

EDWARD AND MARY HARKNESS

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In writing this little tribute for the *Bulletin* of the Metropolitan Museum, all I can do as a friend of Edward and Mary Harkness is to give a small picture as I saw it of the attitude which these wonderful people had toward giving. It was one of the things in life which gave Edward Harkness the most satisfaction. He was a great humanitarian and got his deepest pleasure in doing things for other people. This was literally true.

I had known Ned Harkness since his college days, though he had gone to Yale and I to Williams, but I never knew him well until about the time of his marriage in 1903. From that time on we were close friends and I was in a position to know how difficult it was for a man of Mr. Harkness's wealth to live the normal, easy way with his friends.

Perhaps a story may illustrate this. I had never known in the early days that Ned Harkness was such a rich man. At this period I was an instructor at Williams, and whenever I came to New York Ned Harkness and I dined together and went to the theater. I always insisted that if Ned got the tickets, I paid for the dinner. Years after, out of a clear sky, Ned said: "You know, Lewis, that there is no man in the world I care for more than you. Do you want to know why?" "Yes," I said. "Because you were such a damn fool that you did not know I had money." His attitude toward me put me in a position to know what gave Mr. Harkness real

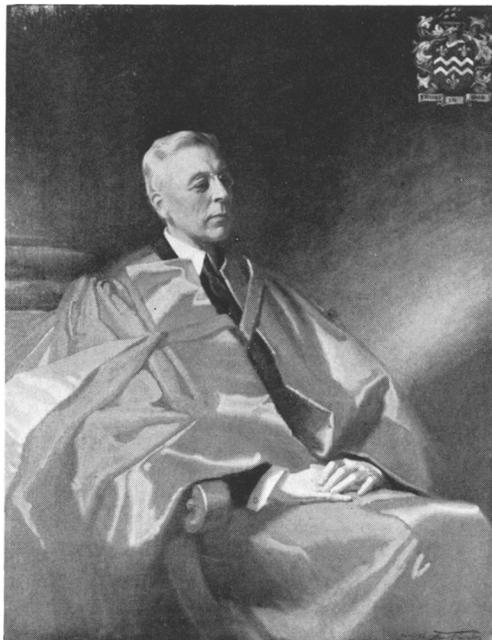
happiness. For to anyone as rich as he, many simple enjoyments are denied. He loved his charming place, Eolia, in New London, where, with a few friends, he enjoyed himself enormously. He used to get the same group together on each Fourth of July, the date of Mary Harkness's birthday. These reunions were one of his greatest satisfactions.

I think Mr. Harkness was one of the founders of the Yeamans Hall Club near Charleston, South Carolina. Here he had a house and here he used to have a few friends who visited him every New Year's. Anyone who ever saw Ned and Mary Harkness at the costume party on New Year's Eve at Yeamans Hall saw two people who were really enjoying themselves and giving a riotously good time to others. They were both actors, both had a sense of humor

which was exquisite, and both had the rare gift of imparting their idea of fun to others.

There was another thing which Ned Harkness enjoyed, his connection with the Southern Pacific Railroad. As a director of the road he went on inspection trips, where, I have been told, his suggestions were very valuable. I know he got immense happiness from these trips.

One more thing which gave him enjoyment was his relationship with President Lowell of Harvard. The enthusiasm which Mr. Lowell showed in accepting the House Plan and in carrying it out gave Mr. Harkness one of the major pleasures of his life.



Edward S. Harkness, by Salisbury

I dined with Mr. Harkness the night he had signed the papers which created the Commonwealth Fund—"for the Welfare of Mankind." He was very happy that night and welcomed the thought of what the Commonwealth Fund might accomplish, but he was never over optimistic about what his gifts would bring to pass. His was a wise and realistic attitude on the subject of giving. The road of a philanthropist is not always smooth, but Mr. Harkness always had in mind the good of humanity, and this consistent attitude made him the great humanitarian he was and brings me to his relationship with the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Again I want to stress that Edward Harkness was a humanitarian first and foremost — truly great in this respect! He purchased priceless treasures with the public chiefly in mind. He was personally fondest of the eighteenth-century English painters, and for Egyptian art treasures he had a veritable flair. Mary Harkness was a natural collector who had an instinct for the beautiful. Munificent and modest giving was the characteristic of both, and for husband and wife to possess this same attitude is almost unheard-of.

