



Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion

Madeline B. Stern, Leona Rostenberg

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Louisa May Alcott once wrote that she had taken her pen for a bridegroom. Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern, friends and business partners for fifty years, have in many ways taken up their pens and passion for literature much in the same way. The "Holmes & Watson" of the rare book business, Rostenberg and Stern are renowned for unlocking the hidden secret of Louisa May Alcott's life when they discovered her pseudonym, A.M. Barnard, along with her anonymously published "blood and thunder" stories on subjects like transvestitism, hashish smoking, and feminism.

Old Books, Rare Friends describes their mutual passion for books and literary sleuthing as they take us on their earliest European book buying jaunts. Using what they call Finger-spitzengefühl, the art of evaluating antiquarian books by handling, experience, and instinct, we are treated to some of their greatest discoveries amid the mildewed basements of London's booksellers after the Blitz. We experience the thrill of finding one of the earliest known books printed in America between 1617-1619 by the Pilgrim Press and learn about the influential role of publisher-printers from the fifteenth century.

Like a precious gem, *Old Books, Rare Friends* is a book to treasure about the companionship of two rare friends and their shared passion for old books.

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