

Measures 5 3/8" x 3 3/4"

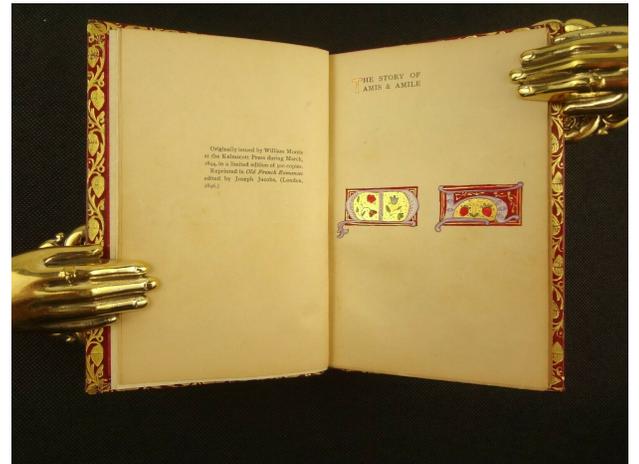
## *The Story of Amis & Amile* Hand-illuminated by Marie Hoke Being a Little Note of Discovery on a Hand-illuminated Book

By Philip R. Bishop

The early path to discovering an illuminator was somewhat revealed in a little book sent to Thomas Bird Mosher in 1901. It was lovingly hand-illuminated by an artist who only signed with the initials M.H.

Peters, William Theodore. *Posies Out of Rings*. London: John Lane-The Bodley Head; New York, George H. Richmand & Co., 1896. Small book, original pink cloth. Inscribed "For my Friend-T.B.M. from M.H. June 14-1901" with 29 pages hand-illuminated watercolors (the first signed M.H.) including a ribbon-tied lock of her hair.

The illustrator M. H. remained unknown to me until by serendipity at a book show I picked up a copy of Mosher's *The Blessed Damozel* (1901) with a hand-written note from Mosher: "April 22, 1901 M.H.: I send you this—before publication—as I promised, and hope it will please you. I am not intending to issue it till Sept so please keep it to yourself—*entre nous* as it were! T.B.M." When as I was more closely examining the tipped-in note, I lifted it up revealing the ownership notation: "Marie H. Hoke—April 1901- Mobile, Alabama." This revealed to me, for the first time, who the illuminator was (more about my original find & reactions can be read within my essay on "The Daunt Diana" [here](#)) Later on while assembling the collected letters of Thomas Bird Mosher, I came across her name as well. Apparently Mosher had known her for some time, at least from 1901 to 1922. In a 1914 letter to Washington Irving Way, Mosher indicated:

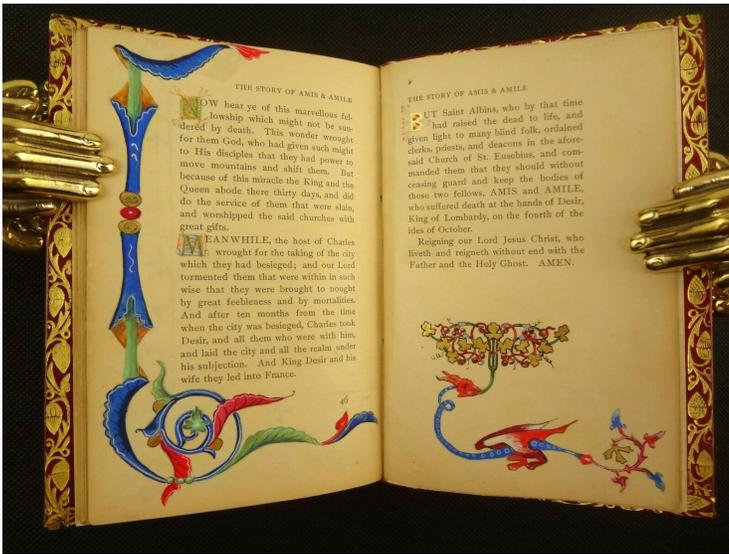


The illuminator's MH (Marie Hoke) initials

Peters [author of *Posies Out of Rings*] was a curious old boy and I have a portrait of him in my office with his signature. He sent it to me years ago and I always felt that he had something worth while which he never managed to express. Of course you have seen his "Posies out of Rings," a lovely little book. I sent one to Marie Hoke and she then gave it back to me with some very fine water colors inserted by herself and a little lock of hair tied to page 21. Marie was a wonder, not beautiful I admit but with a heart that should have met a better fate. She is now I think practically on Easy Street and I hope she will remain there. I would not loan you this, old villain, under any consideration but when I say it satisfied me well in many ways you may be sure I am not talking through my hat. You never appreciated that little lady you scoundrel.<sup>1</sup>

