



The Solar Pons Gazette

W W W . S O L A R P O N S . C O M



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The Derleth Parody

By Bob Byrne

Mack Reynolds and August Derleth collaborated on *The Adventure of the Snitch in Time*. This is not a pastiche; it is a parody of both the Holmes and Pons tales.

A time traveler, Agent Tobias Athelney, appears at the door of 7B Praed Street. Can there be any doubt that 'Tobias' is a tribute to Tobias Gregson, whom Sherlock Holmes described in *A Study in Scarlet*, along with Inspector Lestrade, as "the best of a bad lot" among Scotland Yard inspectors?

And surely 'Athelney' is in honor of Athelney Jones,

the condescending Scotland Yard Inspector from *The Sign of Four*.

Athelney works for the Terra Bureau of Investigation, undoubtedly a poke at America's FBI.

The visitor tells them that there are alternate universes, including some where the two men are fictitious characters, created by a popular writer! He adds that the stories "became the all-time favorites of the literature of deduction."

The villain at large in the future is the notorious Professor Moriarty.

Tongue-in-cheek writing continues, with Walt Kelly's 'Pogo' cartoon creation being comparable to works of art by Da Vinci and Rembrandt. Pons suggests they nail Moriarty for tax evasion, just as the government did to bring down Al Capone. Problem is, Moriarty pays his taxes!

Ahtelney adds that Moriarty has a good lawyer: Randolph Mason. Largely forgotten today, Mason was the creation of Melville Davisson Post, circa 1896. Mason was a completely unscrupulous lawyer who

(Cont on page 2)

If you enjoyed page 3 of our second issue, which featured the beautiful painting by Les Edwards that was used for the jacket of *The Final Cases of Solar Pons*, we have another treat for you. Continue onward to see his wonderful creation for *Solar Pons & the Devil's Claw*.



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Greetings from Praed Street



Welcome to the second year of *The Solar Pons Gazette*! Our third issue brings you yet another installment from the *Notebooks of Dr. Parker*.

August Derleth wrote the first *Notebooks* for *The Praed Street Papers*, which is more commonly found in its reissued form, *The Praed Street Dossier*. The *Notebooks* are thoroughly enjoyable writings that most certainly belong in the Canon.

Derleth wrote two more *Notebook* entries for the first two *Pontine Dossier Annuals*. The *Notebooks* are among my favorite Pons writings and continuing their style was the very first decision I made for *The Solar Pons Gazette*. I began numbering the entries at two, acknowledging Derleth's originals as number one.

This issue also includes *A Fairlie Odd Journey*, an extremely informative monograph penned by noted Sherlockian and England's foremost Ponsian, Roger Johnson (President of the Solar Pons Society of London). It starts on page 14.

The Gazette is extremely fortunate to reproduce Les Edwards' fine painting that was used for *Solar Pons & the Devil's Claw*, by Basil Copper. What great artwork!

Derleth Parody (Cont from page 1)

never lost a case, though that fact is no indication whatsoever of his client's innocence. Shades of Mason can be found in Lawrence Block's Martin Ehrengraff and my own Irish lawyer, Sean Flanagan.

Continuing through to the end, Pons suggests that Athelney contact another Mason, first name Perry, as a foil.

At this point in time, Parker had not yet chronicled any of Pons' cases. However, Pons points out that, according to

Our featured case is *The Camberwell Beauty* and I can promise that you will be seeing more of the Doctor of Limehouse in future issues, as I find his presence to be one of the most interesting features of the entire Pontine Canon.

Edgar W. Smith's introduction to *The Return of Solar Pons* is reproduced: he didn't seem particularly fond of Adrian Conan Doyle, did he?

A first-time item that may become a regular feature is *Further Thoughts*, which provide us some additional insights from Dr. Parker on cases he chronicled. We learn a bit more related to *The Crouching Dog* in this entry.

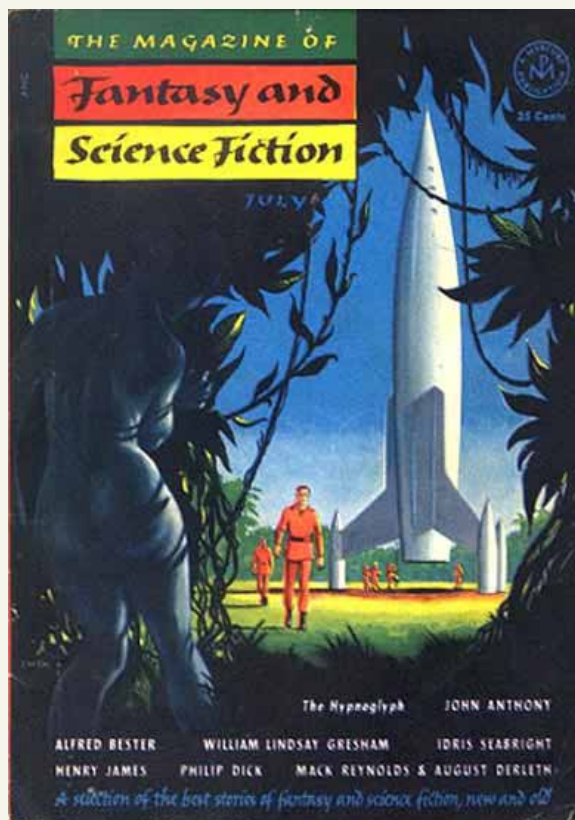
A note about the faux newspaper accounts related to *The Crouching Dog* included with the first issue. There were a few 'Easter eggs' in them. The reporter's byline, Daniel Kearny, was a tribute to Joe Gore's DKA stories. Irving Hall was selected as the name of Ahab Jepson's home in honor of Sir Henry Irving. The picture of Constable Cobbett was really Frederic Abberline of Jack the Ripper fame. And the photo of Ahab Jepson himself was really the first identified screen Holmes, Maurice Costello.

Once again, I hope you will consider contributing a

their visitor's words, Parker will do so and become famous for it.

The second published collaboration between Reynolds and Derleth, *The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus*, is a pure science fiction pastiche with no signs of levity or parody.

I am not judging which is better than the other. But I don't believe there can be any argument that Snitch in Time is a case of Derleth taking an opportunity (initiated by Reynolds) to poke some fun at himself



Solar Pons: Another Big Picture

By Bob Byrne



Issue 1.2 of *The Solar Pons Gazette* included a picture of the full painting used for *The Final Cases of Solar Pons* book jacket. There was no shortage of praise for the extremely talented artist, Les Edwards, in describing it.

It should come as no surprise that he also created the cover for Sarob Press' other Pons effort from Basil Copper, *Solar Pons & the Devil's Claw*. Mr. Edwards was kind enough to provide the *Gazette* with a picture of that painting as well. A visit to his website, especially if you are a fan of fantasy fiction, will be quite rewarding:
www.LesEdwards.com

As mentioned last issue, Edwards notes that Basil Copper insists that Solar Pons resembles Peter Cushing, which certainly comes through in the drawing. Hopefully he will be asked once again to illustrate a future work featuring Solar Pons.



Les Edwards, for *Solar Pons & the Devil's Claw* by Basil Copper



More From the Notebooks of doctor lyndon parker - iv



23 March, 1921

Mother Nature had laid siege to London, her icy gales and driving snow forcing all but the most hardy indoors. I returned from an abysmal afternoon of making my rounds to find Pons comfortably ensconced on the floor in front of a roaring fire, his scrapbooks of crime spread all around him.

"Ah, Parker, welcome back to the warmth of our hearth. It is certainly a particularly unpleasant day outside. Mrs. Bartlett has not yet recovered from her bout of pneumonia, I see."

"I'm sure that you deduced that from the way I carried my medical bag or some such, Pons," I said, shrugging out of my voluminous overcoat and hanging my thick scarf up to dry. But I am cold, hungry and tired. I have no interest in parlor tricks."

Pons made some reply, which did not register. Finally, some fifteen minutes later, I was seated near the fire, a hot toddy in my hand and dry clothes upon my body. Feeling rather more companionable, I asked what entry had so absorbed Pons.

"Your temperament improves with your surroundings, Parker."

I snorted in response. "What strange crime from the past are you reading about now?"

"The affair of a Miss Emily Dimmock holds my attention this blustery evening."

"Dimmock." I racked my brain. "I don't recall that name."

"Not yet fourteen years gone by and the victim is already forgotten." He smiled wryly. "Would it help if I added that The Great Defender's representation of the accused gave a much needed boost to his

flagging career?"

"Sir Edward Marshall!" I exclaimed. "The Camden Town murder. Were you involved in the case?"

"I had only just started my practice a short time before Miss Dimmock met her unhappy end. But as an aspiring private enquiry agent, I followed the case closely and was present most days at the trial. Sir Edward, who had suffered a series of unfortunate reverses, was desperate to improve his fortunes. He brought a fire and passion to the defense of the dubious Mr. Robert Wood."

"Robert Wood was certainly less dubious than Miss Dimmock, a known prostitute!" I replied, somewhat warmed under the collar.

"Staunch moralist to the last, Parker." Pons was smiling slightly. "Do prostitutes not provide a valuable service? Would not many men who buy their wares, treating them poorly in the doing, act out against their wives or girlfriends if they had no other outlet?"

"Really, Pons, you go too far. You are intentionally goading me now."

"Always acknowledge the possibility, right or wrong, of a differing viewpoint, doctor. I have found that premise to be of inestimable value. Scotland Yard would do well to adhere to it even occasionally."

"Are you saying..." I was forestalled by Pons holding up both hands as if in supplication.

"Enough Parker, enough. We shall agree that Miss Dimmock was a young lady found with her throat slashed and Robert Wood was charged with her murder. Acceptable?"

Still somewhat unruffled, I could not deny the truth



More From the Notebooks of
 doctor lyndon parker - IV
 (c o n t .)



of his statement. "Very well, Pons. Did the case present any of those elements that intrigue you so?"

