

take an active part because he shortly thereafter suffered a stroke. His mind remained unimpaired, however, and he carried on a voluminous correspondence with us relating chiefly to the historical writing which engaged most of his time during his last years. He died on January 21, 1945, leaving no close relatives. His will, which was printed by his executor, is such a delightful piece of New England whimsy that libraries are already seeking copies. C. K. S.

ISAAC NEWTON PHELPS STOKES

Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes was born in New York City on April 11, 1867, the oldest of the nine children of Anson Phelps and Helen Louisa (Phelps) Stokes. His father was a well-known banker and philanthropist. He was educated at St. Paul's School at Concord, at the Berkeley School in New York City, and at Harvard, where he was graduated in 1891. After travelling for three months he went to work as a clerk in the office of J. Kennedy Tod & Company, which had succeeded to the Phelps-Stokes banking business. In September, 1892, he left for a tour of the world which took nearly a year. Returning, he entered his father's private office where, among other duties, he served as the president of a small western railroad.

"Business did not really satisfy my soul," he complained, so in January, 1894, he entered the architectural department of the Columbia School of Mines. The next summer he spent in Europe with a travelling group of students of architecture, and when fall came he settled down in Paris to study for admission to the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He returned to the United States and married Edith Minturn of New York City on August 21, 1895, and then resumed his studies at Paris.

Mr. Stokes' interest in architecture was centered in what he called "tenementology"—the problem of providing economically practical and yet healthy and comfortable housing for the lower income group. In the spring of 1897 he and John Mead Howells won a competition for a design for the University Settlement, a pioneer work in the clearing of the New York slums. This resulted in the establishment of the partnership of Howells and Stokes, an architectural concern with its home office in New York and, later, a branch office at Seattle. In accordance with Mr. Stokes' interests the firm designed over a period of twenty years five settlement houses and a number of model tenements, but it by no means devoted most of its attention to this type of work. It designed theatres, churches, and commercial buildings, and particularly college buildings. Its most familiar works are the Dudley Gate and the Music Building at Harvard and the American Geographical Society building in New York.

Immediately upon his return from Paris Mr. Stokes was elected, because of his interest in slum clearance, to the board of the Charity Organization Society through which over a period of many years he put his housing ideals into practice. In 1900 Governor Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to the state Tenement House Commission. He helped draft the Tenement House Law of 1901 which established such an excellent building code that, he later lamented, there was little need for anyone to call for his services in the field of "tenementology." Accordingly he turned his attention to the development of property along upper Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue where as both architect and real estate operator he was, between 1903 and 1925, the pioneer in the development of that luxurious apartment house area. From 1911 to 1939 he was director and later president of the Phelps-Stokes Fund which is devoted to the improvement

of slum housing in New York, and to the education of the Negroes of Liberia, the Indians of the West, and Southerners of all colors. In 1911 he was also made architectural member of the New York Municipal Art Commission, the censor and guide of the expression of the artistic and architectural taste of the city. From 1929 to 1938 he was president of the commission, and at his retirement Mayor LaGuardia gave him credit for the improvement in the appearance of the city.

Mr. Stokes' impressive height and bearded face gave a casual acquaintance a false impression of solidity, for he was an enthusiastic and engaging character who enjoyed a joke on himself and was capable of quick and energetic action. When the trustees of the New York Public Library heard that the capitol at Albany was burning they sent him up to express their sympathy. When he arrived he organized the task of salvaging the remains of the state archives and himself worked for two days in freezing water with fires breaking out all around him. As a member of Troop A of the New York National Guard he was never destined to see active service, but in those days at Albany he showed stamina and courage worthy of a soldier.

In 1917 Mr. Stokes dissolved the partnership with Mr. Howells to go to Washington to help the Department of Labor in its struggles with the housing problem. While in Washington he particularly enjoyed the association with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Upon his return to New York he opened an office and did some architectural work, but devoted more and more time to the completion of the *Iconography of New York*. This work of incredible scope and scholarship will stand for all time as a demonstration of the practical fruition of a collecting urge. For Mr. Stokes was an inveterate collector. At various times he collected stamps, armor, oriental art, and even an entire Tudor manor house which he brought to America. His great love was the

collecting of prints which grew into the *Iconography*, which between 1910 and the appearance of the final volume in 1928 cost him no less than a quarter of a million dollars. In recognition of the achievement which these volumes represented he received the gold plaque of the Fine Arts Federation of New York, the New York Historical Society gold medal, and honorary degrees from Columbia and New York University. The *Iconography* has rather overshadowed three later volumes which of themselves would have established the importance of Mr. Stokes as a collector and scholar. These were *American Historical Prints, Early Views of American Cities*, 1932 and 1933, and *New York Past and Present*, 1939.

It was in 1910 that Mr. Stokes' researches first brought him into contact with the American Antiquarian Society, and for the next thirty-five years he was one of our most voluminous correspondents and an occasional visitor. In October, 1919, he was elected to membership. Despite his intense loyalty to the New York Public Library he was a warm friend of ours. In 1931 he gave us the second known copy of *The Present State of New English Affairs*, Boston, 1689, the first precursor of the American newspaper. He frequently sent us large checks for the purchase of books until the economic changes of the last two decades wiped out his fortune. So far as we could see, this made not the slightest change in his good nature, and certainly did not stop the flow of gifts from his collections to the institutions he thought best suited to keep them. The failing health of his wife caused him to close his office in 1932. After her death in 1937 he began to lay down his public offices, in 1938 ending twenty-two years of service as trustee of the New York Public Library. He died at Charleston, South Carolina, on December 18, 1944, survived by one daughter, Mrs. Edwin K. Merrill.

C. K. S.

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