

NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

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The Trustees of the New York Society Library present to the shareholders this their report for the year ending March 31, 1943.

It is with profound sorrow that we report the death of a member of the Board of Trustees, Stephen Vincent Benét, who died March 13, 1943. The loss of this distinguished man of letters will be felt by the literary world as well as by this Library.

This is the eighth war through which the Library has lived. It is difficult to be objective enough in the midst of it to realize that even the Library's happenings may have large interest for scholars and historians of the future. Only the Revolution delivered a blow sufficient to knock the Library off its feet, and then it was young and the oblivion was merely temporary. It might be known to have been only partial if some far-sighted scribe could have kept a few notes on its fate during the years of which we have no record. The minutes of the meeting of the Trustees on May 19, 1774 gave no indication that it was to be the last one for fourteen years. The next minutes, stating that no meetings of the proprietors had been held from the last Tuesday in April 1774 until December 20, 1788, were set down on the other side of the same page. Whether a sense of the dramatic or a complete lack of it caused this unbroken resumption of record, it is proof of the Library's intention to survive.

The use of the Library has been remarkably steady considering the momentous events happening daily throughout the world. Two reading trends are marked—the increasing interest in serious books on the war and post war topics and, swinging to the other side of the pendulum's arc, the increased demand for "escape" books in the form of mystery and detective tales. One may well wonder where the "westerns" of yesterday are. The increasing vogue of the American historical novel should be a crumb of comfort to those educators who find Americans so ignorant of their history.

Many of our precious book and manuscript treasures have been sent out of the city as a precaution against possible damage by bombing, but a faculty member of one of our universities, wanting to use certain of these books, inquires every month or so whether