Other correspondence with W. Irving Way revealed a little more information including that Marie Hoke returned to the South in 1914 to take care of a dying uncle, and much later in 1922 Mosher writes, "I had a letter from Marie Hoke (now Thomas) who is in Seattle and seems cheerful."<sup>2</sup> The long association Mosher had with Marie Hoke, and her love of book illumination, provides the background grif for

identifying her work, likewise signed MH as in 1901, but with a bit more formal flair in the little Mosher book *The Story of Amis & Amile* (Mosher 1897). There were many manuals on medieval illumination on the market, mostly from England, including Henry Noel Humphreys' *The Art of Illumination and Missal Painting. A Guide to Modern Illuminators* (London: Bohn, 1849), David Laurent de Lara's *Elementary Instruction in the Art of Illumination and Missal Painting on Vellum: With Illustrations for Copying for the Student* (London: Ackerman, 1850), William Randall Harrison's *Suggestions for Illuminating with a Series of Alphabets and Designs for Initial Letters and Borders* (London: Barnard, ca. 1855), and William and George Audsley's *Guide to the Art of Illuminating and Missal Painting* (London, Rowney, 1861) which alone went through at least 14 editions and included colored and monochrome illustrations for a student's practice. S. P. Rowney & Co. even sold boxed kits for "Colours for Heraldic & Missal Painting"—just one among many such boxed kits with instruction manuals and supplies like sable brushes, agates for burnishing gold leaf, tools, and paints available in England and in America.<sup>3</sup> Such manuals and color kits were certainly available to people with keen interest in illuminating favorite books like the medieval *Story of Amis & Amile* was for Marie Hoke (M.H.) who was certainly active in extra-illustrating/illuminating during the turn of the century.

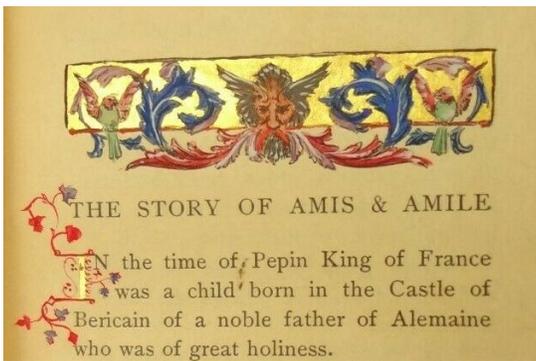


Raretome.com at an Ohio auction as part of a lot. Its previous leather binding was too degraded, dried and cracking, and Cox sent it off for rebinding. For some ill-fated reason the two leaves containing the title-page and publisher's foreword were missing from the book (who knows when or why), but the rear colophon was intact showing it was the third edition of 1897. In April 2021 a new and moderately attractive binding was completed by Karen McGuire of Australia, and the little illuminated book was put up for sale. Matters developed from that point.

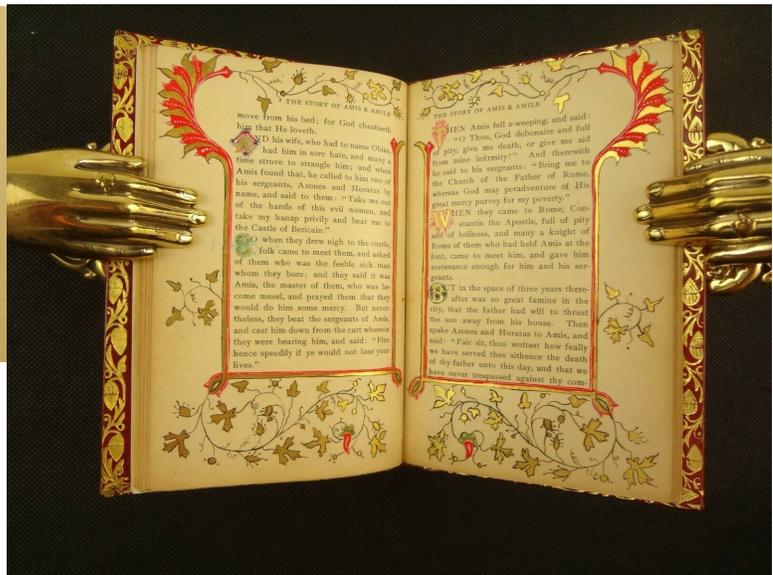
I was given advanced notice of its listing by Mr. Cox, and after reading his description and seeing multiple pictures, but I had multiple questions and he diligently answered them all, but what kept preventing me from accepting the book was that missing title-page and forward. Given that, I just couldn't reconcile the asking price and the defect in my mind, and so I responded "I've given this a lot of thought, but have decided to set purchase aside. I may end up changing my mind, but hey, if it sells then it sells and then good for you." I'm from the old school where collation/pagination needs to be complete. Though again, to the bookseller's credit, he didn't let matters drop there. He came back indicating that he had considered my collection, and what he had in the book/binding, and presented me with an offer that he felt good about and that he'd hold to "if you ever want that price," assuming the book didn't sell, of course. I was driving to Maine when these messages posted, but when I saw his

offer, I relented and responded, "I've been thinking about this and your offer. I accept your offer." He indicated he will take the ads down and send me a PayPal invoice, and everything else fell into place. I paid that PayPal invoice after arriving to our Ogunquit, Maine hotel room. This was one of those times that a bookseller's tenacity and compromise, along with his willingness to consider the collection it would go into, made the difference. That's what changed my mind. And so when I arrived back from Maine on September 27, 2021 and checked my post office box, of the several packages there was this one from Rareto.com. I wrote back that it "certainly is a lovely little illuminated book... I am pleased with it and will be writing about it," hence this present essay before you, the reader.