"The investigation focused on postcards. The murdered woman had a book of them, which was found in the room, several cards apparently ripped out carelessly and missing. The police believed that the killer took them, along with a few other items, such as a gold watch and a silver lighter. There was found another postcard that implied Miss Dimmock was to meet someone named 'Alice' at a local tavern at 8:15 on the evening she was murdered."

"The police believed that a woman killed her? I find that difficult to imagine."

Pons looked thoughtfully at his pipe on the table at his side but did not reach for it. "Do not underestimate the capability of a woman, Parker. And as a **medical man, you know that it takes** no great strength to slit a throat."

"But the official investigation was not limited to female suspects. Regardless, a client of Miss Dimmock's, Robert Wood, was arrested, tried and found not guilty. The police never came any closer to solving the matter."

I knew Pons too well to leave the unsaid question hanging between us. "You had a suspect?"

"I believe that the emphasis on the postcards was misplaced. Miss Dimmock lived with a man named Bert Shaw. The authorities were convinced of his alibi. To this day, I remain unconvinced. Further investigation of his travels on the day in question may well have yielded important evidence."

"Surely you informed the police, Pons."

Pons laughed at this. "You think of me with my current stature, Parker. Then I was an unknown begin-

ner with no accomplishments to my name. My opinions were neither solicited nor welcomed. The 'Camden Town Murder' is just one of many unsolved killings taking place in the seedier environs of London."

9 April, 1921

I have written up a draft of what I intend to call *The Adventure of the Circular Room*. Never have Pons and I investigated such a sinister matter.

20 April, 1921

"Did you see this letter in the *Herald*, Pons?" I asked, handing him the item of discussion. He briefly glanced at it and then tossed it aside without a word. "You don't think much of the suggestion, then?"

Solar Pons looked at me with the trace of a smile. "I believe that you are intentionally baiting me, Parker. So be it. No, I do not believe that 'optograms' will aid in finding the killer of Andrew Treacher."

I could not recall Pons ever commenting on optical photography. "Why is that?"

"Those who argue that optical photography is a science are misguided fools. A murderer's portrait cannot be obtained from the victim's retina. It is sheer folly."

"But Pons, there is a considerable body of work in support of the theory."

"What is a theory but an assertion not backed by proof? The Society For Forensic Medicine published research conducted by Dr. Vernois, a French scientist, completely debunking optical photography. No one has yet disproved his conclusions."

It was clear that Pons gave no credence to the idea,



More From the Notebooks of
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but I wished to further discuss it. "Come now, what harm can it do?"

"Really? Should we invite other charlatans into the case? Read the dead man's palm? Bring a phrenologist to the morgue? No, Parker. My illustrious predecessor said that deduction should be an exact science. Conventional methods are called for, not quackery."

I reclaimed my paper and settled back into my chair. "Conventional methods don't seem to have served the Yard in this matter."

Pons moved over to the fireplace and rested with his back against the mantel. "I believe that I am occasionally more successful than Scotland Yard in these matters," he said, archly. "I should not be surprised if Inspector Jamison does not call upon us in the coming days."

23 April, 1921

Inspector Jamison still has not come to ask Pons for help with the murder of Andrew Treacher, which remains unsolved according to the dailies. My friend has no other cases before him and would eagerly look into the crime.

4 May, 1921

Jamison finally visited our lodgings today, file in hand, to ask Pons for help in the Treacher case. Pons could not resist tweaking the inspector.

"I am shocked that the optograms did not reveal the killer's identity to you, Jamison."

"We are obliged to pursue all possible clues, Pons. We can't be selective on such matters like you can," He replied, obviously ruffled. "But this case has us in the dark."

Neither Jamison or myself understood what Pons muttered quietly, but I thought it sounded like "An environment I would think you are used to operating

in at the Yard." Louder, he said "Then more traditional methods will be needed. Andrew was found, dead of a knife wound, at the fish shop he owned with his brother, Matthew. It was Matthew who discovered the body."

Jamison's calm returned as he shifted his focus to the case, rather than Pons' comments. "It's plain as a pikestaff that he interrupted a robbery attempt. The cash box was pried open and emptied."

Pons meditated on his pipe for a moment before answering. "Your theory is that the robber was caught in the act and attacked Treacher, stabbing him in the chest?"

Jamison nodded his head in assent.

"You brought the knife?"

Jamison handed him a serrated knife, obviously used for gutting fish. "There were no prints of any kind."

Pons gingerly accepted the knife, commenting on the bloodstains on both sides of the blade. He moved over to his deal-topped chemical table and informed us that he would be busy for some hours. Jamison grunted at this rudeness and took his leave. I retired to the Diogenes for the evening, knowing that Pons would be completely absorbed in his task. He ignored my return and was still at work when I went upstairs to bed.

5 May, 1921

Pons was just finishing his breakfast when I joined him at the table. "Come Parker, you have time for a quick bite, then we go to join Inspector Jamison at the Treacher's establishment."

"You have found some clue?"



More From the Notebooks of
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There was a sparkle in his eye as he replied. "I dare say Jamison missed something obvious that should lead us to the killer." Pons could be infuriating when closing the net around a villain and he refused to elaborate on the cab ride to meet Jamison.

We were gruffly greeted by Jamison and more cordially by Matthew Treacher, brother of the dead man. Once inside, Pons carefully examined the array of knives and implements used in the daily business of the shop. He then took out the murder weapon and gazed at it.

"Jamison, does nothing strike you about this knife?"

"I couldn't help noticing that it is covered in blood, and thus it was used to kill Andrew Treacher," he answered, shortly.

Pons smiled. "You are not very cheerful this morning. Perhaps your disposition will improve as the day goes on."

He put down the knife, moved to the end of the room and turned to face us. At that moment, there was a pounding at the back door. "You'll excuse me, gentlemen. Morning deliveries." So saying, Matthew Treacher moved into the next room.

"Did you ask Matthew Treacher if this is his knife?"



"Of course, Pons. He said the business has had it for several years. It is my theory that the robber grabbed it from the table and killed Arthur with it. It was a convenient weapon."

Frank McSherry,
The Pontine Dossier

Pons' smile grew wider. "I think not, inspector. Look at the metal not touched by blood. That knife is no more two years old than I am. Detailed examination of the upper portion will reveal to you that it has been scraped to appear aged. Other areas indicate that the knife is at most two months old."

I peered over Jamison's shoulder as he more closely examined the weapon. Pons then quietly instructed me to stand next to the door and be on my guard. I complied.

Matthew Treacher reentered the room. "That's taken care of. Mister Pons, have you discovered anything new?"

"Indeed I have, Mister Treacher. I understand you've had this knife for some time."

He looked over at the item in question, still held by Jamison. "Yes sir. We use it for slicing certain parts of fish. I believe that my brother bought it a few years ago."

"Indeed." Pons moved slightly closer to the man. "I think not. This is a new knife. And it is of a different make than the others used here. I posit that you purchased it several months ago, aged it as best you could; and quite imperfectly, I might add, and used it to kill your brother."

"Why would you say such a thing?" Treacher was unflinching in the face of my friend's accusation.

"Perhaps because I know that your brother intended to sell his share of the business and move to America with his wife and young child. Since you are actually the minority partner, this could considerably change your situation."

M O R E F R O M T H E N O T E B O O K S O F D O C T O R
L Y N D O N P A R K E R - I V (C O N T .)

Treacher smiled. "I don't know where you heard such ridiculous rumors, but I assure you..."

He never finished his sentence. Instead, he lunged forward and grabbed a wicked-looking knife some ten inches in length. He waved it menacingly at Pons and Jamison, backing away from them. He must have forgotten my presence and when he partially turned towards the door, I delivered a solid right cross to his jaw. He crumpled to the floor, dropping the knife.

"Good work, Parker!" Solar Pons complimented me as he and Jamison moved to the body. The inspector added his praise as well.

Back in our lodgings an hour later, Pons expanded upon the details of the affair. "You see, Parker, I was not totally idle before Jamison came to us with the knife. I looked into Andrew Treacher's financial affairs and discovered that which I told his brother. I also did a little research regarding brother Matthew."

He adjusted his pipe and continued. "Matthew is a frequent loser at the track. I am certain that Jamison will find that the man was borrowing from the business. If Andrew Treacher sold his share of the business, his brother's financial misdeeds would come to light. Matthew killed his brother and staged it to look as if it was a burglary gone awry."

"Thus preventing the sale, covering up his actions, and effectively giving him full control of the business," I interjected.

"Exactly. I imagine that Andrew's young son will eventually own the family business. Who knows? Perhaps some day we shall stop in at an Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips."

16 February, 1921

A conversation over dinner gave me an insight into Pons' keen mind. I had said, "Pons, I am amazed at your ability to follow the correct path in a case based upon trivial clues."

"Ah, Parker, that is because you look at those seemingly small clues as separate and distinct. I daresay Scotland Yard has the same distressing tendency."

"Come now, Pons. Surely you don't mean to say that every clue is related to another. I know that to be untrue."

He laughed at this, "Of course not. But two trivialities that are related are significantly more important than one or the other." Apparently my face betrayed the dubiousness I felt about his statement so he changed tack. "Suppose I tell you that we are searching for a man who wears a pince-nez, is a Mason and walks with a cane. Now, if we see a man with a pince-nez perched upon his nose, we certainly do not believe that we have found our culprit."

It was my turn to laugh and I let out a snort, "Certainly not!"

He smiled and continued. "Many men in London use a pince-nez. However, if I also notice that the man is walking with a cane, we have considerably increased the possibility that he is our man: certainly by more than double, which would only be the case if half of the men with pince-nez's also used a cane. You agree?"

I could merely assent to this unassailable logic.

