



# The Solar Pons Gazette

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



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## CALL TO CONCLAVE

TOASTMASTER ALVIN F. GERMESHAUSEN

AN ADDRESS AT THE FOUNDING OF THE PRAED STREET IRREGULARS, JUNE 12, 1966, AT  
IVORY TOWERS, HOLLYWOOD, CALIF. FROM FEBRUARY, 1967 (VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1) *PONTINE DOSSIER*

Welcome ladies and gentlemen of letters...some of you create them, some wear them behind your names; I have some in my pocket that I have forgotten to mail! The occasion of this precedent-shattering and epoch-making gathering is to honor three titanic, herculean, gargantuan figures...men to bulk large on any horizon...first, the world's second most eminent detective, the immortal Solar Pons...his loyal Achates and Boswell Dr. Lyndon Parker, who is far more than an amanuensis.

Like his esteemed precursor, Dr. Watson, he lives the deeds he records...the third, indubitable and nonpareil literary agent, August Derleth, to whose unremitting toil we owe our holy writ, our classic Koran; the six sacred volumes of incomparable Solar Pons exploits.

Ours is an International brotherhood joined together for adulation and veneration of these great men and their work...and also for mutual appreciation. We achieve beneath the sign of the PSI...this is a set of initials conceived by Nathan L. Bengis for The Praed Street Irregulars, a Greek letter, a symbol for stellar magnitude and a term to designate an unknown component of phenomena.

Of course, the Irregulars are a band of cockney street arabs who serve The Master in crucial crises. Praed Street, honored by the great man's residency, is thought to derive its name from Winthrop Mackworth Praed, eminent 19th Century man-of-letters.

Our hierarchic and hieratic organization is headed by The Pontifical Council of ipsissimi crime-fiction initiates, which decrees and initiates ritual and legislation. The supreme body also admits candidates to the path of virtue and designates a **(cont on next page)**

### Copyright notice:

Solar Pons is the sole property of the August Derleth Estate. The illustrations used in the masthead were created by Frank Utapel.

*"In a delicate and all but indefinable way, he is not, like Holmes, a man of the Nineteenth Century foreshadowing the Twentieth, but rather a man of the Twentieth Century recalling the Nineteenth."*

*Anthony Boucher, Intro. To  
The Reminiscences of Solar Pons*

## GREETINGS FROM PRAED STREET



Year three of the Gazette!  
We've survived four issues so far. Of course, the fact that it's free and electronic-only makes that a dubious accomplishment, but hey!

'We've dusted off Charles Powers' *Pontine Dossier* essay, *The Old Doctor of Limehouse*, featuring my favorite inscrutable Oriental.

On page 7, *Slighted Sleuths* makes its debut. This new column will discuss non-Ponsian detectives deserving a readership today. Did you know that Sam Spade of *The Maltese Falcon* fame also appeared in three short stories? You do now.

*The Gazette* brings you the third in our *Introductions to Pons* series: Anthony Boucher's Foreword to *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons* (*The Adventures* and *The Return* were featured in prior issues). It is followed by William F. Nolan's essay, *Who Was Anthony Boucher?*

Ever wonder how *The War of the Worlds* would have gone if *Solar Pons* had been around to help mankind battle the invaders? Britisher Andrew Norris tells us in his original pastiche, *Solar Pons' War of the Worlds*, beginning on page 19.

However, what does not appear (for the second issue in a row) is a *Notebooks* entry. I hope to bring you another installment in the next *Gazette*, as that is my favorite item in the newsletter. The birth of my first child last December has severely curtailed the time I spend at Praed Street.

The December, 2007 *Gazette* is not posted on the web but a .pdf is available via email upon request. It contains a fully annotated version of *The Unique Dickensians*; easily the most ambitious project in the *Gazette's* short history.

### The Call to Conclave cont.

Noble preceptor to rule under the temporal title of the Lord Warden of the Pontine Marshes.

If any ask of him why this Honour of Pontificality hath been conferred, he shall make answer: "Ill kept The Secrets of Pons as dark as a night pea-souper fog in Praed Street. I went about The Business of Pons as smoothly as runs the Grand Union Canal at the back of the Junction Tavern. I lived up to The Principles of Pons with the regularity of the No. 7 bus which plies for hire along Praed Street. Selah."

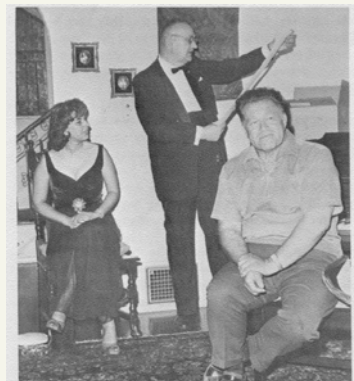
So much for our purpose...now on to our great work. The magnificent title and office of Lord Warden of the Pontine Marshes, created by Michael Harrison, derives from that other great title of honor, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, recently held by Sir Winston Churchill. The Churchill title in turn is derived from the venerable office of Comes Littoris Saxonici, the Count of the Saxton Shore, a Roman General appointed to guard the coasts of Briton...so Sir Winston was titular custodian of the coast.

Similarly our Lord Warden is the guardian of a vast and precious literary and detectival tradition. His responsibility and task it is to expound and defend, to explicate and define our holy writ, the revered writings of Lyndon Parker, the achievements of *Solar Pons*.

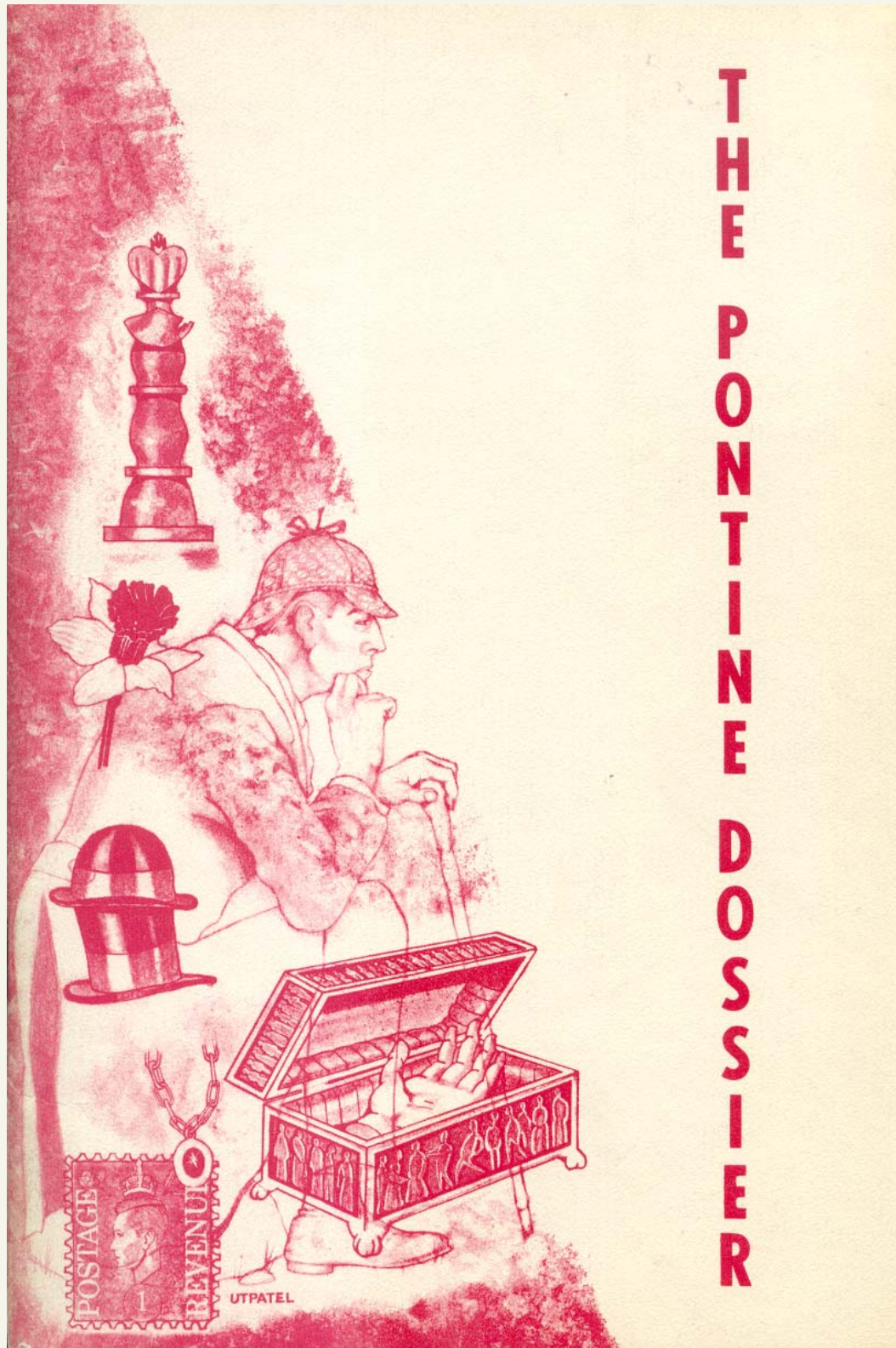
We have had the rare privilege to meet in dedicated fellowship, to receive honors graciously bestowed, and most of all to appreciate revealed greatness as conveyed by our Agent, August Derleth.

Go forth and demonstrate the distinction, intrinsic and conferred, which you represent. Remember, there is but one *Solar Pons* and Derleth is his Agent.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:  
TERRI PINCKARD,  
ALVIN F. GERME-  
SHAUSEN AND "THE  
AGENT," AUGUST DER-  
LETH







Frank utpatel, the 'Sidney Paget of Solar Pons,' created this drawing for *The Pontine Dossier's* 1970 Annual, with a half-dozen references to cases from the Canon.

## FEATURED CASE

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

*A Word From Dr Lyndon Parker*  
*"In Re: Sherlock Holmes": The Adventures of*  
*Solar Pons, 1945*  
Date - 1944

The Case

A short essay from Dr. Parker, written in 1944 to introduce the first collection of his chronicles of Solar Pons. Parker relates how he was sitting in a pub near Paddington Station when Pons entered. A waiter referred to the newcomer as 'The Sherlock Holmes of Praed St.' Pons approached Parker, told him that he was looking for someone to share his lodgings and led Parker away to inspect 7B Praed St.

Quotes

- *Fine color. Not long back from Africa, I see.*
- *Your scarab pin suggests Egypt and, if I'm not mistaken, the envelope on which you have been writing is one of Shephard's. From Cairo, then.*

Comments

This essay was written in 1944, and Parker makes reference to his initial meeting with Pons as taking place "almost thirty years ago." Common usage of such a phrase would seem to indicate some time between 27 and 29 and three-quarter years. Surely if it had been 26 years, some such phrase as "just over a quarter century" or the like would have been chosen. Rounding up, thirty years would make their meeting in 1914. Twenty-seven years would be 1917.

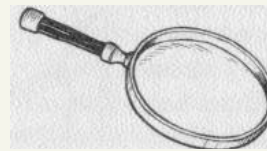
Yet Basil Copper (1919) and Robert Patrick (1921) discount Parker's entry here. Looking at all available data from the Pontine Canon, we must assume that like his Boswellian predecessor, Parker changed and/or made mistakes with dates in his published tales and they cannot be completely reconciled.

