottomley. Our exchange from August 20 through November 20, 2017 was delightful and very productive. We both were able to prepare better transcriptions as a result.

I again had the pleasure to provide information to Laurel Brake on matters pertaining to Mosher and Walter Pater which included my researching the publication date of Mosher’s edition of Pater’s *Uncollected Essays* which, according to *The Publishers’ Weekly* (Vol. 64, p. 577), was Sept. 26, 1903.

ANOTHER VELLUM PRINTING

The vellum printing of the *Ballads done into English from the French of Francois Villon* (Mosher, 1904) entered the collection in 2017. This is copy No. 3 of just ten printed on animal vellum, signed “Thomas B. Mosher” with the further added delight of having the text bound by Stern & Bess in full burnt-orange crushed morocco with gilt rules on board edges, gilt across raised bands and with all compartments gilt-lined. I have never encountered any binding by this bindery and have found no record of them. The book was sold at Bonham’s of NYC at its Dec. 9, 2015 sale and later acquired by me through Nudelman Rare Books. This brings the Bishop holdings of Mosher books printed on vellum to thirty-three.

BINDINGS ON THE MOSHER BOOKS

Several bindings by period binders were added to the shelves. Included are small bindings, one from the Brocade Series, and three from the Vest Pocket Series. Pictured below, from left to right, are the following small bindings:

Pater. *The Child in the House*, 1897. Brocade Series. Sixth ed. The A&C paper used is identical to other larger volumes in the collection. No binder / bindery identified.

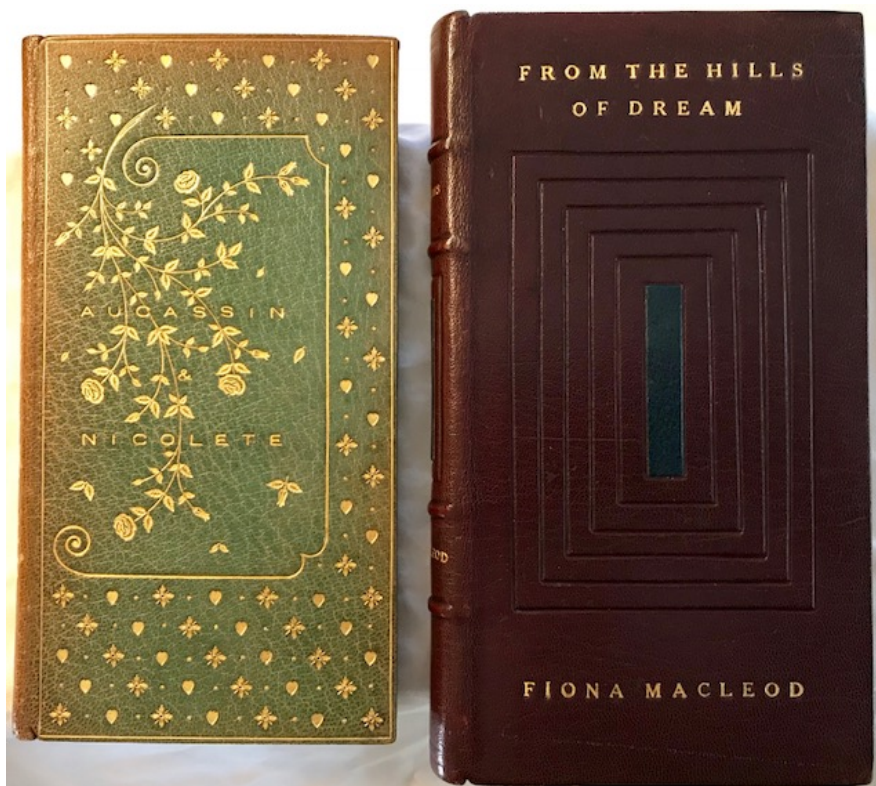
Swinburne. *Laus Veneris*, 1900. Vest Pocket Series. Printed on Japan vellum. All page edges gilt. No binder / bindery identified, but perhaps by KPH as identified on the front cover.

Lang, trans. *Aucassin & Nicolette*, 1903. Printed on Japan vellum. Decorative leather doublures. All page edges gilt. Inside back cover "19 WSH 15" and according to Nudelman, possibly the work of W. S. Hadaway, inscribed "To Father, from Will[?], --1915--."

Swinburne. *Laus Veneris*, 1900. Binding signed on back cover: Marianne Jelinek. This is the second of her bindings in the collection.