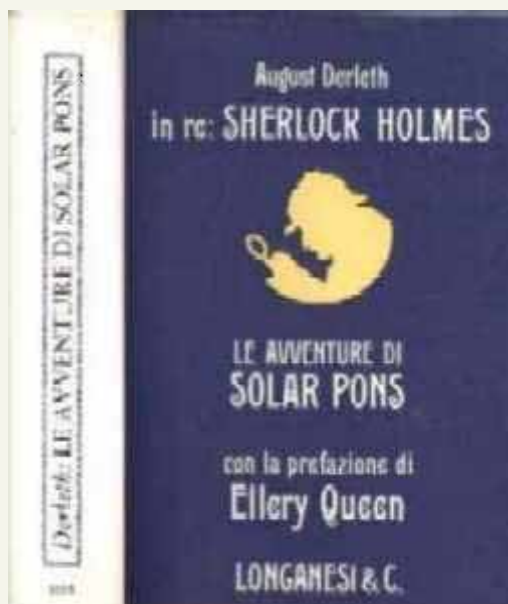
"If I then detect a Masonic pin hanging from his vest pocket, then surely it may be the man we seek, especially if geographical location is relevant. Three trivialities that alone give us only the merest suspicion, depending upon the size of the population we are

More From the Notebooks ... (cont)

dealing with. I daresay there are far more masons in London than Canterbury. But all three clues together make the individual worthy of further investigation."

"It's all absurdly simple once you explain it."

Pons sighed and turned his attention back to the meal. "I have trained myself to see what others do not and to evaluate, not dismiss, what I see. It is one of the fundamental precepts of my approach to being a private enquiry agent."



Looks quite a bit like Sherlock Holmes, eh?

"Both (Frederic) Dannay and Vincent Starrett inquired about Solar Pons and, learning that there were enough tales for a group, urged that they be put out in book form."

- August Derleth on the genesis of the first Pons collection.



August Derleth, seated in his office

Featured Case

(www.SolarPons.com)

The Adventure of the Camberwell Beauty

The Return of Solar Pons, 1958

Date - May, 1933



Frank Utpatel

The Case

Pons receives a request for assistance from the mysterious Doctor, who, though not named, is Fu Manchu. Karah, Manchu's young ward, has been kidnapped; apparently by Manchu's underworld rival, Baron Alfred Corvus. Fu Manchu's extensive criminal organization cannot find her, so he employs Pons.

Quotes

Pons: *I congratulate you, Parker! Plainly, married life has sharpened your wits and increased your faculty for observation.*

Parker: *I must say, your violin playing has not improved, Pons.*

Comments

Pons and Parker had crossed paths with Doctor Fu Manchu twice before this case. The first meeting was in September, 1923, in *The Seven Sisters*. Fu Manchu was a prominent figure in the case. The Doctor had also assisted Pons in the affair of *The Praed Street Irregulars* in April, 1926.

In *The Camberwell Beauty*, Parker does not seem to know Fu Manchu. He asks Pons if the man is a criminal and what manner of man he is. On the surface, this seems impossible. Surely the experiences of *The Seven Sisters*, and the inevitable conversations that must have followed it, left Parker with at least a superficial knowledge of Fu Manchu.

It is also a stretch when Pons says that the Doctor saved his life in *The Seven Sisters*. That is true, but it was one of Fu Manchu's own men that was garroting him at the time, so not too much credit can be given.

The explanation lies in the dates of the stories. *The Camberwell Beauty* was written in 1952 and referenced *The Seven Sisters*. However, the latter tale did not appear until 1965. So Derleth referenced an as-yet unwritten adventure. He then wrote up that adventure some thirteen years later. The details of *The Seven Sisters* are not completely consistent with the earlier story. Or at least we can say that the latter raises some questions. The composition dates of the story answer those questions.

The Praed Street Irregulars is not even mentioned in *The Seven Sisters*. This story was not written until 1961 and is likely that the title had not yet occurred to Derleth, thus there is no reference contained in the 1952 story.

It is interesting to note that at the conclusion of this case, Pons knows that Fu Manchu resides somewhere in Limehouse; that there is an entrance to his underground lair from the Thames; and he has the Doctor's telephone number. While Fu Manchu could certainly change his circumstances if needed, Pons would seem to have some very useful knowledge if he were to find himself pitted against the Doctor in a future encounter.

Parker comments on Pons' lack of skill in playing the violin. There are a few other references in the Pontine Canon that indicate the detective has no real skill with the instrument. It seems quite possible that Pons toys with the instrument solely because his 'illustrious predecessor' was quite accomplished on it.

This is the only mention of Corvus. It seems odd that a man who was powerful enough to rival the Doctor did not directly cross paths with Pons. Perhaps there is an untold tale somewhere in Doctor Parker's notebooks involving the Baron.

This case offers us another example of the Pontine Principle. Fu Manchu and his organization assume that Baron Corvus is responsible. Parker blindly follows this assumption. Pons assumes the opposite: that Lord Corvus did not kidnap Kerah. It is this approach that leads to his solving the case. We see many examples of this approach throughout the Pontine Canon. Pons makes a basic assumption that differs from the other principal parties in the case, whether the police or the client. He turns out to be correct; the others wrong.

Wizard, vampire, Sherlock Holmes and evil mastermind? By Bob Byrne

The unnamed Doctor in the Pons stories is of course, the nefarious Fu Manchu, though the Derleth version is a bit less evil than the original creation of Sax Rohmer.

Unlike Pons, there have been a multitude of Fu Manchu movies over the years. Boris Karloff, Warner Oland and Peter Sellers (yep, Inspector Clouseau himself) are among those who have graced the big screen as the mandarin menace.

Christopher Lee, who starred in horror films for Hammer in the nineteen fifties and is still appearing in huge hits nearly fifty years later (Star Wars and Lord of the Rings franchises), is well known to Sherlock Holmes fans, having portrayed the great detective, his brother Mycroft and Sir Henry Baskerville!

Lee also portrayed the devil doctor five times in the nineteen sixties. As the picture below shows, Lee, as British an actor as has ever been, certainly makes a fine-looking Fu Manchu.



A Fairlie Odd Business

Roger Johnson, PSI, BSI, NMC

August Derleth wrote seventy-four short stories about Solar Pons and Dr Parker, plus the brief jottings gathered as "From the Notebooks of Dr Lyndon Parker" and "More from Dr Parker's Notebooks", and just two short novels, *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey* and *Terror over London*. As Bob Byrne pointed out in the first issue of *The Solar Pons Gazette*, Pons is "Not a Novel Character".

Four of the short stories, categorised by Derleth as "Solar Pons, off-trail", take the detective into mysterious realms beyond the everyday. "The Adventure of the Snitch in Time" and "The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus" first appeared in book form in *A Praed Street Dossier*, though the other two had to wait for posthumous publication in *The Final Adventures of Solar Pons*. All were written by Derleth from plots devised by Mack Reynolds. After the author's death there was some dissent as to whether the first two – the only ones then known – should be included in *The Solar Pons Omnibus*. James Turner, managing editor at Arkham House, decided against. As Jon L Lellenberg states: "Mr Turner had his reasons. One was his decision, reinforced by Allen Hubin's introduction to *The Chronicles*, that the Pontine Canon consisted of sixty-eight tales, and no more. A second reason was his assertion that the two collaborations were largely the work of Reynolds and not closely related to the chronological Canon." Understandably this decision was opposed by "a number of Praed Street Irregulars, and a small campaign began to persuade Mycroft & Moran to include these two stories." As a result, "The Adventure of the Snitch in Time" and "The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus" were added as an appendix to the *Omnibus*, which was eventually published in 1982.

But did August Derleth himself consider these collaborations to be a part of the Canon? Introducing

"The Adventure of the Nosferatu" and "The Adventure of the Extra-Terrestrial", Peter Ruber quotes Derleth's response to an enquiry from Anthony Boucher: "[The Snitch in Time] is not apt to appear in any [Solar Pons] collection... it is rather more of a spoof than the other stories." Even so, he did choose to put the two off-trail adventures into that charming volume of miscellanea *A Praed Street Dossier*, so perhaps he would eventually have given them a place in the *Omnibus*.

In his introduction to "More from Dr Parker's Notebooks", Peter Ruber says, "Excerpts from Dr Parker's Notebooks first appeared in the 1965 Candlelight Press chapbook *Praed Street Papers*, a collection of essays August Derleth wrote to document the beginnings and history of Solar Pons." Mr Ruber adds that a much expanded version of the Notebooks was subsequently published in *A Praed Street Dossier*, and continues, "Sometime between the publication of *A Praed Street Dossier* and his death in 1971, Derleth recorded a few additional notebook entries which we present here for the first time. Very possibly they were written for Luther Norris' *Praed Street Journal*, the official fan publication of The Praed Street Irregulars. The following text was obtained from a carbon of the manuscript."

Well, Mr Ruber was himself the proprietor of the Candlelight Press, which published *Praed Street Papers*, so of course he knows about "From the Notebooks of Dr Lyndon Parker". He could have saved himself the search for that carbon copy of "More from Dr Parker's Notebooks", however. These "few additional notebook entries" were indeed written for "the official fan publication of The Praed Street Irregulars" – which, was not called *Praed Street Journal* but *The Pontine Dossier* – and were actually published in the 1971 issue (New Series Vol. 1, No. 2). Moreover, August Derleth had

A Fairlie Odd Business . . . cont .

already contributed "Some Further Jottings from the Notebooks of Dr Lyndon Parker" to the previous issue of *The Pontine Dossier*, and these, I think, have not yet been published in any book (unless, perhaps, in *The Original Text Solar Pons Omnibus*).

The Final Adventures also features the first publication of a short novel, *Terror over London*, though that is not what August Derleth called it: the manuscript (or rather, I suspect, typescript) is, according to Mr Ruber, entitled *Mr Solar Pons of Praed Street* – a much less evocative name. Derleth refers in his correspondence to *The Adventure of the Clubs*, which is clearly the same story. Again the title is inferior to the one chosen by Peter Ruber.

