



LIBRARY NOTES

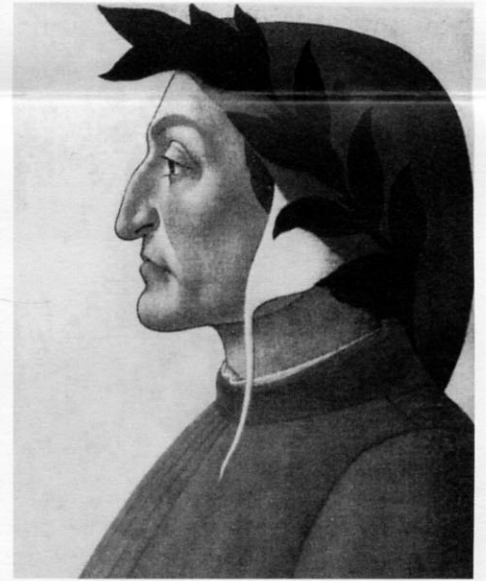
THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 1996

CONVERSATIONS ON GREAT BOOKS

DANTE'S *THE DIVINE COMEDY* (SERIES 1)--MONTAIGNE'S *ESSAYS* (SERIES 2)

Dante's *The Divine Comedy* will inaugurate Series 1 in the Library's program, "Conversations on Great Books," beginning on Wednesday, February 28, and continuing on the next two Wednesdays, March 6 and 13. Series 2 in the program will be devoted to Montaigne's *Essays*, on Wednesdays, May 1, 8, and 15. Both series will be held at the Library from 5:30 to 7:00 P.M.

Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, Avalon Foundation Professor Emeritus in the Humanities at Columbia University, will lead the three "Conversations" on *The Divine Comedy*. Professor Mazzeo specializes in Dante as well as medieval culture and comparative literature of the Renaissance. "As a work of art," he has written of *The Divine Comedy*, "I think we have no other to compare with it in philosophic richness and perfection of execution, both in its grand design and its smallest detail."



Dante (1265-1321)

David Ortiz



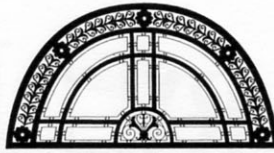
Montaigne (1533-1592)

Jacques Barzun, University Professor Emeritus at Columbia University, former president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and recipient of the French Legion of Honor, will lead the three

"Conversations" on Montaigne's *Essays*. The title for this series is "Montaigne, Essayist and Innovator." Professor Barzun specializes in cultural history and has written more than forty books.

In the Library's "Conversations" program, challenging books are selected and discussed. Certain books--*The Divine Comedy* immediately comes to mind--may become more accessible to readers if they are able to join with others in the undertaking. Each session will be a conversation not a lecture. To encourage full discussion, participants are expected to read the book in preparation. Enrollment for both series is limited. To register in either series, please send your check for \$60 to the Library, attention Nancy McCartney. Upon registration, information will be sent to you as to the translation to be used and where copies can be obtained.

CALENDAR	For Children "Tales To Treasure" ages 4-9 Saturdays 10:30 A.M. January 27 February 3 and 10 March 2, 9, and 16 with Storyteller Nadine Grisar	For Children "Spotlight Series" ages 10 and up Saturdays 11:30 A.M. February 3, 10, and 24 Ann Pearson Eloise Anderson Jolene Rousseau	Conversations-1 Dante's <i>The Divine Comedy</i> 5:30 P.M. at the Library Wednesdays, February 28 March 6 and 13 with Joseph Mazzeo	Art of Biography Series 1995-1996 Wednesday March 20 6:30 P.M. Jean Strouse on J. Pierpont Morgan Temple Israel 112 East 75th	Library Excursion Saturday April 27 Visit to a Boswell archive at Viscountess Eccles estate near Princeton, N.J. 10:00 A.M.- 6:00 P.M.	Conversations-2 "Montaigne: Essayist and Innovator" 5:30 P.M. at the Library Wednesdays, May 1, 8, and 15 with Jacques Barzun
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LIBRARY VISIT TO FOUR OAKS FARM BOSWELL REDUX

Henry S.F. Cooper, Jr.

Remember James Boswell, who graced the Library's first benefit last May? He will be back with us, in spirit at least, on Saturday, April 27, when Library members are invited to lunch at Four Oaks Farm near Princeton, the home of Viscountess Eccles. This is the third of the Library's tours, which have already visited the Rosenbach Museum and Library and the Library Company of Philadelphia in October, 1994, and the Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington, Connecticut, last November.

Viscountess Eccles and her first husband, the late Donald Hyde (the lawyer who brought about the sale of the Boswell papers by Colonel Ralph Isham to Yale), amassed the foremost collection of Boswell manuscripts and other material outside New Haven. Their collection of books and manuscripts of Samuel Johnson is second to none.

In addition to the manuscripts, the collection includes the ebony cabinet from Malahide Castle, in which many of the Boswell Papers had been stored for over a century, and also paintings by Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Hogarth.