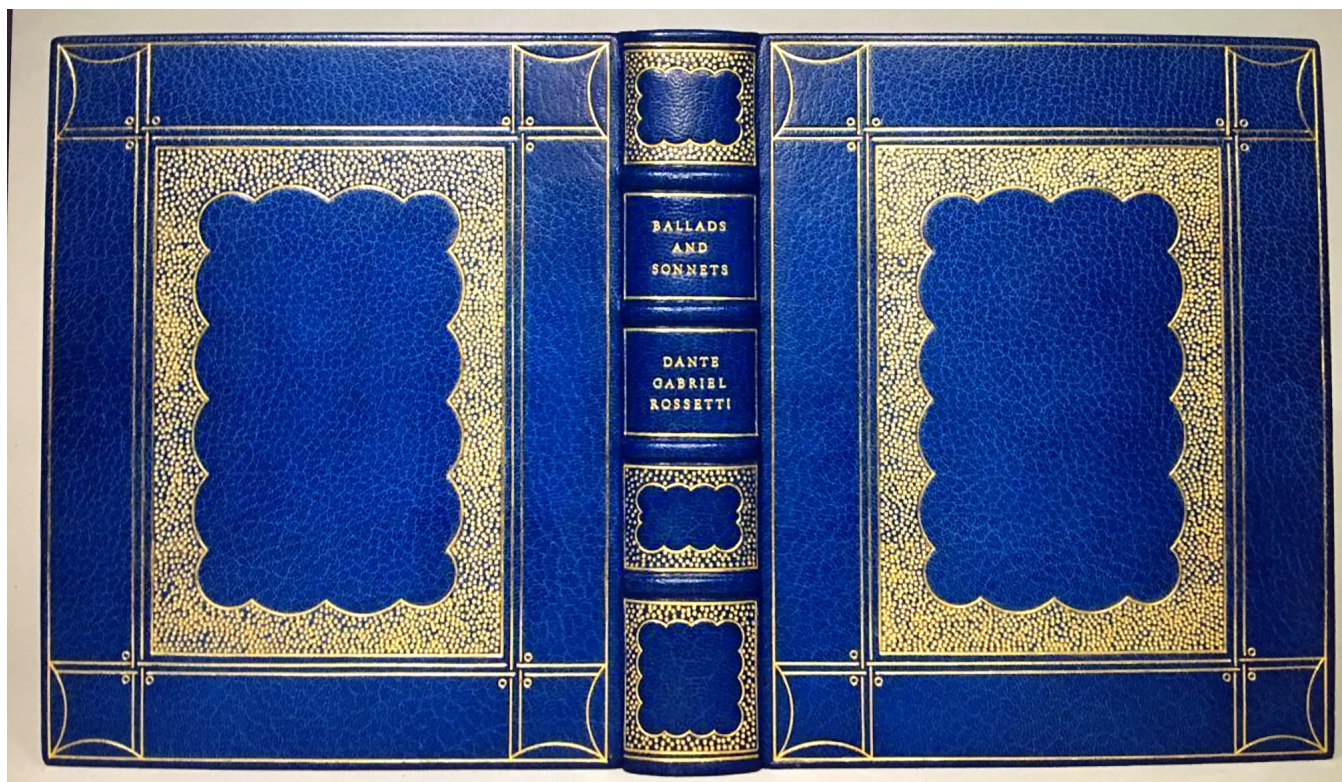
Two 'Old World Series' Mosher books in bindings were added, one using the geometric nesting of vertical rectangles with center black onlays, the other quite elaborate with distinguished provenance, but with color faded to brown. The first of these is Fiona Macleod's *From the Hills of Dream* (1901). There is no indication of binder or bindery, and an inscription which might have possibly contained some evidence has been erased. The other is a far more important binding, this being by Zaehnsdorf on Andrew Lang's translation of *Aucassin & Nicolette* (Mosher, 1896, second ed.). This binding was owned by Helen Venetia (née Duncombe). She was one of the daughters of the 1st Earl of Feversham. Helen Vincent, better known as Helen Viscountess D'Abernon, was described as the most beautiful



woman in England (see APPENDIX). The Duncombe sisters inhabited a world of grace and elegance and, above all, wealth, and were able to enjoy the finest "trinkets" that the world could offer. The nifty thing about this book is that it was given to Helen Viscountess D'Aberon by her sister Cynthia Graham. The book contains two of the Viscountess's bookplates (see APPENDIX) along with the penciled note: "from Cynthia, Xmas '97." How charming. The volume sets aside *The Kasidah* which the Viscountess gave to Cynthia—so kind of matching pair of exchanged gifts now found together as the sisters once were.