Like the rest of *The Final Adventures*, apart from "More from Dr Parker's Notebooks", *Terror over London* is unfinished, in the sense that it was never revised and given that final polish that marks the best – which is to say, most – of August Derleth's work. He was a hack, as he freely admitted, but so was Charles Dickens, and, like Dickens, Derleth was far from being *merely* a hack. He could be a hasty writer, and some of his early horror stories, especially, were clearly written for money and for little else. Mainly, though, he wrote because he loved to write and because he loved what he wrote about. That affection shines through his very best work, the regional sagas that can rank with Hardy's Wessex novels, and it's evident throughout the tales of Solar Pons, in an output that spanned more than forty years.

Even in its unpolished state *Terror over London* is a hugely enjoyable thriller, combining high adventure with sound detection. There may be a touch of John Buchan about it. The flavour of Sax Rohmer is strong. The influence of Arthur Conan Doyle, of course, is unmistakable. But, as always, you are conscious that this is not an exploit of Richard Hannay, or Nayland Smith, or even of Sherlock Holmes.

Our protagonist is Solar Pons, and he is very much his own man. It's impossible to say how much better the novel might have been if Derleth had revised and refined it.

The one Pons novel that saw print during the author's lifetime is *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey*, and there is a marked contrast. Peter Ruber considers *Terror over London* "much more exciting and faster paced", which is certainly true, though over all I consider *Mr Fairlie* superior. We can surely agree, however, that it's quite an achievement to place the same leading characters credibly in two such stories, the one an outrageously entertaining melodrama of espionage and a bid for world domination, the other a mystery that engages the reader's sympathy for characters who are real, flawed human beings. But each narrative is ingeniously plotted, offering a baffling mystery with a logical solution: consequently Solar Pons and Dr Parker are perfectly at home in both.

Even if Derleth had been able to revise *Terror over London*, the action would still, I suspect, predominate, with character and place painted in with broad strokes. It's that sort of story. *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey* is different, and the difference exemplifies another of the author's great talents.

The early and late chapters of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* overflow with the authentic flavour of Transylvania, the legend-rich "land beyond the forest", yet Stoker, as many know, never visited Eastern Europe at all. He derived all his information from books, and, perhaps, from conversations with the traveller and philologist Arminius Vambery. Stoker did at least cross the Atlantic, with Henry Irving's company, and drew on his American memories in the novel *The Shoulder of Shasta*. August Derleth never left the United States; in fact he rarely left his home town of Sauk City, Wisconsin. Yet in the chronicles of Solar Pons, especially in the later ac-

A Fairlie Odd Business . . . cont.

counts, he often wrote so convincingly of specific places in England that even a British reader could believe that he was writing from personal experience.

At first his knowledge was drawn mainly from fiction, but before embarking on "The Adventure of the Black Narcissus", Pons's first recorded exploit, he sensibly invested in a copy of Baedeker's *London and Its Environs*. By 1968 his reference collection on English history and topography numbered, as he said, "close to two hundred works, ranging from street and provincial guides, to such comparatively recent works as A J P Taylor's *English History: 1914-1945*, Eilert Ekwall's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, Paul Ashbee's *The Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain*, the Allen-Maxwell *The British Isles in Color*, and John Betjeman's *An American's Guide to English Parish Churches*". It's impressive evidence that he took his writing seriously, and in Peter Ruber's words: "Derleth's descriptive narrative of the locales and streets where Pons and his associate Dr Lyndon Parker pursued their cases, were surprising [*sic*] authentic in detail."

And it wasn't just London. The Cotswold Hills, the rugged coast of Cornwall, the little town of Rye in Sussex... and the several locations of *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey*... They're all depicted with a thoroughly engaging reality.

August Derleth did not rely solely on books for his information about Britain. "For many years," says Mr Ruber, "British writer John Metcalf read over early drafts of dozens of Solar Pons stories and contributed comments and insight to authenticate them even further." The writing of *Mr Fairlie*, said Derleth, "required descriptive guides – some of the *Little Red Guides*, supplied by G Ken Chapman – of areas around Frome, Somerset, Scotland, and Wales – and application to Chapman and Michael Harrison for specific details of

idiom."

Idiom has an interesting part in the story behind the stories. Peter Ruber observes that John Metcalf "often made suggestions about changing Dr Parker's quaint blend of American colloquialism and Anglo-Saxon English. This Derleth was loath to modify, explaining once in a letter to fan Robert Pattrick, who created a chronology of the adventures, that if the stories were written to conform rigidly with accepted British usage, they would instantly be rejected by American magazine editors."

Think about that for a moment. The editors would happily accept stories set in Britain, and narrated in the first person by a British character, but they would reject any serious attempt to make the idioms accurately British. As a naively enthusiastic young British reader I found that a pretty astonishing attitude, but I've learned over the years that the popular media in the United States are far more insular than their equivalents in other Anglophone cultures. George Miller's film *Mad Max* (aka *The Road Warrior*) was dubbed for its American release on the grounds that audiences in the USA wouldn't be able to cope with Mel Gibson's Australian accent. (Who was it said that no one ever went broke by underestimating the intelligence of the American public?)

Editor's Note: it was H. L. Mencken.

So Dr Parker's accounts are written, as Michael Harrison observes, "in a style full of Americanisms". August Derleth remarked that, being trained in the American idiom, he himself was "peculiarly blind to the flaws in Dr Parker's prose", which he admitted was "neither really British nor fully American".

Based on the occasional use of American idioms, Mr Harrison's monograph in *The Casebook of Solar Pons* convincingly argues that Parker had spent much of his life in the United States – which is exactly the sort of game that devotees of the Holme-

A Fairlie Odd Business . . . cont .

sian Canon have enjoyed for nearly a century, and for which the Pontine equivalent offers yet more opportunity.

But of course the original *Solar Pons Omnibus* was not compiled and edited by its author. James Turner engaged the English writer Basil Copper for the task, and the result was not what most members of the Praed Street Irregulars had expected. "It came to light," says Jon Lellenberg, "that the text of the Pontine Canon was being subjected to two kinds of 'editing' by Messrs. Turner and Copper. The first kind was stylistic in nature. Such spelling variations as 'inquiry/enquiry', 'Pons'/Pons's', and 'color/colour' were scattered throughout stories written over a thirty-year period, and Mr Turner had decided to impose the British variant in all cases as being commensurate with Derleth's preferences at the time of his death. This was unsettling enough, but it appeared that the alteration of the text would not stop there."

Since Derleth had asked Ken Chapman to vet *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey*, replacing American usage with British, James Turner decided to apply the same process to the rest of the Pontine chronicles. "It was at this point," says Mr Lellenberg, "that tempers began to rise. It was one thing for an author to initiate this practice, the Irregulars asserted, and quite another for someone else to impose it retroactively, over the author's dead body... This kind of editing tended to efface the development of an author's style and skill, when such development allowed him to be seen whole."

Moreover, various "factual errors" were to be "corrected" in the texts. "Gone, in other words," says Lellenberg, "will be as many as possible of the inaccuracies, inconsistencies, anachronisms, and the like that have been the making and joy of Sherlockian and Pontine scholarship..."

The Solar Pons stories have always thrived upon an unusually close relationship with their readers, but that is now in jeopardy. Did Dr Parker live much of his early life in the United States? Who will know or care when an Americanism like 'stoop' – made famous in Pontine scholarship by Michael Harrison's introduction to *The Casebook* – has been replaced by the British 'porch'?"

The irony is that Basil Copper loves the Solar Pons stories just as much as do the Praed Street Irregulars. As a writer, though, his affection and admiration are differently expressed. *The Solar Pons Omnibus*, published by Arkham House in 1982, is a lovely two-volume edition, a pleasure to handle and a treat to read. The cases are presented in order of their occurrence, according to the chronology begun by Robert Patrick and completed by August Derleth. But... there's no indication that the texts have been altered at all, nor is there any mention of the first magazine publications. Perhaps this is what Derleth would have wished. More likely it isn't.

Basil Copper was authorised by Derleth's estate to write more adventures of Solar Pons and Dr Parker, and he took great pleasure in doing so. His preferred length is the novella rather than the short story, but he captures the style and the flavour of the originals with striking fidelity. Curiously, though, none of his tales have been published by Mycroft & Moran or by Arkham House. The novel *Solar Pons versus the Devil's Claw* was listed as forthcoming under the latter imprint, but eventually saw publication twenty-five years on, from a small British publisher, Sarob Press, who also put out *Solar Pons: The Final Cases*. When I read the novel I could understand why Arkham House hadn't, in the end, published it. It's a long way from being top class Pons – or top class Copper, for that matter. The characters are largely unconvincing, the plot is confused, and, very noticeably, there's no real sense of *place*.

A Fairlie Odd Business . . . cont .

Place, as you'll have gathered, was increasingly important in August Derleth's Pontine chronicles, and the narratives almost invariably unfold in real towns, real cities, real villages – real and recognisable. The locations of Basil Copper's tales are frequently fictitious, and sometimes stereotyped. The events of *Solar Pons versus the Devil's Claw* might as well be played out in a theatrical set.

Most of Copper's stories, though, are very good indeed. When I first met him, I congratulated him on the accuracy with which he had captured the not-quite-British quality of the originals, and he rather sadly explained that the editors at Pinnacle Books had, against his wishes, Americanised many of his deliberately chosen idiomatic British words and expressions. In a curious sort of mirror image of what happened to August Derleth's stories, Basil Copper's have since been published in the Angli-

The Walden West Festival 2007

It looks really good this year for Solar Pons fans. *James Roberts* is creating a skit based on a Solar Pons story. Come to Sauk City to find out which one and to share in the fun!

The Lord Warden, *Dr. George Vanderburgh*, from Shelburne, Canada, will be with us.