The topic has been discussed ad infinitum (or ad nauseum for some) in regards to the Canon and will not be debated here. However, it is also possible that an elderly Parker simply had trouble recalling the exact details in his dotage. The scene might well exist perfectly clearly in his mind, but the time could be clouded by a year or three. How many of us have forgotten anniversaries or even events from a short time back? It is the event itself that is of most important to Praed Street fans.

Parker writes that Pons "had already established for himself a reputation for skill and intelligent sleuthing for which he was held in high regard by many persons connected with Scotland Yard and his Majesty's government.

Pons' private practice covered the years 1907 - 1939. Since the Chronologies state that Pons and Parker met in either 1919 or 1921, the reference to 'His Majesty' must refer to King George V, who ruled England from 1910 - 1936 (he died of bronchitis in 1936).

The first exchange between Pons and Parker is clearly a tribute to Holmes and Watson's first encounter in the basement of St. Bart's. Though the specifics are different, Parker feels a lack of roots similar to Watson's. Pons makes several elementary observations about Parker's recent experiences and profession. He then discusses the possibility of sharing his current lodgings (certainly prompted by a need for financial assistance) and they set off to view the rooms.



Certainly most readers were discovering Parker's chronicles for the first time with the publication of this collection and the introduction established a warm and comfortable link with Sherlock Holmes.

Parker writes, "And within a few months I had begun to take notes on Pons' cases, at first for my own edification, the better to observe his methods, and then ultimately because I felt that some day these curious

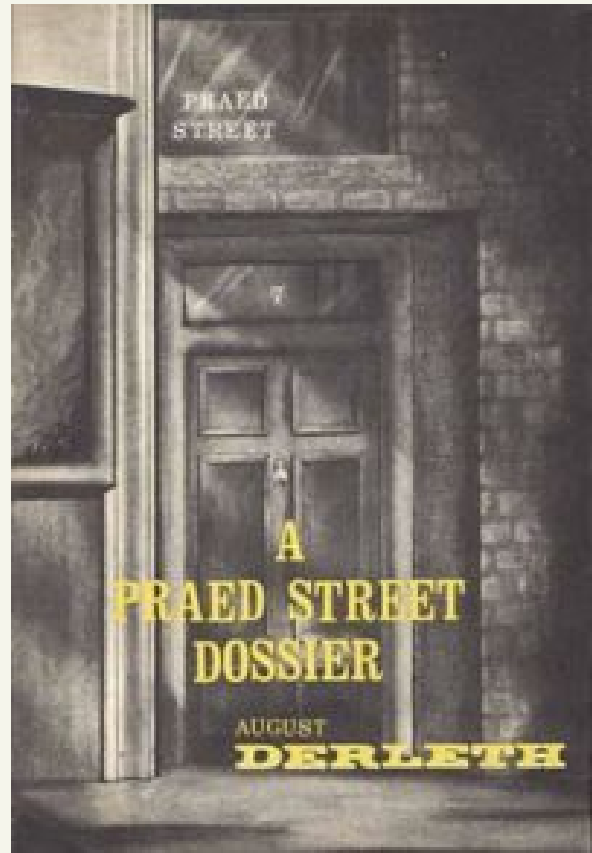
adventure might quite conceivably be of interest to a larger public, if presented in some more readable fashion.” Ignoring the distressing length of that sentence, it is intriguing that Parker references a notebook begun shortly after moving in with Pons. In 1965, at least a portion of the notebooks would come to light, included in a collection entitled *Praed Street Papers*, from August Derleth. Five cases are mentioned in the notebook: *The Curate’s Mistake*, *The Perfect Signatures*, *The Merstham Tunnel Murder*, *The Stevenson Quote* and *The Book-Seller’s Clerk*.

The first publication of a Pons case from Dr. Parker’s pen was *The Adventure of the Black Narcissus*, in 1929. The earliest actual date of a case to eventually be published was *The Adventure of the Sotheby Salesman*, from mid-August of 1920 (Copper) or August of 1921 (Patrick).

Two further authentic excerpts from Parkers’ notebooks, covering February 1-11, 1920 and February 15-24, 1920, were published in the *Praed Street Dossier Annuals* in 1970 and 1971. The notebooks are most intriguing not because of the case references, but for the commentaries by Pons.

For example, he says to Parker, “Yet circumstantial evidence is the strongest of all possible evidence.” This is in contrast to Sherlock Holmes, who says it is very tricky and can point to something different when one changes his point of view.

Pons also espouses punishment first, then rehabilitation. Overall, the notebooks provide some fascinating insights into the character of Solar Pons. *The Solar Pons Gazette* will continue to bring you further excerpts from what are believed to be Dr. Parker’s notebooks, though they have not been authenticated.



The only known picture of the front of 7B Praed Street, used for the cover of *A Praed Street Dossier*.

*A Word...* was my introduction to Solar Pons. I had previously read *The Circular Room*, but it was the Sherlock Holmes version included in Marvin Kaye’s *The Game is Afoot*. I had purchased the Pinnacle paperback edition of *Regarding Sherlock Holmes*.. and Parker’s short introduction gave me my first look at the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street.

It reminded me of *A Study in Scarlet*’s joining of Holmes and Watson and I moved on to the first case in the book already ‘pulled in.’

Relative to its brief length, this essay plays an important part in the Canon by bringing together the two main characters in a pleasing way and also by imparting background information.

*“Oh, Parker, there is nothing like a women’s intuition in these affairs. Their minds often retain the most surprising information.”*

*- Solar Pons in Murder at the Zoo.*



## AN IRISH SOLAR PONS?

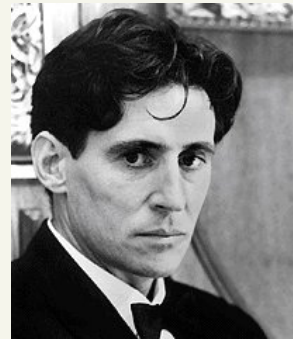
BY BOB BYRNE

The previous issue of The Gazette mentioned that there have been no on-screen depictions of Solar Pons. However, in glancing at the cover of the Pinnacle paperback version of *The Casebook of Solar Pons*, I can't help but think of an actor who looked very much like Pons in his younger days.

Gabriel Byrne (great last name, there) bore an uncanny resemblance to Pons. Byrne has made some fine films, including *The Usual Suspects* and the superb *Miller's Crossing* (based on Dashell Hammet's *The Glass Key*).

I think the two pictures below bear a marked resemblance to each other. Byrne is a bit older now and no longer looks much like the Solar Pons from The Casebook cover. But for a time, he made a nice visual match to the 'Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street.'

Next issue we'll look at an actor who has played Sherlock Holmes on screen and also bears a strong resemblance to a Pons cover.



*Aside from the personal pleasure I derive from reading any dispatch from Praed Street, there is another dimension that delights me. Specifically, I think of a small boy in a Midwestern farm community—a small boy curled in a chair before the glowing coal stove on a bleak winter evening and devouring with wide-eyed wonder the exploits of Sherlock Holmes in the London of far away and long ago. I think of that boy grown to manhood and creating his own colorful criminologist and his own legendary London—and thus adding to the enjoyment of all of us who remember, as he does, the enchantment that commences when the game is a foot. In a word, I cannot disassociate the exploits of Solar Pons from the exploits of his Agent—and I'm grateful for them both.*

- Robert Bloch (author of *Psycho*, member of the P.S.G.)

# Forgotten Ferrets

by Alvin F. Germeshausen

The very first issue of *The Pontine Dossier* in February of 1967 included a column by Alvin Germeshausen.

Titled *Forgotten Ferrets*, the regular feature reminded readers of detectives from the Sherlockian Era who were not as well remembered as

the world's foremost private consulting detective. Germeshausen himself is a noted Sherlockian, having received his BSI investiture in 1998 (Baron Dowson Giles).

There were eight columns, featuring the detectives listed below along with their 'agents'.

Dr. Richard Thorndyke

Joseph Priestley

Max Carrados

Morris Klaw

Martin Hewitt

Dr. Richard John Cunliffe

Romney Pringle

Patrick Mulligan

R. Austin Freeman.

Cecil Street, writing as John Rhode

Ernest Bramah

Sax Rohmer

Arthur Morrison

H. Frankish

R. Austin Freeman and Dr. John James Pitcairn (Clifford Ashdown)

Baroness Orczy

Germeshausen's column was an interesting addition to *The Dossier* and shone a deserving light on some of Holmes' contemporaries. *The Gazette* is happy to revive the spirit of *Forgotten Ferrets* with *Slighted Sleuths*.

# Slighted Sleuths

by Bob Eymc

Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* stands supreme today as the finest private eye novel ever written. For movie buffs, the 1941 Humphrey Bogart film of the same name proved that the third time is a charm, prior attempts in 1931 and 1936 having failed.

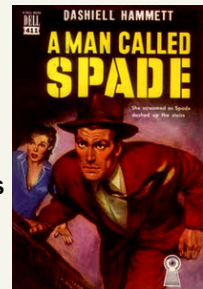
**Sam Spade**, the quintessential tough guy shamus, appeared in a five-part serial of *The Maltese Falcon* in *Black Mask* in 1929. Hammett carefully re-worked the pieces into novel form for publication by Alfred E. Knopf in 1930 and detective fiction would have a benchmark that has yet to be surpassed.

Hammett, who wrote over two dozen stories featuring a detective known as The Continental Op, never intended to write more about Samuel Spade, saying he was "done with him" after completing *The Maltese Falcon*.

But the public wanted more and his agent cajoled him into cranking out three more short stories fea-

turing Spade. The first two appeared in *American Magazine* and the third in *Collier's* in 1932 and collected into book form later that year as *The Adventures of Sam Spade and other stories*. In 1999, Vintage Crime published *Nightmare Town*, a compilation of twenty Hammett stories, including all three Spade short stories.

*A Man Called Spade* is far and away the longest of the three short stories. Spade arrives at a prospective client's apartment to find Falcon stalwarts Tom Polhous and Lieutenant Dundy there and the no-longer prospective client murdered, a five pointed star with a T in the middle outlined in black ink above his heart.



Dundy's antagonism towards Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* is noticeably absent in this story. The two men work together, with Spade having carte blanche in questioning people.

Except for the opening and closing scenes, which take place between Spade and his secretary, Effie Perrine, the entire story takes place in Max Bliss' apartment and feels like it is more of a play than a story. It is, quite simply, boring pales notably when compared to *The Maltese Falcon*.

Dundy is completely adrift in this case and while the police help with the hard evidence, Spade's mind alone identifies the murderer. A red herring in the case is lifted directly from a Continental Op story from a few years before. Of the three stories, this one most feels like it was hurriedly written to generate some cash.

*Too Many Have Lived* opens with Gene Colyer hiring Spade to find out what happened to the missing Eli Haven. Colyer is fond of Haven's wife and would be happy if the man has disappeared forever. Compared to the previous story, Spade does a great deal more detecting and there are multiple locations, making this tale much stronger. In fact, whereas *A Man Called Spade* feels like a poor imitation, *Too Many Have Lived* seems much more like authentic Hammett, though the latter is barely half the length of the former.

