

Bookhounds of London

The City Rumours

The former Satanist, explorer, and occult scholar Lord Northam lives in Gray's Inn, a near-catatonic invalid surrounded by only the most puerile of books and art. He screams when he hears the bells ring, and merely titters when asked anything about his past. Where his great occult library and collection of artifacts may be, nobody knows, but the Northam Collection is the El Dorado of grimoire scavengers everywhere. Before his stroke in 1927, his only companion was his neighbour Algernon Williams, who disappeared shortly thereafter while on holiday in Yorkshire.



A Jewish bookseller in Clare Market sold a Latin Necronomicon (likely the 1623 Cadiz edition of Wormius) for an absurdly low price in 1927. The tome vanished with its purchaser, Algernon Williams, in Yorkshire later that year, but the bookshop can't have simply disappeared, can it? Certainly, neither of the two bookstores in the street seem like the kind of place such things would turn up. Rigorous examination of tax records, city directories, and so forth may turn up where that shop was located, or where its stock went.



One hears that Nevil Carstairs, a broker at the Baltic House on St.-Mary-Axe, is the man to see about importing valuable grimoires, books of Kabbalah, Masonic texts, and other officially banned books from Nazi Germany, without the excessive scrutiny of customs officials. One also hears that he is the man to see about exporting such works into Nazi Germany, where certain Party higher-ups express interest in these matters.



The eccentric book scout Allan Chesover (see p. 85) brings you a copy of the 1605 play A History of Richard Whittington. Known only from printers' license records, the play was long thought lost; this quarto copy credits George Wilkins (according to some scholars, Shakespeare's coauthor on Pericles) as the playwright. If authentic, the play is worth quite a bit – but its "Dick Whittington" becomes wealthy and powerful not through his faithful cat per se, but by use of a book he acquires from "the Queen of Cats" in "a Citie in Syria." It might be worth looking around the crypt of St. Michael Paternoster in College Hill (the church Lord Mayor Whittington generously funded rebuilding of, and in which he was buried in 1423) to see if that book – the Scrolls of Bubastis? – is hidden there.