Also on display, in all likelihood, will be memorabilia of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, which was largely orchestrated by Viscount Eccles. Lady Eccles writes, "David and I hope the bus, bearing members of the New York Society Library, will come to Four Oaks Farm on the 27th. The tulips should be blooming then, the doors of the ebony cabinet open, and treasures to see in the library."

The bus will depart from the Library on Saturday, April 27, at 10:00 A.M. and return by about 6:00 P.M. Reservations are limited. The excursion, which includes lunch, will cost \$50. Checks should be mailed to the Library, attention Nancy McCartney.

TO LIBRARY MEMBERS

William J. Dean, Chairman
Board of Trustees

In 1936, the Library purchased from Mrs. John Shillito Rogers its fifth home, a five-story house at 53 East 79th Street, built in 1917 from designs of Trowbridge and Livingston, architects also of the St. Regis Hotel. The \$175,000 purchase was made possible by a very generous earlier bequest by Sarah C. Goodhue. The back half of the house was torn out and replaced with twelve tiers of book stacks.

Today, when you enter the Catalogue and Reference Room, you are entering the former reception room of the Rogers' house. The small closet just off the Reference Room was once a wash room. Guests would freshen up here before ascending the grand staircase, or entering the dining room across the hall, now the staff work room behind the carved-oak loan desk.

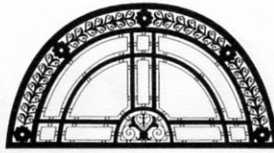
The Members' Room on the second floor served as the Rogers' library. Stack 6 (fiction section K-Z) is the site of the former drawing room. On the third floor, the Whitridge Room was the master bedroom and Librarian Mark Piel's office, the boudoir. Children's bedrooms were on the fourth floor. According to architectural drawings, the large study room on the fifth floor was divided into four maids' rooms, the microfilm room served as the sewing room, and the copier room as a bathroom (note the remaining wall tiles).

I enjoy being reminded of the building's past. In Stack 6 the other day, looking for Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*, I thought I heard charming drawing room conversation. Or was it my imagination?



Boswell's Ebony Cabinet

David Ortiz



THE BIOGRAPHY SERIES
 “NAPOLEON OF FINANCE”

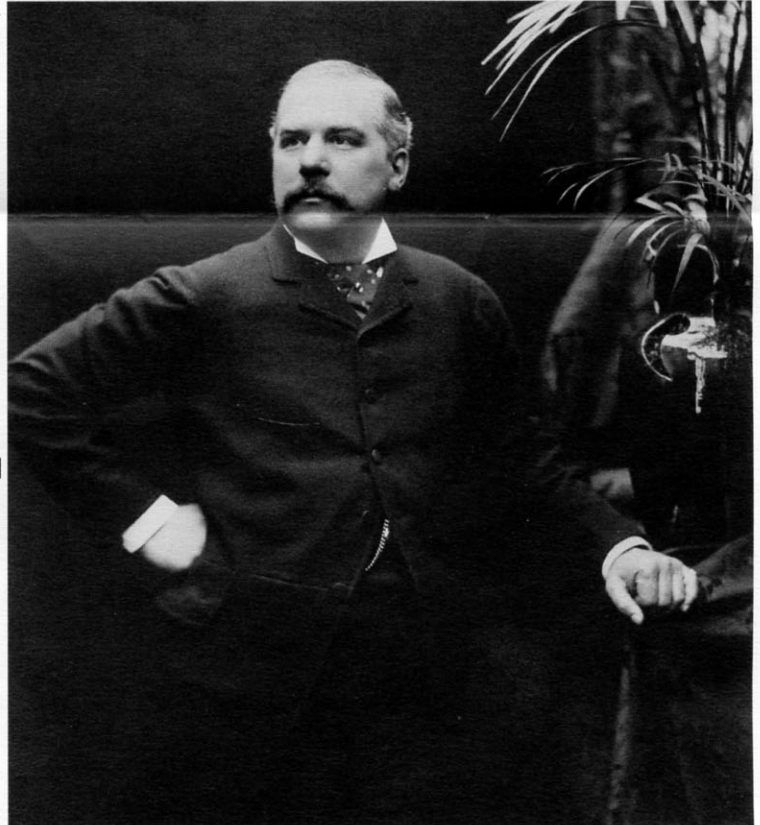
Jean Strouse

Author of Alice James: A Biography and a forthcoming life of J. Pierpont Morgan, Jean Strouse will give the third talk in the 1995-1996 Art of Biography Lecture Series on Wednesday, March 20 at Temple Israel, 112 East 75th Street at 6:30 P.M. Tickets are available at the Circulation Desk.

You might think, if you were working on a biography, that people would ask about the subject. Not if it's J. Pierpont Morgan. They tell you. A poet I met recently said, "Oh, Morgan: he was a terrible guy." An eminent educator warns me, "No philanthropist." A distant relative asks my aunt, who cheerfully passes the inquiry along, "What's a nice girl like her doing with a guy like that?" Why Morgan is a fair enough question, but not really what he meant.