Finally, *They Can Only Hang You Once* opens with a bang. Spade, using a false name, is waiting to see an ill, elderly man in what seems to be a large house when a woman's scream is followed by a gunshot. He rushes in to find a dead woman and two bystanders. The reader's interest is fully engaged in this, the fourth and last Samuel Spade story. Once again Sergeant Tom Polhaus and Lieutenant Dundy enter the case and we're off on a wild ride, Spade solving the case with the police contributing essentially nothing.

Only half as long as *Too Many Have Lived*, this is the most enjoyable of the short stories and the most action-oriented. It has the elements that would have produced a good novella.

Spade is referred to as a 'blonde satan' (which was utilized in the title of the Bette Davis *Maltese Falcon* adaptation, *Satan Met a Lady*). His face is frequently described as consisting of the 'V's of his chin, mouth and brows. His eyes often turn yellow and are 'dreamy,' presumably indicating they take on a faraway look. He does not come across as a handsome man; certainly not dapper, like Hammett's Nick Charles.

We only see the intrepid Effie Perine (who was a miserable judge of character in *The Maltese Falcon*) in *A Man Called Spade*. The interplay with the boss, hinting at intimacy, is totally absent from the three stories. We don't build on what we know, or suspect about the two, from *The Maltese Falcon*. This is mildly disappointing, though perhaps the shortened format precludes a significant

role for her. The romantic Spade is absent, with not even a flicker of female interest in any of the stories.

Spade does not hold out on the police in the three stories, which is certainly not the case in *The Maltese Falcon*. He doesn't even have a client in *A Man Called Spade* yet still solves the crime. Sergeant Polhaus serves as an errand boy and Spade and Dundy are on equal terms in the stories.

Spade, never afraid to get physical in *The Maltese Falcon*, roughs up the criminal in *A Man Called Spade*, though he gets the worst of it in *They Can Only Hang You Once*.

What's missing in the short stories is the code of honor that permeates *The Maltese Falcon*. The impassioned speech that Spade gives to Brigitt O'Shaunessey before the police arrive defined Spade's character as a private eye. In the short stories, he's just a detective trying to earn a living. There's no particular reason to root for him: it's hard to identify with him as a likable protagonist.

Sam Spade, as portrayed by Humphrey Bogart, is the image of a private eye to many people. That character is largely the same one that Hammett wrote about in *The Maltese Falcon*. Perhaps because Hammett didn't really want to write more tales about him, the Spade of the short stories doesn't measure up to the novel's hero. He

comes across as less than fully fleshed out. One would expect these short stories to have come before the novel; that Hammett was developing the character, which fully bloomed in *The Maltese Falcon*.

But even though *Too Many Have Lived* and *They Can Only Hang You Once* are interesting stories, Spade is not all that interesting as a character. Hammett wrote the short stories to make money (which he spent as fast as he earned) and they come across as such. Nearly any tough private eye of the day could have been used instead of Spade and there would be little difference.



(cont on next page)



## THE DIAGNOSIS OF A CRIME

BY BOB BYRNE

There is an insightful exchange between Pons and Parker in Basil Copper's *Murder at the Zoo*. Prefaced by the not uncommon sequence of Parker admitting to Pons that he is in the dark and Pons replying that isn't the first time, something new happens:

Pons—"Just use those faculties of intelligence that you so often bring to your medical diagnosis."

Parker—"Ah, well, Pons, that is a matter of science, whose limits are well signposted with textbook examples."

Pons—"But detection is an equally exact science, Parker. Every apparently disconnected fact has its place in the diagnosis. Just as you draw logical conclusions from your patient's perspiration, breathing and location of pain, so do I similarly read a connected sequence of events from crushed blades of grass; cigarette ash carelessly scattered; or the angle of a wineglass..."

This is an insightful discourse on Pons' ability to do so well what he does. Rather than leaving matters with the quietly insulting comment that Parker misses what Pons sees, Pons makes a direct comparison between his approach to discovering the truth to Parker's approach to diagnosing a patient. Pons did not add that quite often, the difference between life and death is the ability of the two men to reach the proper conclusion in the matter at hand.

## (Slighted Sleuths cont)

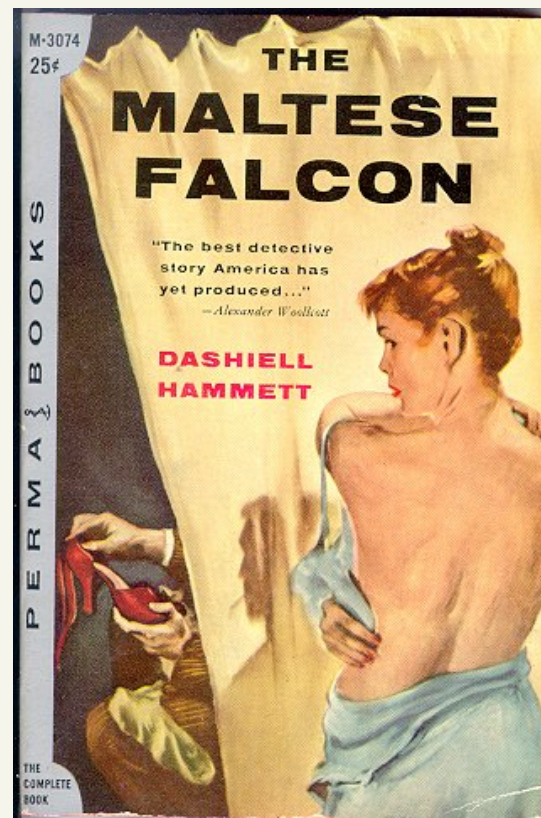
Of Spade, Hammett stated:

Spade had no original. He is a dream man in the sense that he is what most of the private detectives I worked with would like to have been and what quite a few of them, in their cockier moments, thought they approached. For your private detective does not...want to be an erudite solver of riddles in the Sherlock Holmes manner; he wants to be a hard and shifty fellow, able to take care of himself in any situation, able to get the best of anybody he comes in contact with, whether criminal, innocent bystander, or client."

In *The Maltese Falcon*, we see Spade matching wits with Gutman, Cairo and Wilmer, the police, the district attorney and Brigid O'Shaughnessy. It is this adversarial drive that is missing from the three short stories in *Nightmare Town*.

Humphrey Bogart and Edward G. Robinson played Sam Spade in radio adaptations of *The Maltese Falcon* in the forties. Howard Duff, and then Steve Dunne, voiced Spade in a very popular radio series in the forties and fifties. *The Adventures of Sam Spade* lasted for over 240 episodes.

Duff's 1948 *The Khandi Tooth Caper* was actually a direct sequel to *The Maltese Falcon* with Spade once again meeting Caspar Gutman and Joel Cairo (as well as Wilmer's replacement).



Irrespective of the popular film and radio adaptations, *The Maltese Falcon* is a must read for any mystery fan. Though the three Sam Spade short stories don't do much to enhance his reputation, they do complete his body of work.

## THE DISAPPEARING DETECTIVE

BY BOB BYRNE

One would assume that an introduction to a Solar Pons collection would, well, focus on Solar Pons. And, as is often the case in life, one would be surprised, disappointed, or simply wrong. There is a rather notable absence of Solar Pons in several of the introductions.

The original Solar Pons stories were compiled into six collections; first issued by Mycroft & Moran, later reissued by Pinnacle. Pinnacle included five of the original introductions, replacing Ellery Queen's intro to *The Memoirs* with one by Luther Norris.

The great Sherlockian, Vincent Starrett, contributed the first introduction, found in "*In Re: Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of Solar Pons*." Quite simply, this is a Pons-centric essay. The fourth and fifth words are "August Derleth" and Pons himself is first mentioned in the third paragraph. Derleth's creation of Pons is briefly outlined and some nice insights into Pons, Parker and the stories follow. This is, in short, what an introduction should be.

For *The Memoirs*, Ellery Queen (two people of course, but we'll stick with the accepted convention and consider it to be one) took a different path. It opens as a tribute to Sherlock Holmes, rightfully acknowledged as 'The Master.' A long list of parodies and pastiches makes up about half of the introduction. Solar Pons is not even mentioned until page 11, and that's just a standard entry, similar to all the others. Fortunately, Pons is the focus of pages 13 and 14, but that's it. A fourteen page introduction in which the book's subject is discussed in only fourteen percent of it. And the other pages don't really put Pons in context: they are about Sherlock Holmes and his imitators. The final paragraph, which includes the nice phrase, 'Solar Pons, the Pride of Praed Street,' is quite good, but sadly, not nearly enough to salvage an introduction that pays tribute far more to Sherlock Holmes than to Solar Pons.

Luther Norris, founder of the Praed Street Irregulars, wrote a new introduction in 1975. This ranks second only to Starrett's intro to *The Adventures*. Norris expounds eloquently on the differences between the quite similar Pons and Holmes. He discusses their writings, their musical interests and their attitudes towards their faithful companions. Naturally, Norris also discusses their many similarities. Norris' intro is worth more than one read and remains one of the finest pieces of Ponsiana yet written.

Mystery maven Edgar W. Smith wrote the introduction for *The Return of Solar Pons*, issued in 1958. It is an interesting introduction for the information it relates, but once again, Solar Pons is absent for a great deal of it. Smith ventures into a discussion about pastiches and Sherlock Holmes, though not in the encyclopedic manner employed earlier by Queen. The story behind *The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted* is now well-known among Sherlockians, though in 1958 that was not the case. Smith spends a considerable amount of space discussing how the story was found, falsely pushed as a Doyle original and finally exposed as a fake through the work of Vincent Starrett and the Baker Street Irregulars. His take on the matter can be assayed through the use of words like "egregious misrepresentations" and "horrendous." He also refers to the collaborative pastiches of Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr as *Sherlock Holmes Exploited*.

However, once he is done sharpening and swinging his axe, Smith turns to Solar Pons, holding him up as the example for other pastiches to follow. This closing portion of the introduction ranks with Starrett and Norris,

though it is much shorter. It feels as if Smith, in the context of the new Pons stories, wanted to bash Adrian Conan Doyle and then say something nice about Derleth's new collection.

*The Reminiscences of Solar Pons* saw another mystery field icon, Anthony Boucher, as introducer of Solar Pons. Boucher chose to cast a wider net than had been seen previously. He mentions Pons early on and frames the introduction by mentioning that Pons has an interest in the occult. He then branches out to discuss the few detectives (up to that time) that were equipped to handle cases that did not have rational explanations. Pons is absent as investigators such as Morris Klaw and Carnacki are mentioned. However, Boucher has created a genre, "The Flexible Detectives," discussed other members of the genre and then brought matters back around to Pons for the close. This is a nice introduction that must rank in the upper half of Pons forewords.

Boucher (for whom the annual mystery convention is named, 'Bouchercon') makes one of my favorite observations about Pons: "In a delicate and all but indefinable way, he is not, like Holmes, a man of the Nineteenth Century foreshadowing the Twentieth, but rather a man of the Twentieth Century recalling the Nineteenth."

Starrett makes a return appearance three years later for *The Casebook of Solar Pons*. In 1967, Starrett had to be considered the world's foremost Pons fan. Essentially, Starrett wonders what kind of mystery the reader likes. He answers the question for himself by saying that he likes Sherlock Holmes stories. And if Starrett can't have Holmes, he'll take Solar Pons instead. It is a light-weight introduction, more for fun than his first two, but perhaps a change in tone was needed. It adds nothing to the writings upon Solar Pons, but it does feel like a breezy beginning to another collection of fine writings about the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street.