The WWF will be held earlier than usual this year on the weekend of September 22nd and 23rd. Activities include a guided tour of the cemetery by August Derleth himself! A ride in the country to an apple orchard for apple pie is always a must who love the Derleth countryside views. There is always a night visit to Derleth's graveside where his fans read poetry by candlelight on Saturday night. Out-of-towners are invited to a party later at Kay Price's house where we tell ghost stories in front of the fireplace.

The guest speaker this year is *Jerry Apps* who took a creative writing class from Derleth. He went on to become a well-known author of several books that are reminiscent of Aug's nature writings. To learn more about Jerry and his latest book check out his website at www.jerryapps.com.

If you have any questions about the WWF check our website at www.derleth.org or call *Kay Price* at 608-643-3242. We recommend that you call for reservations to stay at the Cedarberry Inn in Sauk City.



Visitors to Walden West Fest 2007 will have the opportunity to see August Derleth's home, Place of Hawks

A Fairlie Odd Business . . . cont.

cised form in which he wrote them. If their first published versions seem very close in style and flavour to the original texts of Derleth's tales, the "definitive" versions are much closer to the contents of *The Solar Pons Omnibus*.

More recently, Peter Ruber compiled and edited *The Original Text Solar Pons Omnibus* for the Battered Silicon Dispatch Box Press, publishing under licence as Mycroft & Moran – and of course it's only right that the Pontine Canon should be available again as it came from the pen or typewriter of August Derleth. And do I own a copy? No, I don't. Even though the pound-dollar exchange rate is currently more favourable to the British than it has been for a long time, the massive two-volume set is just far too expensive.

So for the time being my curiosity on one point must remain unsatisfied. You see, there was one textual change made for the Arkham House *Omnibus* that I rather think Derleth would have approved

of. I've no intention of spoiling things for anyone who has yet to read *Mr Fairlie's Final Journey*, so I'll just say that in the original text a certain fact is established right at the beginning of the novel, which is then not mentioned at all until the very end – where it's presented as a surprise to the reader and to Dr Parker, but not to Solar Pons, who has deduced it from the observation of trifles.

Clearly August Derleth changed his mind while he was writing the story and forgot to delete the original reference. Well, Basil Copper noticed, and did delete that reference in the *Omnibus* text. The story is certainly the better for it, because the reader isn't constantly wondering what became of a certain person.

I'd make a small bet that the original reference remains in *The Original Text Solar Pons Omnibus*, but I rather hope that Peter Ruber had the artistic good sense to remove it.

1 All quotations from Jon L Lellenberg are taken from "The Humbugging of Solar Pons" as by Ebenezer Snawley, PSI, in *The Pontine Dossier*, volume 3, no. 2 (1977). Mr Lellenberg notes: "Mr Hubin wishes me to state that [limiting the Canon to sixty-eight stories] was an oversight on his part, and that in his opinion the Pontine Canon properly contains seventy tales."

2 All quotations from Peter Ruber are taken from *The Final Adventures of Solar Pons* by August Derleth, edited and introduced by Peter Ruber (Mycroft & Moran, 1998).

3 "The Beginning of Solar Pons" in *A Praed Street Dossier* by August Derleth (Mycroft & Moran, 1968).

4 "The Sources of the Tales" in *A Praed Street Dossier* by August Derleth (Mycroft & Moran, 1968).

5 "(Cuthbert) Lyndon Parker" by Michael Harrison, in *The Casebook of Solar Pons* by August Derleth (Mycroft & Moran, 1965).

6 "Concerning Dr Parker's Background" in *A Praed Street Dossier* by August Derleth (Mycroft & Moran, 1968).



Noted Sherlockian and Praed Street Irregular Roger Johnson was a frequent contributor to the *Pontine Dossier* and is President of the Solar Pons Society of London.

From the pontine Dossier

BEING AN EXAMINATION OF THE
 PONSIAN AND HOLMESIAN SECRET
 DEDUCTIVE SYSTEMS

Analysed by A. E. Van Vogt



It is very likely that one of the electrifying qualities of the Sherlock Holmes stories was, and is, the great detective's ability to deduce revealing truths from a few clues. Solar Pons, like Sherlock Holmes before him, was a sharp observer in the , Holmesian tradition -at least an ability equal to that of Holmes has been claimed in the chronicles of Dr. Parker on behalf of Pons. It would take too long in this brief account to give my favorite detailed example from the Sherlock Holmes adventure, *The Sign of the Four*, when Dr. Watson hands Sherlock a watch, and asks him to make deductions from it. (They are in the highest Holmesian tradition, stunningly brilliant.)

In Solar Pons' *The Adventure of the Mazarine Blue*, we have a shorter but equally startling set of deductions. Dr. Parker says (as it is worded), 'testily', 'I suppose you have found the murderer.' Pons reply is: 'We shall see when we have had a look at a heavy man of some five and a half feet in height, well past middle age, bearded, and very probably a lepidopterist.' That, ladies and gentlemen, is in the best tradition of Ponsian observation and deduction. Reading such, we feel ourselves to be in the presence of a master of the genre.

Now, these acute observations have always been of considerable auctorial interest to me. And so, I propose to examine here this evening, not exhaustively -I hasten to say- what goes on in the brain of a person (Pons, or Holmes, or any lesser being) who is capable of making astounding analyses on that level of genius. At this period of time -eighty years after Doyle first wrote about Holmes, and nearly forty years since Derleth began his pastiches - the first questions we are entitled to ask are: Are such things actually possible? And, does deduction of that noble quality relate to reality? Having asked

such questions, we discover that they can only be answered if we put them aside, and go into further details.

Two more questions at this point. Do men observe according to a special talent with which they are born? Or -and this is question two- do they act according to training? Inherited ability? Or acquired ability? To begin with I wish to point out: that Solar Pons stories are written in the best of the original Holmesian format. There are no oddities like *The Sign of the Four*; Dr. Parker in his chronicles moved unerringly to the basic short format. He tells briefly the story of the coming of the client. The mystery is presented. Then there is the visit to the scene. And finally the rapid climax as Solar Pons draws his conclusions, and confronts the murderer.

As Dr. Parker reports it, Pons makes no mistakes. When he deduces, it is an immediate fact. There is no time for shoddy guesswork. Holmes made occasional mistakes, but Pons is unerringly correct the first time. The story moves in a straight line to its inevitable conclusion. How can Solar Pons - and Holmes usually- be so right?

On examination, we observe that both men are possessed of an unusual store of detailed knowledge. In *The Adventure of the Six Silver Spiders*, Pons asks Dr. Parker, 'Have you ever heard of the library of the Count de Fortsas?' Parker has not, but Pons knows all about it. In *The Adventure of the Lost Locomotive*, Inspector Jamison brings over a portly man, who offers Pons his hand. Shaking it, Pons says, 'Sir Ernest McVeigh, I believe. Director of the Great Northern Railway...' Now, I ask you, how many of us, confronted by the president of the Southern Pacific or the Great Northern, would recognize him? In still another story, Solar Pons is able to make a

Illustration by Roy Hunt

B E I N G A N E X A M I N A T I O N . . . c o n t .

deduction because he knows the family name of the Serbian royal family. Are such extremes of special knowledge possible? Yes, yes, they are.

Offhand, I myself could tell you the family names of three or four of the European royal lines of yesterday. I have a further comparison. A few years ago, I was visited by a then eighteen year old nephew. Driving with him was a revelation. He knew every make and year of car that we passed on the street. But there is another, more interesting (than information) aspect to deduction. When we see a trained man thinking on his feet, we see an astonishing moment-by-moment performance. What he does is he consults an inner yardstick.

I have a personal experience with a similar type of reaction in myself. I myself operate on systematic thought in several areas. When somebody talks to me about those matters, I soon find myself examining his remarks in relation to my system. Whatever question I ask relates entirely to my theories, and not in any way whatsoever to casual impulses of the moment. You can see that we are now within sight of our quarry: the nature of the deductions that Solar Pons and, earlier, Sherlock Holmes, made so brilliantly. Both men undoubtedly possessed a natural motivation, or drive, to be interested in endless details of trivia. Once a datum got into their memory, it was never forgotten. And both men consulted an inner yardstick of judgment and evaluation- consisting of no more than three or four questions. With those questions firmly in mind- and always asked- they move confidently through the format.

Naturally, you will wish me to tell you what those questions might be. Before I do so, let me hasten to say that you are probably not listening to a definitive evaluation. It could be that what is described in this paper will serve as a guidepost, or even an incentive, to sharper brains than mine- which needed only to have a direction indicated to them (a new

thought perhaps) - to produce an even more precise analysis than I am now presenting. If this should happen, I sincerely hope they will send me a copy of their additional and better thought.

In my limited fashion, I have come up with the following set of questions. Future detectives and detective writers take note. As I see it, Solar Pons, when he gazes out of his window at a prospective client (and makes a deduction about that person) or later, when he examines a clue, silently, first and before anything else, asks himself: **(1)** Exactly who or what am I looking at?

'Oh, come now,' you say. 'Surely even Dr. Parker can be trusted to notice at a glance that the oncoming visitor is a young woman, as in "*The Adventure of the Circular Room*".' But Solar Pons observed that it was indeed a young woman, and added, 'It is evident that you are a trained nurse, for your cuffs show under your jacket -'

In asking himself the question, 'Exactly who or what am I looking at?,' Solar Pons, in short, noticed that it was a young woman wearing her nurse's uniform- and from this drew the conclusion that she had come because of something that had happened in the course of her professional work... Had the matter been personal, we can trust a woman (unless there is reason for haste, which would show in other ways) to change from her uniform into a nice dress. Under such circumstances her profession would have been irrelevant. The second question follows out of comments I have made earlier.

(2) Is there anything here (meaning in this circumstance, or what I am looking at- the person, or the object) that requires special information, and if so, what? In '*The Adventure of the Broken Chessman*,' Solar Pons glances out of the window of his Praed Street flat, and says, 'Ah, we are about to have a visitor of some importance.' How did he know, and

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how did he identify the visitor a few moments later as M. Perenin, the Russian consul? First of all, the visitor was well-dressed, and carried a walking stick and all that, but the revealing and identifying item was the ensign-that is how what I would have called the crest is named- on his motor car. By having the knowledge of what this particular ensign (or crest) meant, Solar Pons unerringly identified his caller as a 'visitor of some importance,' and then named him.

