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Archives of American Art

Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: Morgan, J. Pierpont, Collection, 1935

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[[page from a magazine]]
 THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 10, 1935. 23
 [[line]]
 [[five columns]]
 [[three-column headline]]
 THE LEGEND OF THE MORGAN ART TREASURES

The Recent Sale of Pictures by the Son Recalls the Method by Which
 The Father Built Up His Famous and Comprehensive Collection
 [[/three column headline]]

[[column 1]]
 (continued from Page 11)
 [[line]]

when he was buying, as some people saw it, "like a drunken sailor." The younger J.P.—who has not been an ardent accumulator except of items to enrich the library, his peculiar care—knows his own mind, too, when he sells six of his best (and best-selling) pictures. Another man might have combed the collection for items that never would have been missed—or missed very much less. The head of the house of Morgan, when he puts up pictures for sale, puts up pictures that will sell and sell well and find buyers at once. The report is that he took no more advice about selling than his father took about buying.

There was a flavor of the pirate about the father, which obviously tickled his own fancy, pillar of the Episcopal Church though he was and prop of the world-fabric of responsibility. Else he would not have named Corsair the big rakish black steam yacht aboard which he took his pleasure upon the salty element that had fed the fortune of his namesake, Sir Henry of the Spanish Main. But he was a true Victorian, and entangled with the hard-boiled business man and brusque autocrat was a strain of simple sentiment.

As a schoolboy in Boston, before he went to Vevey to collect stained glass, they say he wrote poetry. But his graduation essay was about Napoleon. Good Victorians were curiously fascinated by Napoleon. This Napoleon of finance and overrunner of the world for the conquest of art used, like the Little Corporal, to play patience—or solitaire—to assist thought or allay impatience.

Dealers used to come to the library which was his lair with what they had to offer. Once when he had refused over a voyage to Europe and back to make up his mind, or to declare his mind, about the purchase of a collection of MSS. of American authors—Thoreau, Poe, Whittier, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes—the dealer on a third or fourth essay found the great man seated at a little table engaged with the cards. A log in the big fireplace dropped, as logs burned through into chunks do, and a flame shot like a rocket up the chimney. Mr. Morgan harking back to his verse-writing youth, no doubt, quoted:

I shot an arrow into the air,
 It fell to Earth I know not where—

Whereat the dealer remarked that what he had to offer was just exactly that—among other things this very bit of doggerel set down in



Longfellow's own hand. The sale was promptly concluded, though the Morgan mind was probably made up before the poetry intruded.

Another story is, however, that the poem which won the battle was "The Children's Hour":

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower——

This, it is said, reached the mark because of the grim banker's fondness for his grandchildren. In either case, sentiment wins.

* * *

A CLEARER clue to the elder Morgan's methods with "prospects" in the art line is this: A Vermeer was brought to the library——the one now hanging in the Morgan House at Glen Cove. "Who was Vermeer?" asked the collector paramount. The accomplished countryman of Rembrandt was duly placed, including the not immaterial circumstance that very few Vermeers ever came into the private collectors' market. Mr. Morgan took a good look, asked the price, which turned out to be \$100,000

and said: "I'll take it." That was all.

At the time of this summary transaction art circles in America we're not yet Vermeer-conscious, though a few examples of the painter's work had already reached particular collectors in this country. Mr. Morgan's art education was proceeding——somewhat in advance——along with that of his countrymen of less opportunity. And he had just got to Vermeer.

As he proceeded with his collecting his knowledge grew apace. He was the czar of bankers because he had learned the banking business from the ground up. He applied himself to the business of cornering art was equal thoroughness, assisted by a natural aptitude or flair and a Napoleonic power of attention to detail.

When he began to buy pictures——you may read their titles and find handsome reproductions in one of the mighty volumes of the catalogue de luxe of his paintings——they were exactly the sort of pictures that a Victorian-American gentleman with money and civilized associations was expected to buy and did usually buy at that period to hang upon the walls of his house. They were pictures that were pleasant in subject and "right" in sentiment——pictures of dogs and cows and agreeable-looking ladies. The painters were those in contemporary esteem, ranging from Landseer to Troyton and extending to Villegas.

The extent of Morgan's collection of British portraits——forty, including for Gainsboroughs (the Duchess of Devonshire, of course), three Lawrences, six Reynoldses and four Romney's——two Lady Hamiltons among them——shows the persistence of the sentimental streak on the higher, or at any rate higher-priced, plane. There were also a Hogarth and a couple of Turners. The Dutch and Flemish gallery (before the

Vermeer arrived) included four
[[column 2]]

[[columns 2 & 3 of article interrupted by two columnn "Opera" story at
bottom of sheet, transcribed following end of column 3]]

[[column 3]]
Hales (two of which are among the pictures in the recent sale), two
Hobemas, three Rembrandts and two Rubenses—one of which also
went in the last lot along with Miss Farren among the Lawrences.