Alan Hubin wrote the introduction for *The Chronicles*, asked to do so by August Derleth himself. It has a wistful feeling, likely attributable to the fact that Derleth died before the collection was issued. Somewhat reminiscent of Basil Rathbone's *Daydream* essay, in it Hubin takes a nap and encounters Solar Pons. Though Derleth is dead, we are left with the belief that Solar Pons and his adventures will live on long into the future. It is nicely

done.

Approximately half of the seven introductions to Solar Pons collections focus on him. Which means, of course, that half do not. Taste in such matters varies by reader and the casual fan may not care to know how Solar Pons came about. Likewise, the Pons devotee might like more about Pons and less about everything else when starting off. At *The Gazette*, we find it a bit surprising that an introduction to a collection of Solar Pons stories as often as not spent less time on Pons than other subjects. An odd circumstance? As Pons himself would have said with a grin: "Is it not?"





**FOREWARD:**  
**THE REMINISCENCES OF SOLAR PONS**  
**BY ANTHONY BOUCHER (APRIL 28, 1961)**

*Small puzzle for Baker Street Irregulars: why should the fourth volume of Solar Pons stories, after the Adventures, Memoirs and Return, be logically and inevitably titled The Reminiscences?*



One of the most appealing qualities of Solar Pons is the clear fact that he is *not* Sherlock Holmes.

Offhand, this statement may seem at least a paradox, if not a heresy, since his greatest following is among those readers who find a Pons story the best possible substitute for a new adventure of Holmes himself.

self.

But a mere effort to make a facsimile of the Master is not enough to give life and readability to a story – as the Agent himself demonstrated in *The Crown Diamond* and its offspring, *The Mazarin Stone*, and as the Agent's son proved even more clearly in *The Exploits*.

Of all the 48 variants on the Holmes name and character listed by Ellery Queen in *The Memoirs of Solar Pons*, hardly any other has the independent vitality of Pons. (The two major exceptions might be Maurice Leblanc's Herlock Sholmes and H.F. Heard's Mr. Mycroft – both intended to be direct portraits of the Master, but each viewed so differently through un-Watsonian eyes as to become a separate and living character.)

As Vincent Starrett wrote in introducing the first Pontian collection, Pons is “a clever impersonator, with a twinkle in his eye, which tells us that he knows he is not Sherlock Holmes, and knows that we know it, but that he hopes we will like him anyway for what he symbolizes” – and, I might add, for what he is as well.

In a delicate and all but indefinable way, he is not, like Holmes, a man of the Nineteenth Century foreshadowing the Twentieth, but rather a man of the Twentieth Century recalling the Nineteenth. The “twinkle” (which is also perceptible in the eye of Dr. Parker and perhaps even in that of the Sauk City Agent) is faintly self-mocking; the note of gaiety and a sort of ironic playfulness, which marks Holmes upon rare occasions (as in the opening section of *The Valley of Fear*), is more common with Pons, especially when he contemplates his relationship to his “illustrious predecessor.”

Pons is even independent enough to have interests of his own, nowhere abumbrated in the Canon of Watson. Although Dr. Parker lists among Pons' “varied interests” his “addiction to good music of all kinds” (obviously the comment of an unmusical man), he is apparently simply an auditor, and unlike Holmes, neither performer nor musicologist. But Pons is (Parker tells us) absorbed equally by “occult lore and scientific treatises on the nature of evidence”; and the official Pons bibliography lists, along with such works as *The Varieties of the Criminal Method* (1911), a monograph dealing with *An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others* (1931). (The reference for those unfamiliar with other publications handled by Pons' Agent, is to a singularly terrible Mythos of eldritch and arcane horror, created – or revealed – by the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft, which once dominated American fiction of the supernatural in *Weird Tales* and other magazines.)

It is doubtless because of this interest that Solar Pons has on rare occasions found himself involved, as Holmes never was<sup>1</sup>, in cases which contain a definite and undeniable element of “fantasy” – occurrences which pass the bounds of what is (at this moment) believed possible by science. One such adventure you will find in this volume (*The Blind Clauraudient*). Two others (jointly agented by Derleth and Mack Reynolds) appear in *The Science Fictional Sherlock Holmes* (Denver, 1960).

<sup>1</sup> At least, not to our knowledge. There is some reason to believe that the extraordinary “unfathomed cases” listed in *Thor Bridge – Phillimore*, *Persano* and the *Cutter Alicia* – may have been supernatural or at least science-fictional in essence.

Few of the detectives whose exploits have been chronicled for us are competent to handle a case which does not have a "rational explanation." Holmes and such later masters as Dr. Fell and the Great Merlino – yes, and even Father Brown, with his devout faith in the supernatural – approach a seemingly paranormal situation with a firm attitude of "Stuff and nonsense! How was this gimmicked?" – an attitude that may invite disaster if no human gimmickry is involved.

A very few detectives, notably Algernon Blackwood's John Silence, Manly Wade Wellman's John Thunston, and Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin, have specialized exclusively in the supernatural; but this too has the limitations of inflexibility, and one can imagine de Grandin brandishing a clove of garlic or an apertillum as protection against Jack the Ripper.

With more suitable ambivalence, the cases of Richard Sale's too-little-known Captain McGrail, like those of my own Dr. Verner (all save one of which, I regret to say, still repose in their box at the Wells Fargo Bank), end inconclusively, or rather with two conclusions, evenly balanced between the rational and the fantastic.

A certain few detectives have on occasion adopted themselves to a case outside the normal pattern. Lord Peter Wimsey once (in *The Bone of Contention*) employed a good occult reasoning to dispel the supernatural. The career of C. Daly King's Tarant (another of the Great Neglected Detectives – *there's a title for an anthology!*) seemed to draw him more and more into occult involvement. My own Fergus O'Brien, who has coped only with murderers in novels, has met (and I hope competently) with werewolves and time machines in shorter adventures. F Tenneyson Jesse's Solange Fontaine (yet another candidate demanding rescue from oblivion) employs something very like ESP in her deductions, and has occasionally found herself in an unarguably supernatural episode.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, to the somewhat specialized *Dream Detective*, Morris Klaw, Sax Rhomer has chronicled the fortunes and misfortunes of Assistant Commissioner (of Scotland Yard) Sir Denis Nayland Smith and of private detective (ex-FBI) Drake Roscoe, each of whom has often faced an adversary whose

catholic and unscrupulous arsenal of weapons includes the supernatural and the parascientific – Smith's enemy being, of course, the (apparently literally) immortal Dr. Fu Manchu and Drake's the less well known but no less insidious Astar, by first marriage the Marquise Sumuru.

(It is regrettable that the infamous Doctor has no more worthy antagonist than the often startlingly inept Nayland Smith; he should have been matched with Holmes, or at the very least with Cleek of the Forty Faces – as a subsidiary matter, the prose style of his exploits and those of Cleek would have jibed admirably. Aficionados, however, will recall that a certain unnamed Oriental doctor crossed the path of Solar Pons in *The Camberwell Beauty*, and will be happy to learn that he reappears in this current volume.)

The detective of ideal flexibility is William Hope Hodgson's "ghostfinder," Carnacki (of whom Dennis Wheatley's Niels Orsen is a pallid and regrettable imitation). Carnacki is a specialist, called in only for seemingly supernatural problems; but unlike either Gideon Fell or Jules de Grandin, he aims his efforts at determining whether the specific problem is or is not supernatural in origin. Once having determined its nature, he treats it on its own terms, by "realistic" or by occult methods.

You will discover many individual, non-Holmesian virtues of Solar Pons in this volume, as well as many more felicitous echoes of 221B Baker Street in 7B Praed Street. But high among the independent qualities of Pons must rank the fact that his name can be inscribed on the all-too-short list of the Flexible Detectives.

*His Last Bow*, the Fourth collection of Sherlock Holmes' shorter adventures (and I trust you have observed that each volume of the Pontian Canon contains precisely as many stories as its Holmesian parallel?), bears in its original English edition (John Murray, 1917), the subtitle: *Some Reminiscences of Sherlock Holmes*. (The U.S. edition, mysteriously, as always, is subtitled: *A Reminiscence...*)

Anthony Boucher's foreword originally appeared in the Mycroft & Moran edition in 1961 and was reprinted in the Pinnacle edition of 1973.

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<sup>2</sup> I have vivid recollection of a short story by H.C. Bailey, in the 1920's or early 1930's, in which Reggie Fortune confronted genuine witchcraft, but I have never been able to rediscover it. I shall be grateful if any reader can help me.

## WHO WAS ANTHONY BOUCHER?

BY WILLIAM F. NOLAN



Anthony Boucher would be flattered and happily shocked to know that the Bouchercon, the world's premier annual mystery convention was named after him. A singular honor. Yet he deserved it. He earned it.

Yes, I knew him personally; I was proud to call him my friend. And I can tell you a lot about him. For starters, Boucher (rhymes with "voucher") was not his birth name; he was born on August 21, 1911, as William Anthony Parker White, and he used this legal name all his life, along with the pseudonym that most readers, editors and friends knew him by. (He even had a joint bank account with himself under both names.)

He was born in Oakland, California, into a family based in medicine. His parents were both physicians, but Tony had no desire to emulate them. In high school he wanted to be a physicist. However, by junior college, Tony had a new goal: He would become a language teacher. After earning a bachelor of arts degree in 1932 from the University of Southern California, he earned his M.A. (with honors in German and Spanish) at U.C. Berkeley in 1934. Indeed, he was a natural linguist and later translated works into English from French, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. (He was also proficient in Sanskrit!)

During his college years, Tony was active in Little Theater as actor, director and playwright. Opera was also an early passion.

In 1935, he became a theater and music critic for United Progressive News in Los Angeles, and wrote his first mystery novel, *The Case of the Seven of Calvary*, a year later. (Simon & Schuster published it as "by Anthony Boucher" in 1937.)

I once asked him about the origin of his second name. "I invented it for mysteries," he said. "Boucher was my grandmother's maiden name. She was French-Irish. The 'Anthony' came from a favorite saint of mine. Plus, it's part of my legal first name."

Tony married Phyllis Price in the spring of 1938 (they subsequently had two sons), and his second mystery novel, *The Case of the Crumpled Knave*, was published in 1939. Boucher's detective, Fergus O'Brien, was conceived as a kind of West Coast Ellery Queen with an Irish brogue, and Tony wrote three more O'Brien novels into 1942.

He was also writing as H.H. Holmes (*Nine Times Nine*), utilizing his Roman Catholic background in the creation of crime-solving nun Sister Ursula.

Tony told me about this second pen name: "Aware of my ongoing obsession with Conan Doyle's legendary detective, most of my friends assumed that 'H.H. Holmes' was derived from the great Sherlock. Not so. Holmes was an actual alias for one of the outstanding criminals of the century, Herman W. Mudgett. Later, I used



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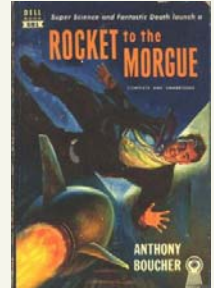
BY WILLIAM F. NOLAN

Mudgett's real name for some of my printed verse."