Another binding, this being on selections from William Morris entitled *The Defence of Guenevere: A Book of Lyrics* (Mosher, 1896), entered the collection in August 2017. The volume from "The Bibelot Series" is copy No. 23 of 100 printed on Japan vellum paper, with the exlibris of Louis Henry Bristol. Bristol was a Yale educated lawyer and Grolier Club member, about whom it was written, "he was an expert in fine bindings, and took special pleasure in his choice library." (Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale Univ., 1915). The three-quarter binding was done by Stikeman of New York and is quite handsome. The inner endpapers are quite the treat of green and purple marbled paper matching the paper used on the outer binding (see pictures of cover and endpapers in APPENDIX).

Lastly, there is this binding which entered the collection: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *BALLADS & SONNETS* (Mosher, 1903) from the Quarto Series, bound and finished by Samuel Feinstein of Chicago, IL. This binding was exhibited at the Windgate Gallery of the North Bennett Street School as part of the Annual Celebration of Craft—Student & Alumni Exhibit 2017, and captioned: "As always, Samuel Feinstein impresses with his incredible tooling abilities. His binding of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Ballads and Sonnets' is covered in bright blue goatskin and intricate gold tooling. His work is always teetering on the line of classic design and modernism." When looking for more modern bindings on any of the Mosher books, my usual intent is to select binding NOT commissioned by me, but rather independently selected by the binder on his/her own work. This handsome volume, housed in case, meets with that criterion and I'm pleased to have Feinstein's work appear as part of the Mosher Collection.

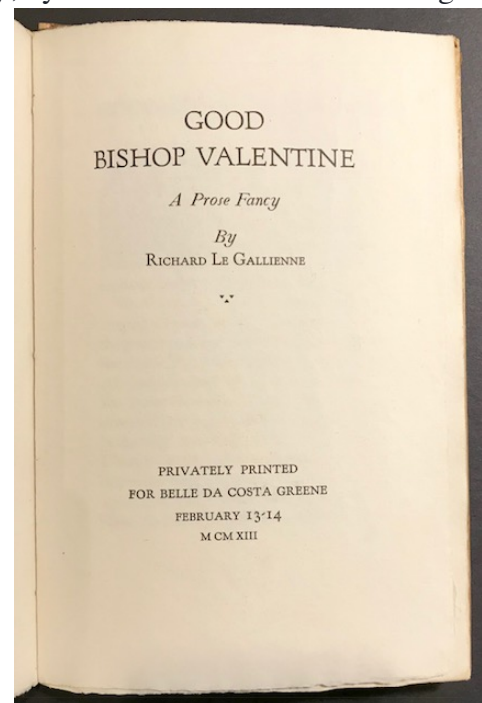
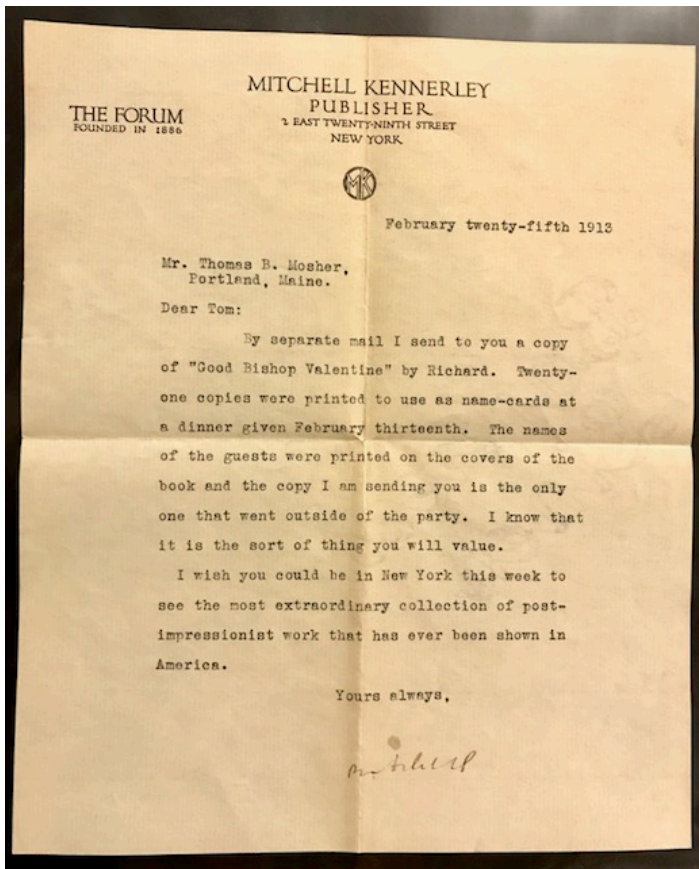