So, when he silently asked himself the question about special information, those were his impeccable answers. The third question which the detective unquestionably has to ask of himself in that secret consulting of his systematic thought (which all good detectives either do, or they're not good craftsmen) is, **(3)** Is there anything here that is obvious?

And, if so, what? For my example of this one, I will draw on the test which I have already mentioned. In *The Sign of the Four*, Dr. Watson hands Sherlock Holmes a watch and asks him to tell him something about the owner. The obvious thing that Holmes observes is that the initials carved on the watch are H.W. He therefore- since the watch was handed to him by Dr. Watson (who has been carrying it, and clearly owns it) - draws the obvious conclusion that the W. stands for Watson. And since H. is not Dr. Watson's first name, Holmes makes the obvious deduction that it belonged to another member of the Watson family.

The fourth question should be obvious to all persons who are deductively inclined. It is simply: **(4)** In what I am looking at-person or thing- have I noticed everything? The corollary to that question would be, 'Did I notice something but dismissed it as unimportant, perhaps by jumping to a conclusion about it based on some preconception?' You will all readily agree that that question is so obvious it does not need any examples. I conclude my little analysis

with an unhappy admission that in the wee hours of last night I thought of a fifth question-which seemed so obvious that I failed to write it down (and have forgotten it) - and with the hope that in the future when you reread your Solar Pons you will gain additional pleasure as you mentally keep pace with him, and silently ask yourself the same questions that he undoubtedly did-which I have now set down for future generations to Ponsder over, if I may be permitted a Puns.

This article appeared in the 1971 Annual issue (Volume 1, Number 2) of *The Pontine Dossier*.



A. E. van Vogt
1912 - 2000

Alfred Elton van Vogt was one of the greatest of all science fiction writers. In 1996 he received the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America for his body of work. Noted authors in the field such as Philip K. Dick, Harlan Ellison and Frederick Pohl were fans of his writing.

van Vogt was a fan of Solar Pons and wrote a nice tribute for *The Pontine Dossier* after August Derleth died. Derleth's Arkham House imprint published van Vogt's novel, *Slan*. He passed away in 2000, a victim of Alzheimer's Disease.

van Vogt was also an early contributor to one of my favorite fantasy series, the *Thieves World* books, edited by Robert Lynn Aspiron and Lynn Abbey.



The Real Story Behind The *Notebook's* Merstham tunnel Mystery

By Bob Byrne

'From the Notebooks of Dr. Lyndon Parker' can be found in *A Praed Street Dossier*. The *Notebook* entry for December 14, 1919, features a discussion between Pons and Inspector Jamison regarding a woman's body found in the Merstham Tunnel.



Mary Money

The basis for this snippet is a real life murder committed in 1905. August Derleth borrowed the specifics of the killing for his entry and then offered a speculative solution involving blackmail. Though the real killer was never caught, there is no doubt that Derleth used the sad story of Mary Money for this *Notebook* entry.

WARNING: SPOILERS FOLLOW

Pons	1905
The corpse of a young woman is found in Merstham Tunnel	The corpse of a young woman is found in Merstham Tunnel
The body was mangled by a train, one leg nearly severed	The body was mangled by a train, one leg severed
The girl, Angela Morell, was a clerk in a dairy	The girl, Mary Money, was a clerk in a dairy
She was of good reputation	She was of good reputation
She left her lodgings, saying she was going for a short walk and was killed shortly thereafter	She left her work place, saying she was going for a short walk and was killed shortly thereafter
A piece of a veil was found in her mouth	A scarf was found stuffed down her throat
She was likely gagged and pushed out of the moving train	She was gagged and pushed out of the moving train
The killer was never identified or caught	The killer was never identified or caught

Elements of the Merstham Tunnel Mystery appeared in a better-known detective story: *The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans*, featuring Sherlock Holmes. The body of Cadogan West was disposed of in a tunnel; for all appearances, having been thrown from a train. However, the killer had done so as a ruse, the murder not occurring on the train at all.

It is quite likely that Doyle discussed the Mary Money killing at one of the meetings of the Crimes Club, since a fellow member was very interested in the case. Thus, Doyle likely had access to more information and analysis than most, laying the groundwork for incorporation of this crime into a Holmes tale.



Foreword:
The Return of Solar Pons
Edgar W. Smith (April 7, 1958)



There is no Sherlockian worthy of his salt who has not, at least once in his life, taken Dr. Watson's pen in hand and given himself to the production of a veritable Adventure. I wrote my own first pastiche at the age of fourteen, about a stolen gem that turned up, by some unaccountable coincidence, in the innards of a fish which Sherlock Holmes was serving to his client in the privacy of his rooms; and I wrote my second when I was fifty-odd, about the definitive and never-more-to-be-seen-in-this-world disappearance of Mr. James Phillimore in a matrix of newly poured cement. It would be difficult to say which conception was the cornier of the two; but the point does not concern me too greatly, after all, because Mark Twain wrote a pastiche once, when he was somewhere between the ages of fourteen and fifty-odd, which was considerably cornier than either of them. The point that does concern me – and it is a point that all of us who are tempted to emulation should bear in mind is that the writing of a pastiche is compulsive and inevitable: it is, the psychologists would say, a wholesome manifestation of the urge that is in us all to return again to the times and places we have loved and lost; an evidence, specifically, of our happily unrepresed desire to make ourselves at one with the Master of Baker Street and all his works – and to do this not only receptively, but creatively as well.

Besides Mark Twain and myself, the roster of those who have felt the impulse to produce a coin in counterfeit of the pure Watsonian gold includes such diverse seekers after the truth as Bret Harte, Agatha Christie, O. Henry, Anthony Berkeley, John Kendrick Bangs, Dr. A. Conan Doyle, Maurice Leblanc, J.M. Barrie, and practically every normal fourteen-year-old boy who has had the proper upbringing and an ade-

quate supply of vitamins. Some of the product of this labor of love is good, and some of it is very bad indeed. It is the writers of high literary repute, by some quirk of fate, and those among them in particular who have turned to outright parody, whose product ranks in lowest esteem. Dr. Doyle, for example – one of the great historical novelists of his time, and a giant in many realms – did no more than scratch feebly at the surface with the two short passages in a lighter vein which he attempted. (*The Field Bazaar* in *The Student*, of Edinburgh University, in 1896; and *How Watson Learned the Trick*, in *The Book of the Queen's Doll's House*, in 1924), and his shortcoming is all the more notable because of the opportunity he had, in his capacity as Dr. Watson's literary agent for more than forty years, to learn how Watson actually *did* the trick. Doyle's work falls below the standards attained by many who wrote from a longer perspective, and without their tongues too obtrusively in their cheeks; it is not to be compared – to cite one instance among few – with that of Vincent Starrett, whose *The Unique Hamlet* stands as a classic in the true genre of the pastiche.

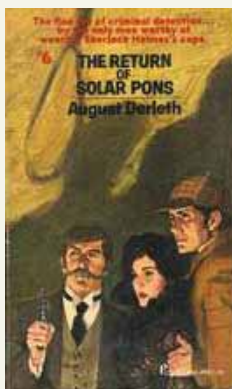
The fact remains, in any event, that not many of the essays made at simulation of the Saga have brought satisfaction to any but the essayers themselves. The writing of pastiches is its own, and usually its only, reward; and this, for the true amateur and dilettante, is altogether as it should be. But there have been occasions when a more ambitious writer has taken it upon himself, in grim and feckless bravado, to launch a highly organized attack upon the whole front of the Sacred Writings, with the acknowledged intent of invading them, planting his banner in their very midst, and pushing his way to stand boldly at Watson's sainted side. This, I think, is carrying good, clean fun too far.

Just such an effort as this to enlarge the Saga was made, a few years ago, by Adrian Conan Doyle, the agent's son. What he did was to produce twelve sto-

ries, some of them deriving putatively from the manuscripts in the tin dispatch-box in the vaults of the bank of Cox & Co., at Charing Cross, which he proceeded to offer to the public, straight-faced, as Canonical and heaven-sent. He worked at first with John Dickson Carr, that excellent exponent of the locked room and the unlocked solution, but disagreements arose between them, and the last six of the stories were by the Scion alone. The book containing the stories, when it was published, was called *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*, but to the cognoscenti it is known as *Sherlock Holmes Exploited*; the stories, in the vernacular of the Baker Street Irregulars, are not denominated as pastiches, but rather (shunning the crude term "forgeries"), as simulacra. It is evidence of the appraisal given them, to put it in its mildest terms, that they have not been subsumed into the Canon.

That honor of subsumption came closest to being conferred in the instance of one pastiche which attained to such rarefied heights that it was published, in a national magazine, under the by-line of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself. The history of this episode – certainly one of the great biblio-bobbles of the century, if not of all time – is worth detailing.

The rumor had spread during the years of the Second World War that the manuscript of a new Sherlock Holmes story had been discovered among the papers left by Dr. Doyle at the time of his death in 1930. Hesketh Pearson quoted excerpts from it in his *Conan Doyle: His Life and Art*, in 1943, and the Irregulars clamored for its publication in full. The Doyle estate pleaded reluctance on the score of "unworthiness," but when the war was over, and the market for literary merchandise showed promise of a better financial return, the manuscript was sold to Hearst's *Cosmopolitan* magazine (although no British magazine would touch it) for what must have been a very tidy sum.