Boucher had always been deeply involved in the genres of fantasy, mystery and horror (having sold his first story, at age 16, to Weird Tales), but it was not until 1940 that he added science fiction to the list.

"SF was a 'cult' genre in those days," Boucher told me. "The boom in science fiction didn't take place until after the second World War. I was drawn into it by some of my local writer friends."

Tony became active in a Southern California group known as the "Manana Literary Society." Its members included some of the major talents in early science fiction: Robert A. Heinlein, Edmond Hamilton, C.L. Moore, Henry Kuttner and Cleve Cartmill. Tony's second H.H. Holmes mystery novel, *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942) was based directly on the group--and was dedicated to them.



This proved to be Tony's last novel, although he continued, throughout his career to write short fiction for both the mystery and SF/fantasy markets.

By 1942, he was into what most of his admirers claim was his "true vocation"--that of reviewer and critic. He began reviewing in the San Francisco Chronicle, expanding to the Chicago Sun Times, and the New York Herald Tribune, but his major critical contribution appeared in the New York Times Book Review beginning in 1951. In all (to the year of his death), Tony wrote more than 850 weekly review columns under the heading "Criminals at Large." He won three Edgars from the Mystery Writers of America for this outstanding body of criticism and was recognized as the nation's foremost authority on crime fiction, without question the most influential, as well as the most popular, mystery critic of his period.

He was no less an expert on true crime, editing *The Pocket Book of True Crime Stories* in 1943, and later helming the highly-regarded *True Crime Detective*.

The 1940s proved to be a very busy and productive decade for Boucher. In 1945 he launched into a spectacular three-year radio career, plotting more than 100 episodes for "The Adventures of Ellery Queen," while also providing plots for the bulk of the Sherlock Holmes radio dramas. By the summer of '46 he had created his own mystery series for the airwaves, "The Casebook of Gregory Hood." ("I was turning out three scripts each week for as many shows," he stated. "It was a mix of hard work and great fun.")

Tony left dramatic radio in 1948, "mainly because I was putting in a lot of hours working with J. Francis McComas in creating what soon became *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. We got it off the ground in '49 and saw it take hold solidly by 1950. This was a major creative challenge and although I was involved in a lot of other projects, I stayed with F&SF into 1958."

Indeed, throughout his years with the magazine, Boucher was certainly involved in "a lot of other projects." Among them:

- Supplying the SF and crime markets with new fiction.

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- Teaching an informal writing class from his home in Berkeley.
- Continuing his Sunday mystery columns for the New York Times Book Review.
- Functioning as chief critic for Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.
- Reviewing SF and fantasy (as H.H. Holmes) for the New York Herald Tribune.
- Editing True Crime Detective.
- Supervising the Mercury Mystery Line and (later) the Dell Great Mystery Library.
- Hosting "Great Voices," his series of historical opera recordings for Pacifica Radio.
- Serving (in 1951) as president of Mystery Writers of America.

In addition to all of this, Tony was a devoted poker player, a political activist, a rabid sport fan (football, basketball, track, gymnastics and rugby), an active "Sherlockian" in the Baker Street Irregulars, and a spirited chef. We met in 1952 when I asked him to write a short piece on Bradbury's early career for my one-shot Ray Bradbury Review. Despite his incredible workload, Tony graciously responded with a fine essay and we became instant friends. In 1956 he printed one of my stories in F&SF. I recall my delight. Tony was a "tough sell" due to the strict, exacting standards of quality he imposed; for me, getting a story into F&SF was akin to cracking The New Yorker.

As an editor, Boucher was strong-willed but gentle. He hated form letters and always personalized his rejections. He possessed enormous tact and patience and took real pride in discovering new writers, offering them his unique brand of warm helpful encouragement. And he had a truly phenomenal memory.

I recall an evening in San Francisco during the course of which he gleefully reeled off dozens of bawdy limericks. He was equally adept at quoting Shakespeare, and his in-depth knowledge of the mystery genre, past and present, was mind-boggling. He was a one-man encyclopedia when it came to opera or sports. Also, he was able to recall, in detail, the plot of every story and novel he'd read from boyhood on, and we're talking thousands of plots here!

Tony's physical health was never comparable to his mental health and by the spring of 1958, illness forced him to step away from his editorial duties at F&SF, leaving the magazine to others. Nevertheless, the final decade of his life was crowded with Boucherian activity.

In 1961 he became a regular reviewer for Opera News. In 1962 he supervised the line of Collier mystery classics, and in 1963 became editor of Best Detective Stories of the Year, while continuing to conduct his "Great Voices" radio show and provide reviews for the Times and Ellery Queen. Other passions included SF conventions (where he functioned as a witty and erudite speaker and panelist), Elizabethan drama, mathematics, religion and pre-history.

One of his most endearing qualities was the profound joy he took in the talents of others, no matter what these talents might embrace.

I recall his amused delight in my rather strange ability to walk backward down steep hills. Whenever we were together on a steep hill in San Francisco, he would insist that I perform for him. I was always happy to oblige;

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hearing Tony's deep chuckle of pleasure was ample reward.

Tony Boucher took pleasure in so much, and brought pleasure in turn to so many. He was truly *sui generis*. I have never known anyone like him.

In 1968 I dedicated my book, 3 to the Highest Power:

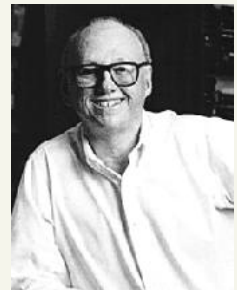
*For Anthony Boucher, who...in eighty-seven splendidly edited issues of Fantasy and Science Fiction, perfected the Grand Art of the Preface.*

This is reference to all the wonderful short prefaces he contributed to each story in F&SF.

The last word Tony wrote to me was "amen"—shakily scrawled at the bottom of a letter from Phyllis telling me how much the dedication meant to him. He was dying of lung cancer and a few weeks later he was gone.

This article is gratefully borrowed from [Mystery.net.com](http://www.mysterynet.com) (a website highly recommended for mystery fans) and can be found at: <http://www.mysterynet.com/books/testimony/boucher.shtml>

William F. Nolan is a prolific writer who is co-author of the novel *Logan's Run*, which was adapted as a successful film in 1976. Nolan has written extensively in the science fiction, horror, Max Brand and hard boiled noir genres, among others. His *Hammett: A Life in the Fast Lane* is one of my favorite biographies.





*FROM THE PONTINE DOSSIER*  
**THE OLD DOCTOR OF LIMEHOUSE**  
 CHARLES R. L. POWER

*The Adventure of the Camberwell Beauty*, *The Adventure of the Praed Street Irregulars*, and *The Adventure of the Seven Sisters* all involve a mysterious personage whom we shall call 'Dr. F.' Unfortunately, *Seven Sisters* has not yet been chronicled, so we must rely on the other two adventures for our information, primarily *Camberwell Beauty*. Pons, in *Praed Street Irregulars*, mentions having dealt with Dr. F. once before, though not having actually met him. This took place before the Pons-Parker meeting (itself June 1919, by the Agent's revision of Patrick).

This may or may not have been *Seven Sisters*, referred to in *Camberwell Beauty* as an occasion upon which Dr. F. saved Pons's life. The Agent tells me that Dr. Parker intends to send *Seven Sisters* some time in the future, so we can only wait.

*Praed Street Irregulars* (Patrick, uncontradicted as yet, places it in April 1926) involves Dr. F. only insofar as he aids in accomplishes, I should say the rescue of the Crown Prince of one of the Balkan thrones from the hands of the notorious Israel Sarpedon. His only apparent reason is the request of Pons.

In the course of the adventure, we learn that Dr. F. has a small army of Orientals (Chinese, Burmese, Malays) in his employ for nefarious purposes, and that his headquarters is in Limehouse. He himself is described as 'a tall, stooped Chinese, an ageless old man wearing a skull cap and smoked glasses' and having a sibilant whisper.



Illustration by Frank Utpatel

*Camberwell Beauty* provides considerably more food for thought. I should mention that even independent of Dr. F., this adventure is a notable one simply by reason of its being the first since Pons's return from the south of France and the first since Parker's marriage to Constance Dorrington.

ton. Patrick, uncontradicted, makes this May 1933.

One point should be cleared up here. In his own account of *Camberwell Beauty*, Parker shows himself as ignorant of Dr. F.'s existence. He obviously has not forgotten *Praed Street Irregulars*, since that chronicle was published as late as 1961. We must remember that scriptural interpretation need not always be literal. Parker's supposed ignorance was merely a literary device by which Pons was able to give the reader some background on Dr. F. *Camberwell Beauty*, after all, was published first, in 1952. *Camberwell Beauty* involves another abduction, or so it seems; this time it is Pons who is to help Dr. F.

The abduction (or elopement, as it turns out) is of Miss Cecily Kennet, alias Karah. It turns out, as PSI members will remember, that Pons was hired merely by way of saving Dr. F.'s face. He does, nonetheless, receive, in addition to his fee, a set of Chinese ivory and ebony figurines, complete with inlaid jewels. To make such gift, it is obvious that Dr. F. is a man of means.

Dr. F. is, of course, the same uninitialled Chinese doctor as was involved in *Praed Street Irregulars*. Not only do physical descriptions tally—a pair of striking green eyes accounting for the smoked glasses worn in the earlier adventure—but even Pons's description of his position—'the head of one of the most skillfully organized bands of—shall we say, secret agents?—in all London'—goes along with *Praed Street Irregulars*. True, the one agent we meet is not an Oriental, but Dr. F. has, after all, some thousand agents. Besides, he is much too intelligent to believe in racial discrimination.

Who is this mystery-man who keeps a marmoset on his shoulder? We don't know. However, I recommend PSI members to a novel entitled *The Yellow Claw*, which deals with one Mr. King, whose activities are certainly of the type in which Dr. F. is supposed to be primarily engaged. He is an exceptionally obscure figure, by an equally obscure author, one Sax Rohmer, who is known for some fantastic series of novels about some idiotic British agent's pursuit of some ludicrously unrealistic 'master criminal.' We are to be grateful that Parker relegates his imagination to his reading. In that department, as Pons said in *The Adventure of the Grice-Paterson Curse*, 'Pray forgive Dr. Parker...'

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## SOLAR PONS' WAR OF THE WORLDS

BY ANDREW NORRIS

### A Scientific Romance

#### **PART ONE: The Adventure of the Martian Conquest**

##### **CHAPTER ONE - A Call From Inspector Jamison**

I recall that the day was a very fine one to begin with. My mind was on other matters, and it was simply yet another typical London day for me. It never occurred that it would be perhaps among the most memorable of my adventures with Mr. Solar Pons to date.

The day was October 25th, 1938. The year itself had been a quiet one for Solar Pons and I, with only a handful of cases that I have scribed within my other volumes. I was returning on the Underground to our shared lodgings and found to my surprise that two men were struggling up the stairs of 7B Praed Street with a wireless upon my arrival.

The poor gentlemen were so exhausted from their task that I dared not disturb them as they completed their task and departed. At the top of the banister, I saw Pons looking down at me with a smug grin, his left arm resting casually the wireless as he leaned forward slightly.

"Goodness gracious, Pons!" I spluttered, dismayed to see my friend with such an expensive-looking item. "What the devil is all of this?"

"Come come, Parker," he chuckled lightly as I ascended. "Surely you did not think that I would be kept informed of the day's events solely by the newspapers?"

