

April 2017

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

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Bruce (2017) "Bet You Missed It-What do 19th century newspapers and book thieves have in common?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 29: Iss. 2, Article 62.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7761>

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Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Bruce Strauch** (Retired, The Citadel)

Editor's Note: Hey, are y'all reading this? If you know of an article that should be called to *Against the Grain's* attention ... send an email to <kstrauch@comcast.net>. We're listening! — **KS**

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**.

See — **Sarah Laskow**, "The D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths is Famous. But What About Their Forgotten American Stories?" *AtlasObscura.com*, June 17, 2016.

LET'S READ ABOUT SINGLE WOMEN

by **Bruce Strauch** (Retired, The Citadel)

George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1993) (Impoverished spinsters take to feminism. **Gissing** is best known for *New Grub Street*.); (2) **F.M. Mayor**, *The Rector's Daughter* (1924) (Aging Edwardian spinster finds love late in life. Published by **Leonard and Virginia Woolf**.); (3) **Vita Sackville-West**, *All Passion Spent* (1931) (The widowed **Lady Slane** has late life rebellion against her staid children.); (4) **Elaine Dundy**, *The Dud Avocado* (1958) (a British Holly Golightly except a lot more fun.); (5) **Alison Lurie**, *Foreign Affairs* (1984) (Aging woman professor falls for loudmouth from Tulsa. Turns him on by getting him to read *Little Lord Fauntleroy*).

See — **Rachel Cooke**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 18-19, 2017, p.C10. (**Cook** is the author of "Her Brilliant Career: Ten Extraordinary Women of the Fifties.")

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.

See — **Lauren Young**, "Bibliomania, the Dark Desire for Books that Infected Europe in the 1800s," *AtlasObscura.com*, Dec. 2, 2016.



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?

See — **Glen Weldon**, "Grad Student Discovers a Lost Novel by Walt Whitman," *All Things Considered*, Feb. 21, 2017.

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.

See — **Haley Richardson**, "Cute Holiday Flat Above a Bookshop," *The Sun Online*, Feb. 19, 2017.

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."

See — **Sarah Laskow**, "Protect Your Library the Medieval Way, With Horrifying Book Curses," *AtlasObscura.com*, Nov. 9, 2016.

SPY TALES

by **Bruce Strauch** (Retired, The Citadel)

John Banville, *The Untouchable* (1997) (imagined life of **Anthony Blunt**); (2) **W. Somerset Maugham**, *Ashenden* (1928) (based on **Maugham's** life in British espionage in WWI); (3) **Erskine Childers**, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) (inspirational for **John Buchan**); (4) **Alan Judd**, *The Kaiser's Last Kiss* (2003) (**Kaiser** in exile at beginning of WWII; filmed as "The Exception"); (5) **Javier Marias**, *Fever and Spear* (2002) (learn more from people by watching than by listening to them).

See — **James Naughtie**, "Five Best," *The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 11-12, 2017, P.C10. (**Naughtie** is the author of *Paris Spring*.)