

The very picture of contentment

FORSAKING THE POMP and prestige of heraldic display, the sweeping majesty of natural landscape, and the classical imagery of mythology and allegory, the bookplate that graced books in the library of Montreal businessman and book collector Norman H. Friedman (1900–1981) depicts a homey scene of comfort and domestic tranquility.

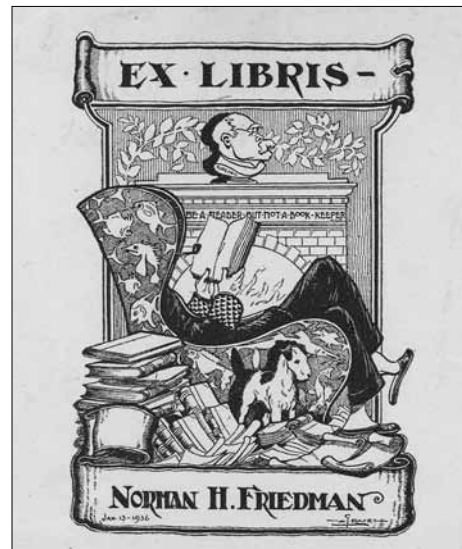
The bookplate reveals a reader, who we may assume is Friedman himself, ensconced in a commodious wingback chair, curiously upholstered in a tapestry of exotic fish, in front of a roaring fire. He is smoking a pipe and wrapped in a dressing gown, and a slipper dangles lazily from his foot. A faithful fox terrier stands guard in front of the chair, protecting his master against intrusions upon his privacy.

The words carved into the fireplace mantel, “Be a Reader but Not a Book-Keeper,” are perhaps ironic given both the toppled pile of books and manuscripts in the bookplate’s foreground, and Friedman’s reputation as a passionate book collector. Friedman’s collection included works by Rudyard Kipling, a bust of whom sits atop the mantel, Robert Louis Stevenson, Christopher Morley and author Stephen Leacock, Friedman’s instructor at McGill University.

The collection of Kipling, gifted to McGill in 1946, became the core of the Norman Friedman Rudyard Kipling Collection, which now contains 1,541 items and includes first, early, variant and collected editions of Kipling’s works.

But the fireplace quotation has a sly double meaning. As a successful businessman and manufacturer in the areas of clothing and candy, Friedman presumably did his fair share of “book-keeping,” but we may assume that he enjoyed the role of reader much more. Given the idyllic scene depicted here, who can blame him?

The artist behind this charming portrayal of a contented reader is Arthur G. (A.G.) Racey (1870–1941). A graduate of St. Francis College, which was affiliated with McGill University, Racey went on to enjoy a long career as the



cartoonist for the *Montreal Star* from 1899 to 1941. A profile of Racey in *The Canadian Magazine* in 1900 declares that Racey’s work possessed “that subtle humor and keen insight into the diversified traits of human character which have marked his work distinctive and given it that field which real merit alone could command.”

Racey’s political cartoons were, said this profile, “known the country over,” and his work was frequently “reproduced in high class publications in London, the United States, France and other countries.” And as one might have guessed from the inclusion of the delightful terrier in Friedman’s bookplate, Racey was apparently an animal lover. “An amusing fad of the cartoonist is the gathering around him of such strange pets as turtles, raccoons, owls, guinea-pigs, monkeys, fowls, and finally cats—the latter always deservedly being wanderers from home on account of the development of traits which had justly caused them to be Pariahs.”

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The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.