"But a contraption such as this must have cost you a pretty penny!"

"Exactly 6 pounds, 10 shillings," he nodded. "But I shall explain all in a moment."

He permitted me to aid him in moving the heavy contraption into his living quarters, where a small space amongst the furniture had been cleared to house it. After depositing our cargo and mopping our faces in exhaustion, Pons straightened himself in his armchair and looked at me sternly.

"Doctor, you recall the shooting star you have been pestering me about for the last few days?"

"I do," I nodded. "Every time I brought up the subject, you remarked that it was mere tripe."

"Indeed, but now I am not so sure, especially in light of some of my recent readings in the field of fiction. Also there was a somewhat small article in the evening edition of *The Times* yesterday that stated the star in question had passed beyond the orbit of the moon and appeared to be traveling towards the Earth at some fantastic speed. If such a star causes any harm, I wish to know what I might do to assist the authorities."

Although the shooting star had indeed encapsulated my mind, I felt that this humanitarian streak was atypical of Pons. "But why the sudden interest to help mankind on such a scale?"

"Have you ever heard of H.G. Wells?" was the strict response.

"I have. He is that fellow who was responsible for that 'Things to Come' film a few years ago,"

"He is a brilliant writer, Doctor, although I do not altogether agree with his politics. When I was barely 18 years old, he published a novel entitled 'The War of the Worlds', a piece in which alien beings arrive on our world in shooting-stars very similar to the one the world's observatories are so keenly watching this very day."

"You're surely not suggesting that such an object could contain little spacemen, Pons?! The whole idea sounds completely absurd!"

"If I recall, Doctor, that is what you said about the concept of deduction upon our first meeting. It is also what many have said about the idea of flight, and yet we now have the aeroplane!"

Our somewhat cordial altercation was rudely interrupted by a loud hammering at the door. The sudden outburst startled me, and I jumped alarmingly in my chair. Pons, however, appeared to remain somewhat cool and placid.

"By the incessant rapping and the pressure of the

fist," he remarked, "I would say that Inspector Jamison is calling." As Pons predicted, Inspector Jamison came stumbling in through the door, his face swollen and red as a beetroot. He wheezed for breath for a moment before making any attempt at speech.

"Mr. Pons," he gasped. "Have you...have you 'eard the news?"

"Indeed no," Pons responded, acting as though this was merely a casual conversation. "I have avoided the news all day to await the arrival of my wireless."

"Then switch it over to Radio Luxembourg!" Jamison barked, as if somewhat impatient with Pons. "If there's a newsflash, the front line'll tell you why I'm here!"

Pons complied, and sure enough, we caught the latest newsflash, which began as follows.

"The shooting star that has been tracked by observatories across the globe has reportedly landed in the small village of Harlington on the fringe of Greater London, England. Police are struggling to keep spectators back as we speak, and scientists from across the country are hurrying to observe the fallen star first-hand."

"You see, Pons," Jamison huffed. "Being the expert, we were hoping that you could tell us a little more about the thing itself. So far, the scientists have failed to turn up for one reason or another."

"And you wish for me to use my deductive skills in an area that I know little of save for the curiosity of my good friend Dr. Parker?"

"We only want you to give us some ideas, we're not asking you to pinpoint where the damn thing came from!" Jamison hissed. I perceived that his patience was growing somewhat thin. I stared over at Pons to see what his response would be, and I could see that, despite his initial reluctance to engage in the affair, he was not one to miss out on an adventure.

## CHAPTER TWO - *An Observation of the Fallen Star*

We hailed a taxi from Praed Street and proceeded along the choking arteries of London traffic towards Harlington. Jamison had evidently arrived by taxi also, as a number of police cars had been called upon to keep back the spectators.

Once we arrived, Pons quickly exited the vehicle, leaving Jamison to pay for the journey. I followed behind until Pons came to an abrupt stop. Both he and I were standing on the rim of an enormous pit that had been formed by the fallen object. Some empty houses had once stood where the pit now was and the debris of bricks and floorboards lay piled over the top of the object, partially concealing it from view. From what little we could see, the object was a far cry from an enormous boulder, which most comets usually resemble. It appeared to consist of a pewter colouring that glistened slightly in the sunlight and the object was entirely cylindrical, its diameter alone being 30 yards across and its length being something triple that diameter.

"Well, Pons?" murmured Jamison, who had silently arrived as we stood there. Pons did not answer immediately, for his eyes were fixated on the object. Unlike myself or Jamison, he did not appear to step back to compensate for the heat this object was generating. After a minute or so, he moved back to join us, lighting his pipe in the process.

"From what I can gather," he began. "The object is evidently artificial and hollow. It was not a shooting star or a meteorite but perhaps some form of vessel. The heat itself is not an inherent characteristic and the object was piloted rather than flying through space with no sense of direction."

"And what exactly makes you say that?" Jamison sniffed.

"Most of the information I must thank Dr. Parker for. From him, I have learnt that no meteorites are wholly made of any single metal and that solid meteorites cause a greater impact upon landing. Many burn into the size of mere pebbles when entering our atmosphere. This object has caused little mayhem upon landing save for these unfortunate buildings and its shape is far too sleek to be anything like a spatial body. The heat itself is a result of entering our atmosphere and was conducted through the metal, which has made it untouchable upon impact."

"So, if that's the case, who sent it?"

"If we are to believe Mr. Wells, Martians." Such an idea sent Jamison into a state of cynical hilarity. Pons did not flinch during the Inspector's little spectacle, but patiently puffed on his pipe as

Jamison hollered in his hyena-like way.

"Of all the things you have suggested, Pons, that is by far the most pathetic!"

"You believe there is no life on Mars, Inspector, but I did not say that there were Martians within the cylinder. Had I bothered to heed to Parker's interest on the subject, I would have sooner made a note of its origin, but for all I know, it could be from anywhere!"

"If I could say something," I murmured, attempting to make my presence known. "The cylinder was first picked up by telescopes when the planet Mars was in its closest orbit to the Earth, exactly ten days ago. Taking that into account, the idea is not as absurd."

Pons smiled at Jamison for my contribution, although our companion still refused to believe the idea. There passed a silent altercation between Pons and Jamison, as if their thoughts were being transferred between the glares of each. The crowd of spectators had grown considerably during this time and the police were straining to hold the eager tourists at bay. It was not until one of the constables called for Jamison that the awkward silence was broken.

"What was all that about?" I muttered to Pons as Jamison marched off.

"Inspector Jamison's cynicism is holding his belief at bay, Parker, and I do believe that it should take another spectacle to convince him."

It did not take long for that spectacle to occur.

### CHAPTER THREE - *The Opening of the Cylinder*

Pons and I were beginning to walk back towards the road when he suddenly came to a halt. We heard a scraping sound like metal on metal. The crowd of spectators gasped and ceased their movements whilst the police turned about to see the commotion.

Before our very eyes, the uncovered end of the cylinder was rotating on some unseen axis. Somewhere within, a mechanism or creature was unscrewing a section of this "vessel" as Pons had put it, and was attempting to emerge into the world.

I recall that some of the crowd began to flee at

the spectacle, while others remained transfixed in horror. I certainly was spellbound but Pons retained his cool composure, though his eyes did show signs of curiosity. When perhaps two feet of shining, metallic screw projected from the aperture, the lid slid slowly down until it hit the floor of the pit with a reverberating thud, bringing a small heap of rubble falling atop of the cylinder.

There was little to be seen inside the cylinder, save for the shadow cast by its walls. Presently, we faintly heard deep, heavy breathing, like that of some monstrous hound. The sounds intensified as something limped into the daylight. The horror which we now observed was far greater than I can accurately describe.

Before us was a greyish-brown bulk of flesh, limping painfully on a multitude of thick, slithering tentacles, obviously weighted down by our own gravity. A fleshy beak rose and fell in time with the breathing I have already described. A pair of yellow, orb-like eyes surveyed us in the daylight, and the entire bulk of the thing, which was perhaps no larger than a walrus, pulsated and convoluted in a disgusting manner. I would say that the thing was very much like an octopus with a demonic face.

Some of the women in the crowd fainted, whilst others screamed. I stepped back slightly, fearing that this monster might rise up and attack, but it did not. Instead, it limped onto the underside of the lid, which contained nothing more than the screw I have previously mentioned. As it sat there, scrutinising us with its disturbing features, there came three loud puffs of greenish smoke from inside the cylinder. The smoke poured about us and caused a violent coughing among many.

Pons waited no longer and instantly dragged me away by the arm. Jamison noticed us leave and straggled after. I could not see what was happening but I could hear over our footsteps a series of light clanking noises, as though some great structure was being erected. It was not until we were a great distance away that Pons halted, gasping for breath. Jamison too was somewhat exhausted, although my rude departure was something strong within my mind at the time.

"What in Heaven's name are you doing?" I frowned at Pons, straightening my sleeve.

"Indeed," agreed Jamison. "I'd like to know exactly why you were so keen to leave, Mr. Pons."



"Look at the cylinder again, Inspector, and you shall see why!" Jamison and I exchanged confused glances, and looked around the corner of the building to view the cylinder. I could see little of the structure but gleaned that it was supported on several thin, silver rods, and an unusual apex was wobbling about on top of this structure. A loud droning filled the air and some fantastic ray swept across the crowd, burning them to mere ashes. Their agonising screams were drowned out by the screeching of the unseen weapon. I cannot even find the words to pen my terror as I watched this massacre. There were only a handful who I saw successfully evade destruction, but some of the houses caught in the ray simply exploded upon making contact with the Martian's destructive weapon.

The cacophony soon died away, and the structure sank into the pit, hidden by a shroud of green mist. Jamison, Pons and myself were left dazed and petrified. Never before had I seen such destruction of man, even during the Great War. Pons mopped his brow with his handkerchief, and I clutched at my bosom, and felt my heart palpitating at a fantastic rate from the horror.

"How in all things holy did you know that was going to happen?!" Jamison gasped, overcome with shock.

"They say that some men are the prophets of the modern world," Pons remarked. "And Mr. Wells had evidently envisaged the Martian invasion within his novel. If I had not read his book, Inspector, then I do believe all three of us would have perished also."

"So what do we do? It'll take ages for the army to get here! The only thing we can count on is that the gravity'll hold them down long enough!"

"Indeed," agreed Pons. "But I suggest that we speak to Mr. Wells. He may be able to give us some information that he never penned in his story."

### CHAPTER THREE - *Our Meeting With Mr. Wells*

We hailed a taxi once again to take us to Mr. Wells' home on the suburban outskirts of London, our only halt being for Inspector Jamison to telephone for help. I heard little of his conversation, for the walls of the telephone kiosk muted his voice, although I could hear words such as

"military" and "assistance" being mentioned.

As we traveled further, Inspector Jamison looked at us both with concern.

"Well, Mr. Pons," he frowned. "You appear to know so much about these Martians, and about Mr. Wells. So, assuming he is the great prophet you believe, what exactly will the Martians do next?"

"So far as I can perceive," Pons began. "They will be hindered by our greater gravity, but will start working on fantastic machines that they will use against us. The heat-ray you have seen was just one of several weapons they have at their disposal."

