

Bookhounds of London

Westminster Rumours

Every so often, a well-known occultist (or a well-known figure who is a less well-known occultist) dies, and their library goes to the block. Shortly thereafter, the story goes, a “man from the Ministry” visits antiquarian book-dealers and other bookshops, buying up certain of the deceased’s grimoires. This “man from the Ministry” also discreetly seeks specific Mythos tomes related to Azathoth. Bookseller legend does not agree on the fate of those dealers who refuse to sell: do they lose their royal warrant, their social cachet, their store’s lease-hold, or their freedom?



An intimate of the Royal Family – we shan’t sully a noble name with specifics – is the reputed patron of a very exclusive set of collectors interested in illustrated manuals of witch-finding. As for the nature of the illustrations that pique their concupiscence ... we shan’t sully a noble name with specifics. Is this set a cover for a witch cult, or a cabal of witch-hunters, or merely an elevated interest in degraded behaviour? And more importantly, does this set include anyone who can tell a forged (or Grangerised) 16th-century hexenhammer from the genuine article?



Two years ago, Scotland Yard named one Simon Miller a suspect in a particularly gruesome crime with a strongly ritual aspect. Miller fled to Paraguay ahead of his inevitable arrest and conviction; the case is officially in limbo until Miller can be formally arraigned. The books the detectives seized as evidence – the ones they found in his disgusting attic shrine – have begun turning up at the auction rooms of Sandeston & Co. in Bond Street. Is someone at the Yard doing a discreet business in specialty volumes?



Gilbert Warrender (see p. 86) puts a small bibliographic mystery to you over brandy and soda at the Athenaeum Club. He has come into possession of a first edition of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Longmans, Green; salmon cloth, 8vo, date “1885” hand-corrected in ink to “1886”) in which only the right-hand pages of the novel’s text are printed. The left-hand pages are blank, impossible to explain as a printer’s error given the way signatures are bound. Warrender has traced its two previous owners; both were twins. And both were found dead under mysterious circumstances.