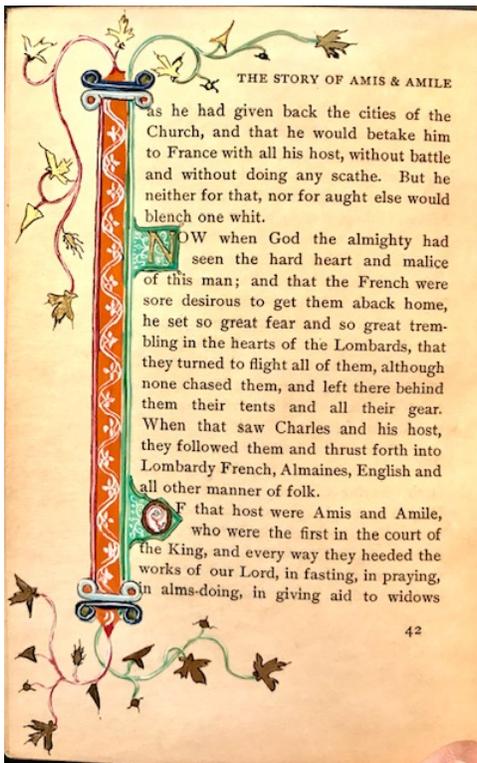
Here are some more pictures along with some descriptive information about the hand-illumination. There is a lot of leaf & vine tendrils work, real burnished gold, multiple colors, three droilleries, intricate scrollwork, and seventy-five small illuminated and decorated capital letters throughout the text. The binding design chosen by the binder employs the ever-present vine and leaves of the illuminator.



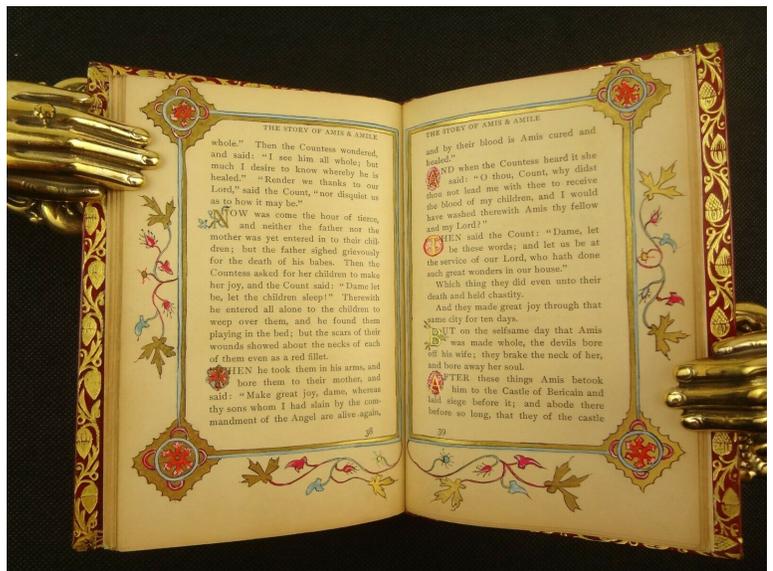
Embellished head-piece and decorated initial



Striking Egyptian-like fans terminating the scrollwork, all amid leaves and tendrils stretching across the top and the bottom of the pages



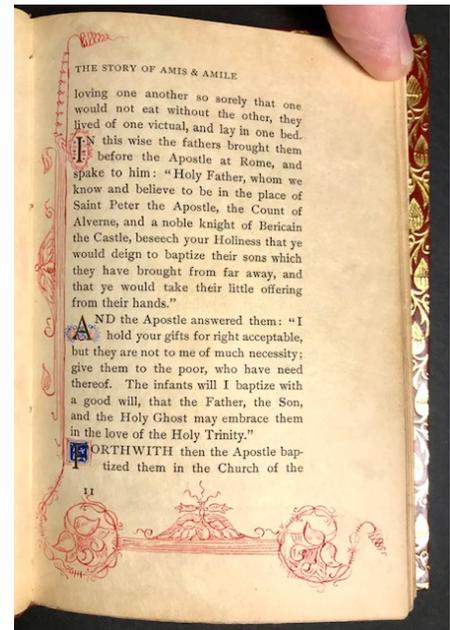
Single page column-like scrollwork



Azure and gilt decorated frames for each page; vine & leaf tendrils



Simple linear frame leaves and vines of different designs and color



Marginal red line design



Two dragon drolleries accompany the scrollwork design: one with fiery vines coming out of his mouth, and the other crouched and pointing upward on the right-hand side.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Mosher to W. Irving Way, July 14, 1914, at the Huntington Library

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Mosher to W. Irving Way, April 25, 1922, at the Huntington Library

<sup>3</sup> See Beckwith, Alice H.R.H. "Manuals and Examples of Hand-Illumination" in *Victorian Bibliomania*. Providence, RI: Museum of Art and Rhode Island School of Design, 1987, pp. 64-71.