Our taxi halted at the semi-detached home of Mr. Herbert George Wells. Far from being the grandeur town-house I originally expected it to be, it was more like the home of a middle-class office worker, one of the new-age designs built in the jazz era after the Great War. Again, we left Jamison to pay the fare as Pons marched up the small garden path and hammered frantically upon the door.

We heard a voice within grumbling unintelligibly, after which Pons ceased knocking. There was a click of the latch, and standing before us was Herbert George Wells in the flesh. He stood slightly over five feet, and his face was beginning to pale and wrinkle with age. His once oak-brown hair was gradually giving way to gray and his moustache was beginning to widen as age set in. It is difficult for me to still realise how lucky I was to meet one of the most imaginative writers of the last century, but I wished it could have happened under more pleasing circumstances.

"Yes?" he asked simply, looking slightly disgruntled at the deputation before him.

"Good day, Mr. Wells," Pons grinned, tipping his hat. I could tell by his grin that his admiration for the man was being kept bottled up. "I am Solar Pons, and these are my associates, Dr. Lyndon Parker and Inspector Jamison of Scotland Yard."

"Well, what is it? I'm a very busy man, Mr. Pons, and I've no time for chit-chat."

"Mr. Wells, we are here on a very serious matter, and we require your assistance," Rather than wait to be invited in, Pons simply strode into the front

room of Mr. Wells's home, with the owner spluttering in disbelief. I followed after Pons, whilst Jamison attempted to seize control of the moment.

"Now Mr. Wells, there's been a little trouble at Harlington, and we just want to ask you about some of your work," Jamison proceeded in that ferret-like manner of his.

"What are you talking about, Inspector?" Wells grunted. "Forgive me, but none of my works relate to such a place, so why should I be linked to it?"

"Mr. Wells, a cylinder has landed at Harlington and wiped out practically all of the villagers within," Pons proceeded. "We three were witnesses to the tragedy, and practically everything we saw and everything we heard matches the account you transcribed in your 'War of the Worlds'. It is very rare for people to publish accounts of their premonitions, Mr. Wells, and thus I believe that you may wish to tell us anything that could aid us at this hour."

There passed a great silence, during which Mr. Wells simply stood in the doorway, trembling somewhat. Sighing, he gestured for us to follow him, and led us to a small shed at the bottom of his well-kept garden. After opening the door, he retrieved a small brown box covered in oily rags and pulled out what appeared to be some form of quartz-like crystal that had taken the form of an egg, although its size indicated something far greater.

"Here," Wells murmured. "I found this in my garden one night, it's..."

"A Crystal Egg," Pons replied, to which Wells nodded solemnly. "When placed in a completely pitch-black room, you are able to view the landscape of the planet Mars and its inhabitants."

"Dear Lord, Pons! How in heaven's name can you know that?!" Jamison exclaimed in disbelief. I too was perplexed, for Pons knew little of the cylinder, yet knew much of this egg.

"Because our friend Mr. Wells here wrote a short-story on such a subject in 1897, one year prior to the 'War of the Worlds'."

"Indeed," Wells nodded, and allowed us to examine the egg further. I daresay, it felt rather heavy, and was perhaps slightly larger than the egg of an ostrich. "No sooner had I finished my work on 'The

Crystal Egg' than I began to view other images through it. I saw terrifying scenes of war, destruction and the like. In the night, such images would come back to me, and I felt compelled to transcribe them in 'The War of the Worlds'."

"So, this thing is a sort of gateway to Mars?" Jamison ventured, somewhat skeptical of the idea.

"I think so," Wells replied. "But once I had completed 'The War of the Worlds', no further images came through, and it became simply a large crystal. I've kept it locked in my shed ever since and have told nobody of its existence. The world believes such an object as nothing but mere fiction."

"I wonder," Pons mumbled. "Perhaps there is a faction of the Martian race that opposed the idea of invading the Earth and so perhaps sent the Crystal Egg as a warning to mankind, like a reel of movie film that would show the invasion of the Earth. But the idea was considered nothing more than fiction and nobody took Mr. Wells' ideas seriously. Now that the Martians are invading, we are still unprepared for a threat beyond this world."

#### CHAPTER FOUR - *Alerting Bancroft*

Due to the gravity of the situation, we four realised that London would need to be evacuated as soon as possible, for we feared that it would be the first target for the Martians. The aliens were no doubt at work on their machines even as we made haste into Central London.

This time, Jamison had secured a police car to transport us. Pons, Wells and I kept our ears open to the incoming radio announcements. Most were irrelevant, but one shook terror into us all:

"Calling all cars in the vicinity of Harlington. Isolate road-blocks. Inner cordon of Coldstream Guards have come under heavy attack by Martian heat-ray. Do not panic and do not allow anyone, repeat, anyone, within a five-mile radius of Harlington village. That is all."

It was certain that the heat-ray had been improved upon, if there was now such a great distance between the cylinder and the outer-cordon. I observed in Wells' eyes the horror of seeing such a nightmare, both viewed and penned by him, becoming a harsh reality. There was no doubting that such a thought was traumatizing to the poor fellow.

Arriving in Whitehall, Pons and Wells alighted while I took the rear. Jamison also alighted, but where he ventured I do not know. We three, however, raced into the Foreign Office and up to one of the more senior offices, marked only by the well-polished mahogany door and the brass plaque it sported, which read "B.S. PONS" upon it.

We marched inside, where the lethargic figure of Bancroft Pons, seven years senior to Solar Pons, sat hunched over his desk in a posture not unlike that of a vulture. To say that Bancroft was surprised to see us barge in unannounced would be an understatement and he seemed both curious and worried at our arrival.

"Bancroft," Pons murmured sternly. "There is little time to explain, but I suggest that you contact any European nation still open diplomatically and begin organising a mass-evacuation of London."

"What?!" hissed Bancroft, rising. "Do you realise what a herculean task that is? And in any case, why do you want eight million people to suddenly take leave of their activities?"

"You have heard of events in Harlington?"

"I have, but I fail to see their relevancy."

"Oh, Bancroft, do try and show some logic!" Solar rebuked, allowing Mr. Wells to take over.

"Mr. Pons, I have foreseen the events that will follow if you ignore what this man has said. Unless we act, the thing that lies in Harlington will begin to cause greater destruction than any of us have scarcely dreamed!"

"What fanciful rubbish!" Bancroft snorted. "Whilst I respect your celebrity, Mr. Wells, I cannot excuse you or my brother for barging into a government office and delivering fanciful stories! I'm ashamed of you, Solar. I thought you were interested only in facts!"

A thundering explosion suddenly knocked us all from our feet. The entire building rattled and groaned as if it were the subject of some violent collision and I began to fear that the worst had suddenly become the inevitable.

#### CHAPTER FIVE - *The Cylinder in Whitehall*

The crash had surprised us all, and I supposed that the range of the Martian heat-ray had in-

creased to some fantastic distance. And yet the force of the explosion was too great, for we had felt the reverberations of the heat-ray against the houses in Harlington and these shockwaves were on a much larger scale.

Solar and Bancroft wasted no time in rushing outside while Wells and I trailed far behind. As we reached the square in front of the Whitehall building we found a newly-arrived cylinder entrenched firmly in the ground. All about it were shattered bricks and concrete which had been scattered by the impact of the enormous projectile. An up-turned pipe was spraying jets of water which rapidly turned into huge gusts of steam upon contact with the cylinder's glowing-hot surface.

"Dear lord!" Bancroft gasped, amazed at the sheer size of the alien object. "Solar, is that the cylinder you professed to have seen in Harlington?"

"Indeed," nodded Pons grimly. "And the arrival of this second cylinder means that the Martians within the first cylinder will almost be complete with their work. But the fact that these cylinders are landing closer to London than I had anticipated is an even greater worry."

"And you stand by your statement regarding the evacuation of London?"

"My dear Bancroft, would the Martians trouble themselves to travel thousands of miles to Earth only to incinerate trespassers nearby the pits where they are so mercilessly bound by our heavier air?" I could see the response in Bancroft's face, and thus he left us to begin operations. A multitude of people had gathered about the cylinder to examine it, curious at its presence, but we three kept our distance and moved around the cylinder in an arc to leave Whitehall and find help.

"Mr. Wells," Pons proceeded as we walked. "I am well aware that you described bacteria as the cause of the Martians' death, but is it possible that you could be more specific on that subject?"

"If only I could," Wells sighed in an exasperated manner. "Through the Crystal Egg, I could see only a specimen of amoebas to which I cannot place a name. Had I the knowledge of the late Dr. Robert Koch, naming the substance would not be a problem." Pons sighed in irritation and then an idea struck him.

"Mr. Wells, if you would care to follow me to the Science Museum, then perhaps we may find the specimen you are looking for." He turned to me. "Doctor, I want you to make sure Mrs. Parker gets to safety. Once you have done so, return to the Science Museum where we shall await you." Until then, the thought of my beloved Constance had escaped me, but it was now, for me at least, the very first priority. I parted company with Pons and Mr. Wells on Regent Street and crossed into Carnaby Street before hailing a taxi to carry me home.

#### CHAPTER SIX - *The Martians at the Thames*

I returned home to my dear wife, whom had been following the progress of the Martian reports on our own wireless. It was through her that I learnt that many more of these fatal cylinders were making their way from Mars. A further eight were believed to be traveling to Great Britain, and five were believed to be traveling to the Soviet Union, as were another five to the United States. Two were said to be traveling into India, and two more to Canada, thus making 22 cylinders in total. Why the Martians chose to concentrate their forces on such a small island like Great Britain I cannot conceive, although it is possible that yet more were due to start on their way to the Earth, scheduled for other places.

I told Constance of Pons' fears of a Martian attack, and proceeded to convince her to move to safety, perhaps in Belgium or France. Constance wept upon my shoulder, refusing to leave without me, though I insisted that I would follow as soon as Pons and Wells had found the very weapon we could use against the invaders. It was only then that Constance agreed to leave without me.

After packing her suitcase, I accompanied her to the mouth of the River Thames, where Bancroft's evacuation efforts were apparent. No Martians had been sighted outside of their pits or cylinders and yet there were many steamers and vessels waiting to transport throngs of people to safer territory. Sheer panic had obviously gripped the nation, as the decks of the ships below me were swamped with people hoping to evade the threat that loomed over us. I began to grow fearful for my darling wife, recalling what had become of my first love in 1912. But it was the only transport that had yet been arranged and there was no other means of seeing her out of danger to the continent.

One of these vessels, named the "Thor", was where I aided Constance in embarking. But as I saw her despairing face disappear into the mass of people on the crowded deck, there came a deafening hoot from the distance: a sort of howl which seemed to cry "Aloo!" from over the tree-tops from the south.

And then I saw it! The Martians were on the move! To compensate for their lack of sustenance, they now occupied the bodies of these enormous mechanisms! I can describe a mechanism only as an enormous tripod, with three, spider-like legs that maneuvered it. Around its cylindrical body were several versatile pieces of metallic rope dangling from the sides. Two of these ropes held firmly to two small canisters, one of which resembled an enormous funnel. A cage was mounted upon the rear of the machine, containing a handful of people that must have come in the path of these monsters. A hood within the body of the brute contained the Martian, piloting this blunderbuss as easily as a man pilots a motor car.