Edward Harkness and Mary Stillman were married in 1903, and their wedding trip included Egypt. It was at this time that Mr. Harkness's interest in Egyptian excavation arose. Mrs. Lythgoe and Mrs. Harkness had been great friends, and Mr. Harkness became a friend of Mr. Lythgoe. When an important Egyptian stela of Mentu-wosre (ill. p. 72) appeared on the market in 1912 Mr. Lythgoe was anxious to procure it for the Egyptian Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and wrote Mr.

Harkness asking him if he would care to join in a group of contributors to secure it. Mr. Harkness replied that he would be glad to give it himself. This was the first of many wonderful gifts to the Museum. Not long after this most generous evidence of his interest in the Museum, Mr. Lythgoe spoke to Mr. Morgan (then the President of the Museum) about making Mr. Harkness a Trustee, and he was thus appointed on October 12, 1912. He was made chairman of the Egyptian Committee on March 23, 1914.



Mary Stillman Harkness, by Salisbury

After Mr. Morgan's death in 1913 Mr. Harkness came to Mr. Lythgoe and said: "I know I can never take Mr. Morgan's place with the Egyptian Department but, as far as I can, I would like to do so." During the years that followed and until his death the enthusiastic interest of Mr. Harkness, and his generosity, proved of incalculable help. Again it should be born in mind that his pleasure in acquiring works of art was based more on the pleasure which the public would derive from them than

on the act of collecting.

Mr. and Mrs. Harkness spent the winter of 1923-1924 in Egypt, chiefly at the Museum's headquarters at Luxor. His Ford car added greatly to Mr. Harkness's convenience and pleasure and he made almost daily trips to the Valley of the Kings and kept in close touch with the work being conducted there at the tomb of Tut-ankh-Amun. In addition to the car he had a moving-picture camera which played an important part for him during these exciting days.

A little more about the method of giving of Edward and Mary Harkness. Both of them helped an infinite number of individuals, the type whom organizations do not assist, and they

always helped in a quiet way unknown to any but the beneficiary. Miss Charlotte Stillman, a sister of Mrs. Harkness, once said to Ned Harkness, "You really would prefer to be under the sofa than anywhere else, wouldn't you?" And she adds, "Never a thought of publicity, or acclaim, truly a Christian."

As well as I knew Mr. Harkness I never heard him speak of his gifts to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, only of his interest in the Museum. This was typical of the man and showed his modesty. I imagine he had very little to say at the meetings of the Trustees of the Museum, just as he had very little to say in detail as to how his great gifts for education at Harvard, Yale, and Exeter should be spent. He, like the great man he was, had the original idea about the House Plan at Harvard, the College Plan at Yale, and the Harkness Plan at Exeter, but he let others carry out these plans. Yet he was al-

ways intensely interested in how things were working out; he was interested in details but was never dictatorial. I am very glad to have the opportunity to say this, for he seemed to me to be the ideal giver—generous, interested, self-effacing, and infinitely patient. But his was the vision which made so many things possible. A chance trip to Egypt in the winter of 1903-1904, a friendship with the Lythgoes, an enthusiasm about Egyptian excavation, which he never knew he had, and the Metropolitan Museum came into possession of some enduring treasures. And the extraordinary thing is that in the generosity and method of their giving Mr. and Mrs. Harkness had ideas which were identical.

Both Edward and Mary Harkness when they gave, gave gladly, personally, almost shyly—and great good came from the gift and from the givers.