If you will open the issue of *Cosmopolitan* for August, 1948, and turn to page 48, you will see it there in all its textual glory, with beautiful illustrations by Robert Fawcett. THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO WAS WANTED, the headline screamed, BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE. and at the foot of the rector page, "Printed by arrangement with the Estate of the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Copyright, 1948, by Denis P. S, Conan Doyle, Executor of the Estate of the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle." The blurb at the front of the issue said this: "We wish we could tell you the dramatic story about how the previously unpublished Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on page 48 was discovered after all these years. But the facts of the matter are simply that Doyle stuck the manuscript into a hatbox which he put in a safe-deposit box back in 1922 without telling anybody about it. The bank finally decided to open the safe-deposit box last year and there it was."

That, in all conscience, is a dramatic enough story for anybody's wish – but the best is yet to come. The story, it turned out, was a fairly good one, but only fairly good: it contained anachronisms and un-Sherlockian doings and un-Watsonian sayings that led many a B.S.I. to question its authenticity, and disputation waxed on every hand. The circumstance seemed incredible that the one fixed point in a changing age had given way, and that the Canon now comprised not sixty tales, but sixty-one. But there the record stood: "by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle," which was to say, under the agential arrangements that existed between them, by Dr. Watson.

And there, to all intents and purposes, the record stands today, despite the fact that neither Doyle nor Watson had anything whatsoever to do with the story's authorship. It was Vincent Starrett, praise be, who brought proof to confirm the suspicions still prevailing. Putting his sleuths in Britain on the trail, he uncovered the facts and published them in his column in the *Chicago Tribune*; and they were later reprinted and extended in the pages of *The Baker Street Journal*. And the facts were simply these: that

an English gentleman by the name of Arthur Whitaker, now deceased, had written this pastiche, had sent it to Sir Arthur, and had received from him, in return a small but generously-minded solatium; that Sir Arthur had tossed the manuscript on his shelf (there is no evidence that it ever got into a hat-box), and that it had lain there, forgotten, until his heirs and assigns discovered it several years after his death and ingenuously assumed it to be his. Fortunately, Mr. Whitaker had kept a carbon copy, and was able to prove his authorship beyond dispute. What settlement was ever made with him for the fee received from Mr. Hearst I do not know; but I do know that I have never seen any statement in print by either the Estate or Cosmopolitan retracting the egregious misrepresentations made and setting the record straight; nor have I seen mention of this horrendous example of mistaken identity in any publication other than the two mentioned above. It is terrifying to think that, in the lack of more widespread testimony to the contrary, the world might come, in its innocence, to believe that this *Case of the Man Who Was Wanted* was a true Canonical tale.

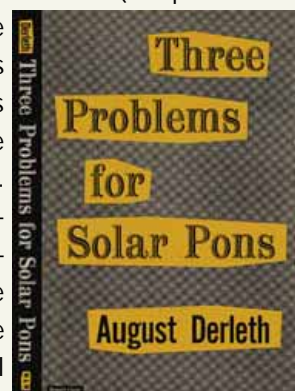
Here, typically, was a serious pastiche, calling Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, by their own names, bearing persuasively upon the Baker Street scene, and attributed, in the accustomed manner, to the man who was closer to the Master and his companion than any other ever was. And yet, as with so many similar efforts made by the hardest-boiled professional or the rankest amateur, the counterfeit clanked with a muffled sound when it was thrown upon the hard surface of the Irregular mind.

It has remained for one whose love of the Canon is as respectful as it is profound to abandon this pretense and to write a series of tales which are not, ostensibly, about Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson at all. The pastiches he has produced (for they are, to any but the utterly benighted, about Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson) come to the closest of any that have been written, consistently, to capturing the true flavor of the Saga, and to making its people and its places and its happenings entirely credible. Au-

gust Derleth, a prodigious man in many arenas, gave us, in 1945, after their publication in part in national magazines, his magnificent *"In Re: Sherlock Holmes": The Adventures of Solar Pons*. There were twelve stories in all, and they were followed by eleven more when *The Memoirs of Solar Pons* appeared in 1951, and by another trilogy in *Three Problems for Solar Pons*, published in a limited edition in 1952. Now, after too long a lapse, ten new stories – to which the trilogy of 1952 have been added – about this "tall, thin gentleman wearing an Inverness cape and a rakish cap with a visor on it," with "the thin, almost feral face; the sharp, keen dark eyes with their heavy, but not bush brows; the thin lips and the leanness of the face in general," are brought together, happily in this present volume, *The Return of Solar Pons*.

The flavor is still there: Dr. Watson still walks and talks in the guise of Dr. Parker; the image of Sherlock Holmes is incarnate in the likeness of this man called Pons; and, though we are led by the hand to Mrs. Johnson's house on Praed Street, we know it is Mrs. Hudson who waits to receive us in hallowed Baker Street itself.

In his introduction to *Three Problems for Solar Pons*, Mr. Derleth wrote: "These are quite possibly the last Solar Pons pastiches I shall write...I (am persuaded to) believe that filling the "abhorrent vacuum" as Anthony Boucher put it...is now in more capable hands than my own..." Mr. Derleth's mistaken deduction related to the forthcoming publication of the Exploits, to which I have made reference above. I am glad he has changed his mind since reading them, and that he has once again taken his own – or Dr. Watson's – pen in hand. We are left with the impression that, just as it was Dr. Doyle (in collaboration with ex-Professor Moriarty) who tried to kill Sherlock Holmes at the Reichenbach



Falls, so it was the agent's son who almost brought about the death of Solar Pons. But both attempts resulted in failure, and we rejoice in the fact now as we rejoiced in it then. Sherlock Holmes returned; and here, for our delectation, is *The Return of Solar Pons*.

Edgar Smith's foreword originally appeared in the Mycroft & Moran edition in 1957 and was reprinted in the Pinnacle edition of 1973.



Edgar W. Smith was a President of the Baker Street Irregulars and the first editor of *The Baker Street Journal*.

A Little More About Dr. Parker By Bob Byrne

Dr. Parker does not reveal a great deal about his backgrounds in the stories. The Agent, August Derleth, wrote a misleadingly titled essay, *Concerning Dr. Parker's Background*, found in *A Praed Street Dossier*. It touches upon the presence of American idiom within Parker's writings, primarily about Michael Harrison's communications to Derleth on this topic. But no solutions whatsoever are offered. Derleth leaves "this entire subject to other, more impartial hands."

There is also *A Word From Dr. Lyndon Parker*, which can be found at the beginning of the Pinnacle Adventures. There, Parker recounts his first meeting with Solar Pons (eerily similar to another famous meeting between a detective and a doctor. It does provide a smidgen of information about Parker's past.

However, there are two other sources which provide us with more knowledge regarding the pre-Pons life of Parker. By far the more detailed is Michael Harri-

son's essay included at the start of *The Casebook of Solar Pons*. Discussion of that essay will be addressed in separate monograph in the future, as it really does have too much information to adequately address in this limited space.

However, a September 28, 1919 entry in the *Dossier's Notebooks* discusses Parker's habit of being less than forthcoming about himself. Pons mentions that Parker received the Order of Osmanieh from the Khedivial Government (Egypt) and a commission from the British government to continue his work in Mansura, Egypt. Also, that Parker had attended school at Dover College, University College and Heidelberg. Also, that he had a series of articles on opthalmia in *The Lancet*.

This is an intriguing, though rather general, look into Parker's background. However, it is the further revelations, dealing specifically with Parker's experiences in America, that tantalize us. Parker graduated from Columbia and worked two years for the Allegheny Sheet & Tube Corporation. Certainly this company name was influence by the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, incorporated in Ohio in 1900. Allegheny must refer to that same region in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Sadly, Louisa Parker, his first wife, was aboard the maiden voyage of the Titanic, perishing in the tragedy. Parker closed the book on the American chapter of his life and we find him serving in the British army during World War I.

Surely there is a great deal of speculative writing to be done regarding Parker's American years. Rest assured, The Gazette will tackle this issue in the future.

In addition to the Harrison and *Notebook* essays, there is one "unauthorized" addition of note to the doctor's story. So, in an enjoyable speculative pastiche about the good Doctor, *The Gazette* brings you an article written by Cecil Ryder, Jr., for *The Pontine Dossier* back in 1976.

THE INFALLIBLE BOSWELL: LYNDON PARKER, M. D.

By Cecil A. Ryder, Jr.

Major Lyndon Parker, M.D., D.S.O., Royal Medical Corps, seconded to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers, fastened the last two buttons on the bishop's collar of his mess dress uniform. He adjusted a row of miniatures on his left chest. As he patted the distinguished service order into place, he could feel the twinge of pain in his left leg and arm. He moved his hand without thinking to the fresh scars on his leg. He did think of that unforgettable cold of Shato Terry and the blistering heat of Africa.

His thoughts were pierced by the memory of the clatter made by 30 caliber machine gun bullets ripping through more than air. Standing as he was before the mirror, his image began to fade and he saw reflected in its phantom depths the bloody and battered bodies of the brave British tommies.

"Major! Major! Major! Sir, Major, I must insist, sir!" The strident voice of Sargent McDuff shattered the images in the mirror. "Sir, the hour is grown late, sir. Let me get the tie for ya, sir. Your left arm and hand ain't up to the maneuvers o' one o' them blumen dress ties, sir. Beggin' your pardon, sir, but you must not be late for the regimental dinner, especially when it is the king's birthday, sir. Not like the old days, sir. I mean before the war when there would be a birthday ball on the sovereign's birthday, insteaden just a dinner, sir. But them's the way of wars, ain't it, sir? No time for the frills and such. But then, the regiment don't need that, does it now, sir? The regiment's got pride. That's what makes a regiment, pride and honor, sir."

"Yes, McDuff, you are quite right. The regiment has a proud and honorable history. It did upset the men when the regiment was pulled out of France and reassigned to duty in Africa. It was as if we were leaving the front at a time when the regiment was needed most. But men die and are wounded here, as we both know only too well, in this foul smelling, stiffling, muggy hell hole of infernal heat just as easily as they died in the damnable cold of France. But we have a duty here also and the regiment will do its duty."