One reason why is to examine a figure obscured in myth. Critics see Morgan as rapacious pirate; defenders describe him as patriot-saint. Called "Jupiter," "Pierpontifex Maximus," the "Napoleon of Finance," and a modern Medici prince, he reorganized the nation's railroads (the process came to be called 'Morganization'), put together giant trusts--U.S. Steel, General Electric, International Harvester, AT&T --and assembled one of the greatest art collections of modern times. He also appointed himself to act as lender of last resort, virtually a one-man Federal Reserve. When the government ran out of gold in 1895, Morgan raised \$65 million; and when banks and trust companies began to fail in 1907, he led teams of financiers to stop the panic. For a moment in 1907 he was a national hero: crowds cheered as he made his way down Wall Street, and world leaders saluted his statesmanship with awe. The exercise of that much power by one private citizen appalled a nation of democrats, however, and revived America's long-standing distrust of bankers, plutocrats, and concentrated wealth.

Morgan had two wives, four children, six houses, three yachts, epicurean tastes, and strong ties to the Episcopal Church. He died in 1913 worth about \$100 million (roughly \$1.5 billion today). Who was he? After years in the archives I have some ideas, which makes it all the more surprising that so many people, nearly a century after he died, would rather weigh in than find out.



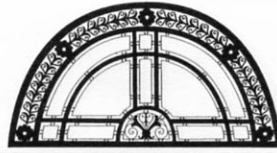
J. Pierpont Morgan in 1881, London

Courtesy of the Archives,
 The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

FOR INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS for events, please call Nancy McCartney, the Library's Events Coordinator, (212) 717-0357. Comments and letters to Jenny Lawrence, editor of *Library Notes*, at the Library.

FOR CHILDREN--SATURDAYS AT THE LIBRARY

Storyteller Nadine Grisar will lead a series entitled "**Tales To Treasure**" for children 4-9 on six Saturdays: January 27, February 3 and 10, and March 2, 9, and 16, from 10:30-11:00 A.M. The Library's "**Spotlight Series**," for children 10 and older, will take place on three Saturdays from 11:30 A.M.-12:15 P.M. The first, on February 3, will feature Ann Pearson, Metropolitan Museum archeologist and author of *The Eyewitness History of Ancient Greece*. On February 10, dancer Eloise Anderson will present a portrait of the legendary African-American choreographer Tally Beatty. On February 24, 14-year-old Jolene Rousseau will give a multimedia account of her visit to Vietnam. All programs will be in the Children's Room (3rd Floor) and are free for members and their friends. Please reserve ahead as space is limited.



SHELF TALK

Mark Piel, Librarian

For the past five years this Library has been part of the Membership Libraries Group, comprising the subscription libraries of the United States. Our number stands at about twenty, but the count is not precise as libraries come to our attention that were not included before. Some of the larger institutions and their dates of founding are: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia (1814); The Boston Athenaeum (1807), with which we are now affiliated by reciprocal membership privileges; The Mercantile Library (1820), another New York City membership library; The St. Louis Mercantile Library (1846); and San Francisco's Mechanics' Institute (1855). The group meets annually, the libraries taking turns as host in their home cities. The festive occasions provide a forum to share information and to discuss how best to serve our publics. Programs under consideration are a possible joint publication with a description of each library's history and collections as well as a cooperative exhibition that would travel to each of the member libraries. For those interested, I would be glad to distribute a list of some of the better-known membership libraries across the country.

REPLACEMENT BOOKS SOUGHT
 Custine, *Russia*; Creighton, *A History of the Papacy During the Reformation*; Halstead, *Life of Jay Gould: How He Made His Millions*; Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Lady Rose's Daughter and Marriage à la Mode*. These titles have been found missing. We have not been able to replace them and would very much appreciate copies.

THE WALLET

Barbara H. Stanton, Development Committee Chair

The Library's two wallets, for the 1993-1995 Capital Campaign and the 1994-1995 Annual Appeal, have been filling at a wonderful rate thanks to the continuing generosity of members and friends. Final pledge payments and new contributions have swelled the Capital Campaign total to almost \$700,000 as this three-year effort nears completion. Recently, through the good offices of Dr. James J. Heslin, the Campaign received a \$5,000 donation from The Guide Foundation of New York City in consideration "of the important work undertaken at the Library." This gift will help pay for the retrospective conversion now underway. Retrospective conversion is the process of describing the Library's holdings in a form that can be stored and accessed by computer, permitting computerized book circulation, which will save the staff much drudgery.

At the same time, the 1994-1995 Annual Appeal ended at a record \$118,347, an increase of 37% over the 1993-1994 total of \$86,290, itself a previous record. The Annual Appeal runs from November to November and supplies approximately 10% of the Library's operating funds. The 1994-1995 total is particularly noteworthy as a number of members were fulfilling pledges to the Capital Campaign during this period. Many, many thanks to all the Library's contributors! You ensure the continuation of this special institution.

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