The French section included the ten Fragonards done for DuBarry but
left on the painter's hands; Bouchers, Greuzes and Vige Le Brun.
There were also a Goya and a Velasquez, showing the esthetic ascent
in the prevailing modern scale of such matters. Finally, there were the
fifteenth century Italians like the Ghirlandaio portrait of Giovanna
Tornabuoni, counted the high watermark of the entire picture collection,
and the "St. Lawrence," by the way, was almost the last of Mr. Morgan's
purchases, acquired just before he went away to Europe on the trip
which was cut short by his death in Italy.

* * *

The "St. Lawrence," which will hang in the Metropolitan, was bought in
the library and had its home there along with the Ghirlandaio. Only a
few of the many Morgan pictures ever hung on those library walls. But
the entire span of the great collector's career of scouring the world for
what he wanted lies between the triptych of the saint and the stained
glass in the windows of the white marble pavilion built to house the
things he loved best.

Some of that stained glass is the glass bought with the pocket money
of the schoolboy of Vevey. It got rather broken up, being carried around
in the boy's luggage, but the bits have been arranged in very lovely
patterns set in the plain glass through which the light falls on the
bindings of the old books rising in tiers around the great room. The light
falls also on the portrait of Morgan the Magnificent, placed there by his
son.

[[/column 3 of lead story]]

[[two column story at bottom of sheet]]
[[two column headline]]
OPERA FOR PROVINCIAL AUSTRIA
[[/two column headline]]

[[column 1]]
VIENNA.

The Theatre and opera lovers of provincial Lower Austria have recently
been provided with a special transportation service to Vienna, national
capital and seat of the Federal Theatre and the State Opera. Three
government agencies—the Home Service, the Federal Theater
Administration and the National Tourists League—have combined to
inaugurate the effort which seeks to bring together, cheaply and
efficiently, the people of the provinces and the art established by their
government in the capital.

Several months ago the Home Service installed agents in all the communities of Lower Austria, the largest province in the country. With its population of about 1,600,000, it lies directly south and west of Vienna. The agents were intrusted with the task of organizing groups in their respective territories and selling them subscriptions for performances in the Federal Theater and State Opera. Prices were arranged to meet the purse of the poorest enthusiasts.

It soon became apparent that the public response to the plan warranted further steps. The Home Service then arranged a regular autobus and railroad service between the various communities and the capital which would bring subscribers to Vienna's theaters and after performances take them home again.

Despite the fact that the Opera and the theatre are national institutions, the folk of provincial Austria have not had an opportunity to visit them as much as they would like.

The Austrian Federal Theater traces its origin to the last quarter of the eighteenth century when Emperor Joseph II established it

[[column 2]]

in Vienna as a national institution. The State Opera goes back to 1640 when musical plays were first performed in the dancing hall of the Imperial Castle.

During the World War their activities were curtailed and afterward both the Opera and the theatre became Federal instead of Imperial. Their répertoires are cosmopolitan. In one recent season the State Opera played 168 musical works of foreign composers, while the Federal theatres devoted 279 performances to the works of foreigners, in which Bernard Shaw with thirty-five and William Shakespeare with twenty-eight performances were the leaders.

[[line]]

[[display ad image: large passenger ship looming with "AB" on the funnel, \$150 superimposed on the hull of the ship with text "New York, Harve, Southampton, ROUND ETRIP TO EUROPE \$150d to May 15 \$170 May 15 to July 15 Before paying more elsewhere consider this remarkable new service. Find out what kind of people travel on this line; the excellent food; spacious deck; spotless outside cabins, was not more than two beds; courteous stewards. Also we will take your car to Europe for \$120 round-trip. Ask for illustrated folders! ARNOLD BERNSTEIN LINE 17 BATTERY PLACE, NEW YORK, N.Y.: BOwling Green 9-3395

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[[line]]

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[[/ad for psoriasis medicine]]

[[line]]

[[two one column ads]]

[[ad in column 4]]

[[image: bottle of Bite-X with illustration of a baby on the label]]

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STOPPED THE NEW WAY

Simply apply BITE-X to thumbs or fingertips. It instantly forms a tough transparent coating unpalatable to taste. Also stops nail biting. Contains Aloin, 1.5% in a collodion base. Approved by child specialists. Send for free booklet.

Satisfactory Results or Money Refunded. MAIL \$1 to Child Welfare

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[[/ad in column 4]]

[[ad in column 5]]

[[banner]] DRI-BATH [[/banner]]

[[images: Left: shaker can with image of dog on label; Right: head of a dog]]

[[ad text]]

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[[/ad in column 5]]

[[line]]

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