A COUPLE NICE MITCHELL KENNERLEY ADDITIONS

Englishman Mitchell Kennerley was a publisher, editor and auction gallery owner in America. He was early befriended by Mosher when he arrived in America to manage the New York branch of publisher John Lane. MK and Mosher maintained close contact, both in person in New York and through hundreds of letters between the two men. Unfortunately, almost all the correspondence was destroyed by Kennerley himself (note by MK at NY Public Library), but a few examples remain. The Mosher Collection contains Kennerley's letter of condolence sent to Flora Lamb following Mosher's death and several other Kennerley related items. Most recently I acquired two Kennerly letters, one which neatly dovetails with a prior significant holding in the Mosher Collection. On May 25, 1937 Kennerley wrote to Arthur W. Rushmore, printer and owner of the Golden Hind Press (1p., TLS) indicating: "It is thirty years since I published an edition of 'Dreamthorp'. I do not know if it had previously been published in America. It was my edition and enthusiasm that prompted my old friend Thomas B. Mosher to publish his edition." Indeed, Mosher's disassembled and edited copy of Kennerley's *Dreamthorp* imprint is one of several dozen original text sources used by Mosher for his own publications which are now housed in the Mosher Collection. I think Kennerley's letter and Mosher's edited copy of Kennerley's edition of *Dreamthorp* form a nice combination. But the other MK to Mosher letter is a real winner.

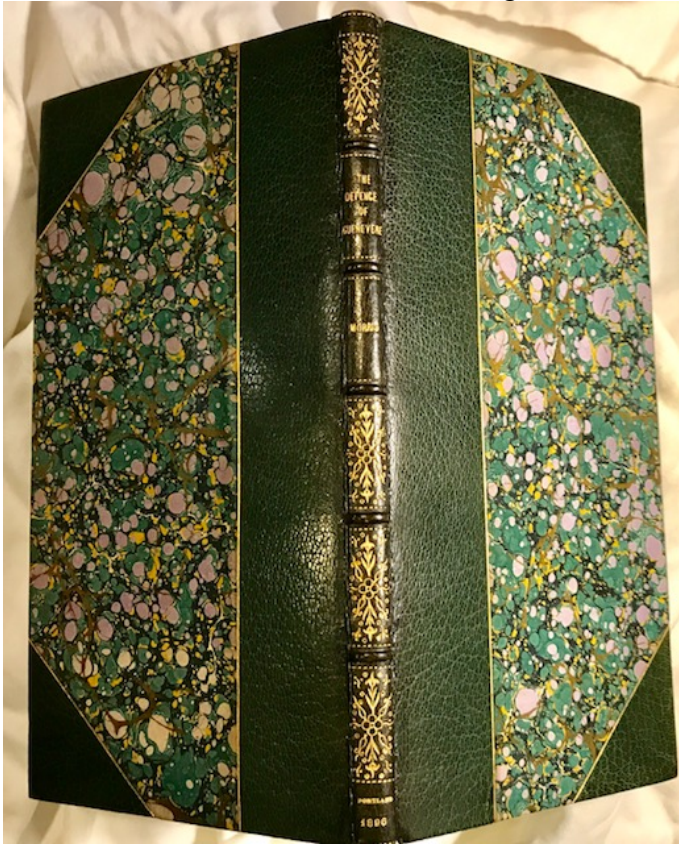
Why a winner? Because it shows not only the close connection between Mosher and Kennerley, but it also shows Kennerley's importance in keeping Mosher in an inner loop of New York book activities which is one of the reasons why Kennerley destroyed most of their mutual correspondence. Too many secrets? Anyway, this second letter involves a rare entity, a privately printed, slim book bound in boards (literally) which is entitled *Good Valentine—A Prose Fancy* by Richard Le Gallienne. It was privately printed at the

Village Press in 22 copies for none other than Belle da Costa Green, February 13/14, 1913. Yes, that's the same woman who was the librarian to J. P. Morgan and later J.P. Morgan Jr., and who in 1924 became director of the Morgan Library. *Good Valentine* copies are only located at the Morgan Library & Museum, the NY Public Library, Syracuse Univ. and Vassar College.



APPENDIX

Cover of Stikeman binding



Endpapers of Stikeman binding



Bookplates of Helen Venetia