The Regiment! Yes, the regiment. He was part of the regiment, the medical corps, the army. Parker's thought moved forward in his mind at a stiff regimental pace as McDuff finished with his attack on the

bow tie. The army, medicine, this was his life and now it was going to change. After all these years as regimental surgeon in the service of his king and country, making the world sane from the kaiser's madness.



He was to be returned to civilian life. The wounds he had received at the field hospital during a strafing attack by a squadron of Fokkers had not done their full job. But it was the abominable, bloody influenza that had brought about his pending discharge from active military service. In his weakened condition from Hines air born missiles of death he was an easy target for mother nature's air born menace. He would have died if it had not been for his batman, Sargent Murray McDuff.

The Germans were making one great offensive before the Americans were placed in the lines to support the French and English. Doctors, nurses and hospitals were being used far beyond their capacity, not to mention their supply; as the German offense moved forward, the casualty list kept growing larger with each bursting shell. Sargent McDuff had become his doctor, nurse, and confessor, prying him out of the jaws of death and back to his regiment, a dissipated shell of his former self. He had served well in France and now what was left of him was serving in Africa where part of his regiment had been reassigned.

His regiment... and now they were putting him into the jaws of civilian life to face the hostile metropolis of London... his regiment, his king, his country. But did it matter; the war would be over soon. The colonials had moved in and shown themselves exceedingly well. What did he expect; they were English once and they had not forgotten what they had learned from their past. So, with the advancing course of events he would be a civilian soon again. What difference did it make if it were a few months sooner. True, he was thinking of making the army his life's career.

He had not really started to practice as a budding young doctor just out of medical school when the war broke out. The brass plaque engraved with his name, Lyndon Parker, M.D., had just been placed on

Illustration by Roy Hunt

the door of his modest consulting room not too far from Harley street and very few patients had crossed the threshold when he knew he must be a part of the

efforts of the world to thwart the Germans in their goal of world conquest.

"Sir, I must point out the time again. I hope the leg ain't cramping up on ya again, sir. Ya know them doctors said you'd never walk again. But we fooled them, sir. Sir, your cane."

Parker reached for the cane as if it was a hot poker. He hated the use of it. It just seemed to remind him that he was not fully recovered and that he would soon be leaving the regiment.

"Thank you, McDuff. Don't wait up for me. I think I will let the brandy and soda do its work tonight."

Major Lyndon Parker walked stiffly through the double doors of the regimental mess. The hall was full of the things that he loved, the men in their uniforms, the table dressed in white linen and crystal, the crackling flames in the large stone fireplace with the picture of the king above it. No, it was not the things in the room he loved, it was that intangible spirit that all of these things represented. That ethereal, untouchable thing, pride, confidence, respect, tradition, courage, and something more. Something that would never let you down and you would never let it down. The Regiment.

Seated at the table, it was all around him, the past, the present, and the future- his regiment. No matter what the future held for him he would always be a part of it. The last course of the meal was ending; the talk of the soldiers was diminishing, as the port wine was passed around the table from officer to officer. Each filled his glittering crystal wine glass for the toast to the king and the regiment.

It was all there. One could see it in the tradition of not letting the wine decanter touch the table as it was passed from man to man. Never give in, never quit -and he was part of it. The Regiment!

The chairs moved back from the table as the officers rose to the ring of the colonel's voice throughout the hall. "Gentlemen, the king." The glasses were raised.. .

The brandy and soda had done its work that night, but only for the night. It seemed so long ago yet it had only been a few short weeks before that he had stood with his brother officers and they had raised

their glasses to the king. The voyage home from Africa had been filled with many such memories. Good memories of his regiment and bad memories of the war. These thoughts had engraved a picture on his brain which could not be removed by brandy and soda. Even his short sojourn in Cairo did not lessen the projection of these images by his mind's eye. He had stood on the deck of the ship *Ishtear* as officers from his regiment had given him a rousing salute in farewell.

And now he stood in a pub not far from Paddington Station, alone but for his memories. He took a seat and ordered a whiskey and splash.

He had been sitting for some time in the pub, ruefully reflecting that the London he had returned to after the great war, the war to end all wars, was not the city he had left, when a tall, thin gentleman, wearing an Inverness cape and a rakish cap with a visor on it, strode casually into the place.. . .

"A waiter, who was wiping tables next to him, noticed his interest and came over. 'Sherlock Holmes,' he said. 'That's who he is. "The Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street" is what the papers call him. His real name's Solar Pons'."

Little did Dr. Lyndon Parker know that day that he would become this man's closest friend, companion in adventure, and above all his infallible Boswell.

This article appeared in the 1975-1976 issue (Volume 3, Number 1) of *The Pontine Dossier*.



Praed Street Irregular Cecil Ryder, Jr. (left) and Luther Norris (PSI founder)

Featured Case II

(www.SolarPons.com)

*The Adventure of the Defeated
Doctor**The Further Adventures
of Solar Pons, 1979
(Basil Copper)*The Case

Sculptor Romaine Schneider is found dead in his studio, brutally bludgeoned from behind with his own mallets. Inspector Jamison and his colleague, Inspector Buckfast, are at a loss and the former consults Solar Pons at Praed Street. Pons finds a preponderance of large, powerfully built men populating the case.

Quotes

Parker: *He (Jamison) is exploiting your talents, Pons.*

Pons: *Possibly, Parker, possibly. Though it would not do to underestimate the doggedness of Inspector Jamison. Obtuse he may be occasionally – and plodding certainly – but method and devotion to duty usually get him to his destination in the end.*

Pons: *Come, Jamison. How many times have I told you? No visible motive – there is always a motive for every crime, however pointless it may appear to the casual bystander.*

Comments

Pons assumes that the killer snuck across the room, undetected by Schneider until the last instant. This seems dubious and worthy of a little second guessing. Because there were no signs of forced entry, certainly it was possible that Schneider admitted his killer into the house, not suspecting any danger. Thus, he continued with his work, allowing his visitor to stealthily move behind

him and strike a savage blow with a mallet. Why isn't this as likely as Pons' own deduction that a very large, strong, man crept the length of the room, unnoticed, and struck?

Pons points out that a jealous rival would likely have continued savaging the body after the initial stroke caused death. This is a sound proposition.

But why did the investigators seem to so lightly dismiss robbery? It is true that one of the constables says that nothing appears to be missing. But, building on the point above, either a fellow sculptor or rival (not a sworn enemy) visited Schnedier to procure something, whether damaging to himself or to further his own career?

After Pons refers to Jamison as obtuse and plodding, Parker tells Pons that he is being unusually generous. Ignoring Parker's questionable observation, Pons' attitude towards Jamison in this case seems a bit harsh.

When Jamison, quite reasonably, tells Pons where the dead man lived, Pons cuts him off:

Yes, yes, Jamison. I am tolerably familiar with the area. Get to the facts and leave the guide book details to friend Parker here when he comes to write the case up.

Pons is not in a very good mood this day. He manages to be condescending to Jamison while denigrating Parker, who has done nothing to deserve it. Perhaps Pons did not have enough coffee in the morning.



Basil Copper

Further Thoughts: The Dog in the Manger

By Bobby Byrne

For a variety of reasons, I am not always at liberty to disclose fully certain matters related to the cases I chronicle. Perhaps the points concealed are too delicate, or I withhold them from a sense of patriotism. It is not uncommon for unproven speculation, while perhaps extremely likely to be accurate, to have an adverse effect upon some persons or institutions and a sense of responsibility stays my pen. There are also more mundane reasons, such as space limitations or the flow of the story, which preclude inclusion. Regardless, I have chosen here to jot down some thoughts related to the diabolical Ahab Jepson.

A Sense of Deja Vu

When Pons discovered the hidden chain mechanism, there was something familiar about it. But I was certain that I had never assisted Pons in a similar matter! It was only some time later I realized that subconsciously, I was recalling the Sherlock Holmes adventure at *Thor Bridge*. The former Maria Pinto arranged her own death to throw suspicion on her husband and their governess. Though he did not mention Holmes' case, I am sure that Pons was aware of the similarity as he investigated. It was simply to avoid disclosure of my obtuseness that I failed to link the two cases when I presented this one to the public.

His Finest Production

I cannot say that I was a fan of Ahab Jepson's body of work. He was doomed to pale in comparison with his wonderfully talented father. But as a performer in his own right, he simply was inadequate. The local press mentioned that his last project had been a version of *Jane Annie*, a, frankly, forgettable collaboration between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and J.M. Barrie. I venture to say that if he had plotted any of his original melodramas as well as the elaborate scenario he devised for his own death, he would have enjoyed a smash hit. Perhaps he was saving his best work for last. His only flaw was that he did not fore-

see Solar Pons' involvement!

The Common Elements of Crime

One evening, as we sat in comfortable silence in our Praed Street lodgings, I pointed out to Pons that the Jepson case flew in the face of one of Pons' accepted principles of investigation.

Intrigued by my assertion, he asked me to continue. I showed that all four men invited to Stoke Poges for the weekend had more than adequate means, motive and opportunity to kill Jepson. Pons had often lectured me on the importance of looking for these elements in a case. Yet all of those characteristics served only as red herrings, leading the police further away from the true culprit.

He agreed, but added "You have cast too narrow a net, Parker. I believe that I mentioned at the time, those men had all won the suits brought against them by Jepson. It was he who had the strong motive of hatred. By inviting them to his house, he provided himself with the opportunity. He certainly had the means. I believe it was Sir Malcolm who volunteered that Ahab Jepson was dying. That single fact made Jepson a much more likely suspect. Who had the most to gain by his death? Since he was terminally ill, he would gain a great deal of joy in his waning days if he could spur a murder charge against one or more of his guests."

I understood Pons' explanation, but I remained convinced that the Jepson suicide was in contrast to the applied analysis of means, motive and opportunity. Pons merely believed that I was being uncommonly stubborn.



THE BEST SUBSTITUTE FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES KNOWN

- Vincent Starrett

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