Bet You Missed It-What do 19th century newspapers and book thieves have in common?

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THE FABULOUS D’AULAIRES
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Ingri from Norway met Edgar Parin D’Aulaire from Germany while studying art there. They married and moved to America in the 1920s. A librarian for the New York Public Library suggested they use their talent to make children’s books.

Their books are stone lithography with each page printed from multiple stones layering over one another. The d’Aulaires read and travelled and sketched the spots of their stories. Abraham Lincoln, Leif the Lucky, Columbus, George Washington, Pocahontas, Benjamin Franklin, Buffalo Bill, and the very famous Book of Greek Myths all became exquisite productions.

In the 1950s publishers ditched the lithography and produced cheaper and cheap-looking acetate versions. Now Beautiful Feet Books has brought back the original colors from editions held by the Beinecke Rare Books Library.


LETS READ ABOUT SINGLE WOMEN
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)


OCD FOR BOOKS
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

In 1869, Dr. Alois Pichler became head of the Imperial Public Library in St. Petersburg, Russia and promptly began stealing books. When he was caught he had over 4,500 stolen volumes on every imaginable subject. It was the largest library theft in history.

On trial, he pled “bibliomania” as a mental illness defense but was convicted anyway and sent to Siberia.

Bibliomania, the lust for possession, swept through the upper classes of Europe in the early 1800s. English collector Richard Heber filled eight houses with 146,000 rare books. Gustave Flaubert wrote Bibliomanie about a murderous bookseller.

The disease seems to have died out with the advent of efficient steam engine-powered printing press technology around 1820.


GRAD SLEUTH HITS PAYDIRT
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Who says grad students just create footnotes for their dissertation advisors? Zachary Turpin of the University of Houston was scouring a database of 19th century newspapers when he came across a lost Walt Whitman novella published in six parts in a New York newspaper. Life and Adventures of Jack Engle is a harrowing, Dickensian “temperance novel” about a stout-hearted young man who overcomes demon rum.

Three years later, Leaves of Grass was published, and Whitman never acknowledged Jack Engle. The University of Iowa Press is releasing it in book form.

But will it get Zach tenure?


WORKING FOR BOARD IN WIGTOWN
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Above a bookshop called The Open Book in Wigtown, Scotland is a £28/night cute holiday flat. But you have to work in the shop below.

Wigtown is in beautiful Galloway and is Scotland’s National Book Town. And along with browsing books, in your time off, there’s crumbling castles and whiskey sampling.


DOOM FOR BOOK THIEVES
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

A single illuminated book could be years in the making during the Middle Ages. To protect these objects of great virtue and value, elaborate curses were devised for book thieves — excommunication or hideous forms of death. And people believed them.

Marc Drogin has collected the curses in Anathema! Medieval Scribes and the History of Book Curses. It includes curses from ancient Greece and Babylonia up through the Renaissance.

“For him that stealeth, or borroweth and returneth not, this book from its owner, let it change into a serpent in his hand and rend him.”


SPY TALES
by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)
