

# Hart House Designer

*An appreciation by F. S. Baker, F.R.I.B.A.*

Those who have resided in Toronto, or vicinity, during the last thirty years will join the writer—if they are interested in the development of art in Canada—in a brief tribute to the works of that famous and distinguished, and still young, architect and artist, Henry Sproatt, LL.D., whose photograph appears with this attempt of an old friend and colleague to express his admiration and appreciation of his great achievements in architecture.

The son of a great Canadian engineer, whom this country will never forget, he naturally turned to architecture upon leaving Varsity. Hard, steady work as a student at his drawing board in the offices of his early masters brought him to the broad road to success, along which his career has ever been onward and upward, until with his equally eminent partner, Ernest R. Rolph, he is ready to retire with great content. This is merely the writer's idea, no doubt Dr. Sproatt and his accomplished partner have other views and will be prevailed upon by many future clients to add to his achievements. The works which he has already accomplished speak for themselves. One by one they have been published, drawings and films, until that most recent and perhaps most important and most beautiful of all—Hart House—has just appeared in great detail in *CONSTRUCTION*.

The writer, if he may be permitted the space, feels that he should not leave this subject without reference to the great usefulness of good architecture in the development of a young country like Canada, where materialism necessarily prevails and will for some time, no doubt. The beautiful works of Dr. Sproatt, especially, perhaps, those Collegiate Gothic structures now famous for their beauty, will direct much thought and action on the part of those contemplating building in higher planes of art.

## Henry Sproatt and His Work

*An appreciation by Lt.-Col. W. M. Moorehouse, D.S.O.*

The clever type of architectural design may often exercise on the community an influence which is not of the best. It may create a fashion to be seized upon by a host of imitators whose work will be but the mask of the original without its animating fire. The world is full of just such architectural corpses. This condemnation, however, cannot be applied to the architecture of Henry Sproatt, R.C.A., on whom the University of Toronto has just conferred the honorary LL.D. degree. With a thorough knowledge of what has been done in the past, he is not tied to tradition, for tradition's sake. With a complete equipment of architectural technique, he is never carried away by false ideas of originality in an art which, with its many limitations, must be evolutionary.

Possessing a keen sense of construction, he has always adapted his knowledge to existing conditions. His is the evolutionary type of design and not the passing whim of fashion that the future mind will condemn. That is why the work of Henry Sproatt is good and will live. It is difficult to state in words just what constitutes the charm of his work. It leaps into the mind of the trained observer, and grows in the mind of the untrained. The secret must lie in the simplicity and genuineness of his methods in dealing with a problem. His structures are not built piecemeal with certain features studied and elaborated as the work proceeds in such a manner as to detract from the harmony of the whole. His plan develops on simple, logical lines, and with its development the proportions and mass are visualized. His idea in the abstract is never dominated by detail as the building assumes concrete form. Almost always one sees the finished building in his preliminary sketches, and these are not like the flattering portrait that leads to disappointment in the original.

Until 1904 his work was mainly in the classic styles of architecture, in which he shows the same refinement and restraint that characterize his present design. It was the Metropolitan parsonage that definitely determined the Gothic trend of his work. In this style he has shown himself big enough to look for the weak points in what he has done, and the result has been a steady development—Victoria College Library, Burwash Hall, Hart House—each telling its story of patient study and growing facility. Many outside interests are involved in the study of architecture, and in these Henry Sproatt has developed unusual versatility. He is the true collector in whose estimation of a piece, its market value plays little part. His home and office are full of objects of high artistic merit, paintings, china, silver, each piece with its individual charm and interest.

This article is not in any sense biographical and is not therefore the place for remarks of a personal or anecdotal nature. Any such remarks would presuppose the idea that the subject were not present to defend himself.

In pointing to the past work of Henry Sproatt the writer wishes to indicate the promise of the future. Such a man's work is his life, and whether recognition comes or not, the reward is always his—

Who toils to leave as his bequest  
An added beauty to the earth.