The ground heaved as they stomped towards us and the crowds began to panic. Some remained transfixed in sheer horror, while others fled in all directions. Some of the crewmen of the vessels reacted to the threat and a few ships cast off without orders or permission. The Martians continued their advance and a total of three marched to the river. I ran, fearful they would once more discharge their heat-rays. And yet, when they halted, one of the canisters they held began to fire a series of rockets which exploded in the air and sent a thick, black smoke upon the people, who were fleeing in all directions. From my hiding-point, I could see that those who inhaled the black smoke were suddenly overcome by disgusting convulsions, choking and dying within a matter of minutes. Those who ran towards these machines were suddenly picked up by the pieces of rope, which were like the tentacles of some cephalopod, and were dropped into the cages on the rear of these mechanisms.

I turned to run, feeling that there was nothing I could do. The "Thor" had thankfully evaded them, though I later learned that some of the ships that remained at dock, had succumbed to the heat-ray and the black smoke. Now that my beloved Constance was safe, there was nothing to do now but rejoin Pons at the Science Museum.



## CHAPTER SEVEN - *The Great Evacuation*

When I had departed from London, all seemed normal save for the bustle of police activity about Whitehall. But upon my return, there were enormous stampedes of men, women and children fleeing the city in almost every direction. No matter who I attempted to halt and question, they would quickly knock me aside and continue their flight. There was neither order nor goal within this headlong drive. But I was unsure as to what it was they were running from.

Again came the reverberating footsteps of the Martians, and I perceived three machines pursuing these crowds. Perhaps these were the Martians from the second cylinder, aided by the cooling of the cylinder from the burst water pipe. Wherever there were signs of the police or the army attempting to hold the Martians back, they were quickly slaughtered by this unseen sword of heat. Our efforts were like toys against this advanced technology and there was little effective weaponry against them. Those who resisted were either destroyed or held as hostages in the cages.

I scrambled into the Underground Station on Baker Street, where I found that a civilian shelter had been set up for evacuees. Trains were still operating as usual, transporting people to the outskirts of London not yet affected by the Martians, where they would find safe passage out of England. It was on one of these trains that I headed to Praed Street via Paddington, thankfully finding it untouched by heat-ray or black smoke, although the Martian machines were still visible on the horizon.

I wasted no time in making my way to the Science Museum. There were but a handful of people in the streets, all making a calm, dignified exit out of London. Somehow, the mass panic was not as prevalent in this part of London, which I found to be more bearable.

After much difficulty, I finally arrived at the Science Museum and invited myself in. There was not a soul about due to the Martian attacks and I found the silence somewhat unnerving. Through the skylight I saw the green flares of the third and fourth cylinders descending upon Greater London, bringing yet more calamity to our planet. These thoughts did little for my comfort and I found myself meandering aimlessly through the museum, growing fearful of the menacing-looking dinosaur skeletons about me.

There was a violent crash from outside and I stared out from one of the side-entrances to find that a newly-arrived cylinder, perhaps the fourth, had landed in nearby Primrose Hill. I observed the greyish smoke pouring from the pit it had dug for itself as the crowds of London continued to rush away from the metropolis. This further heightened my fears of encountering a Martian before I could re-unite with Pons or Mr. Wells. All around me, I could see the silhouettes of the fierce tripod machines swaying about, demolishing any resistance with ease and trapping the helpless. It would be only a matter of time before I myself was caught.

## CHAPTER EIGHT - *The Laboratory*

I moved to somewhat precarious safety further in the Museum, where I was sealed off from any prying Martian eyes. My footsteps echoed eerily about the empty place, as though I were the only occupant. For some time, I walked about, both in the public and private areas, hoping to find where Pons had gone. I grew fearful of he and Mr. Wells being in the hands of the Martians, with myself being left alone to fight a force I knew practically nothing of.

At last, salvation was delivered, for a door leading to basement level (how I missed it, I can scarcely guess) had been propped open with a small bucket, and a piece of notepaper pinned to the door read as follows:

"Parker, we are downstairs. As soon as you've finished your little museum tour, be a good sport and join us, will you? - SOLAR PONS"

Hastily, I made my way downstairs, where I found Pons hovering over several pieces of glass equipment with Mr. Wells at his side. Several flasks were bubbling away, and a microscope had been set up nearby. At the foot of the stairs was Pons and he appeared somewhat grim as he and Wells tended to the apparatus laid out before them. I saw a veritable maze of glass tubing and flasks with an array of coloured fluids bubbling away. He looked up sternly as I came down.

"Parker," he murmured. "Was that a cylinder I heard a moment ago?"

"I fear so, Pons," I nodded. "It's on Primrose Hill, and any movement outside will send the Martians tumbling down on us!"

"Then, gentlemen, we are truly trapped. We have enough food and resources to continue our work, but unless we can find something to use against the Martians from a biological approach, we can only assume that this planet is truly in the hands of the Martians."

## PART TWO: The Adventure of the Martian Defeat

### CHAPTER NINE: *The Global Dispatches*

In the first half of this work, which concerns the adventures of Solar Pons, Mr. Herbert George Wells and I during the Martian invasion of 1938, I gave details concerning how quickly the invading Martians had conquered London. I also discussed the weakness of England's forces, which were unprepared for such an attack and thus, were caught unawares by our extraterrestrial antagonists.

The reader may recall that this narrative concluded with we three aforementioned men in the cellars of the Science Museum in London. Before proceeding, I wish to make a brief summary of the Martian attacks on other countries in the world at this time. I refer to them here as the Global Dispatches, because this was the title of a series of worldwide accounts of the invasion printed by the *Daily Mail* newspaper in 1943 to commemorate the invasion five years later.

The United States of America, one of the new world powers of the era, had also suffered heavily from the invasion. At the time, in what might be considered to be a bitter twist of irony, one Orson Welles was broadcasting a radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, but his attempts to warn the nation of the actual invasion went ignored due to the nature of the programme. As a result, the Martians succeeded in splitting the great continent of North America in two, proceeding to reduce countless cities to rubble. The Martian forces travelled east to New York and St. Louis, and west to Denver, exterminating all opposition within that great radius. There was a notable last stand in Texas, where a large force of National Guard soldiers, along with other military and civilian forces succeeded to destroy a fighting machine before succumbing to the effects of the black smoke<sup>(1)</sup>.

On the European continent, matters were no better. France had also suffered heavy losses from the surprise attack of these aggressive monsters, and just as London had fallen, so had Paris. The

French forces had been forced eastward to the Maginot Line, an enormous, impenetrable defence barrier built to stave off the threat of Nazi Germany, but which was now being turned against the Martians. The soldiers on the Maginot Line, like their counterparts across the Atlantic, destroyed a lone fighting machine, and had successfully crippled a second, but the heat ray destroyed the strongest section of the Maginot Line, thus breaking the spirit of the valiant French soldiers.

The Soviet Union also suffered heavy losses, but not due to the advanced technology of the Martians. Premier Stalin had just completed a mass purge of the Red Army as a result of his persistent fears of opposition. The Red Army was now a weak force and stood no real chance against the invaders, who penetrated into Moscow within an hour of rigging their fighting machine, forcing the Premier and his colleagues to flee to Vladivostok. China experienced a similar catastrophe, in which two separate war machines quickly felled the cities of Peking and Taiyuan, forcing the Chinese authorities to flee to Wuqia, a town in western China that borders the Soviet Union. From there, they attempted to form a resistance movement, but the country's disarray ensured that the movement was weak and unsuccessful.

To avoid creating a sense of dullness and pessimism to this account, I shall not dwell on all the Martian attacks upon humanity, and I shall instead conclude the Global Dispatches by stating that the Australian forces had successfully destroyed two of the three fighting machines upon their continent, with the third hiding in the wilderness to make repairs. There were also minor Martian activities in South Africa, Cuba and India, although it is not entirely clear what became of these otherworldly fighters. One can only speculate whether they perished in hostile lands or if unknown assailants had silently destroyed them.

### CHAPTER TEN: *The Work of Five Days*

To return to the main narrative, Solar Pons, Mr. H.G. Wells and I had all taken refuge within the Science Museum in London, the very city in which the Martians were establishing their main camp for further attacks upon the British Isles. As I have previously stated, Mr. H.G. Wells had originally written his novel *The War of the Worlds* based upon images of the invasion presented to him, presumably, by a faction of Martians opposed to the initial conquest of the Earth. Upon reading the

novel, my good friend Solar Pons had used its content as a guide for what action to take in the midst of the Martian conquest.

"It is within the epilogue of your novel, Mr. Wells," Pons addressed our guest with an air of dignity. "That you yourself stated that the Martians had succumbed to a strain of bacteria of which humans have gradually adapted to over the centuries, and yet was absent on Mars."

"Quite so," Mr. Wells nodded slowly, a trace of doubt in his voice. "But I must confess, Mr. Pons, that the image presented to me in the Crystal Egg (2) was that of microbes when viewed through a microscope. As I am by no means a bacteriologist, I simply presented them to the reader as generic microbes."

"Parker," Pons addressed me with a neutral expression. "As a doctor yourself, what would you believe the best approach to be on the matter?"

"Well, Pons," I coughed as the cold, sterile air of the cellar tickled my throat. "I fear not to be much of a chemist, but were I to make a suggestion, I would try and use whatever resources are available to try and find a virus that would attack the Martians as quickly as possible."

"An admirable notion, Parker." Pons nodded, a slight smile across his face as he looked up at the many items stored in the vast cellar in which we stood. "We have already established that these war machines cannot be easily defeated without considerable firepower. The Martians appear to understand this, and have adopted a 'divide and conquer' approach to their invasion. If we are to stand any chance of survival, gentlemen, we must attack them utilizing a biological approach, rather than merely distracting them with what they might consider primitive weapons. In order to stop a disease, one must strike at the heart, and that is exactly what we must do."

The Science Museum had a large store of chemicals in the cellars and the laboratories above-ground, and it was our aim to research each one to find some form of chemical that would cause considerable harm to the Martians once released into their camp. Because of my history as a medical doctor, I was elected to examine the different effects of each chemical as recorded in the museum's logbooks, and to determine which might be the most effective. Mr. Wells and Pons took turns standing sentinel on the Museum's ground

floor, should we receive any surprise visitors from Mars. I am thankful even today that we remained undetected for such a considerable amount of time, for I am very much certain that, had the Martians exposed our activities, I would not be narrating this account.

In those five days, we toiled and searched for a destructive weapon that we could put to use in our efforts to free ourselves from the hostile aggressors who were slowly destroying our world day by day. My eyes were sore from continuous reading, yet we pressed on in our struggle for liberty. The patience of Mr. Wells grew noticeably thinner as the days passed and Pons was left with the difficult task of keeping the man calm, which was no easy feat in the conditions we were working under. The Martians had been quick to destroy the electrical supplies of the city, and so we toiled by the light of paraffin lamps and small candles, choking upon the fumes that hung stolidly in the air of the cellar, strangling our lungs as we worked. For food, we took sustenance from the museum's café, where there were some sandwiches and cold drinks at our disposal. To avoid contamination, each one of us would consume our food away from the makeshift laboratory and all of us continuously washed our hands with the little water remaining in the museum tanks. The Martians had days before destroyed the city's water supply.

After a considerable amount of time had passed, during which Mr. Wells had begun to fear the isolation we had confined ourselves to, I found one particular chemical that appeared to arouse Pons' interest. He closely scrutinized its details, examining it through the microscope and analysing its behaviour. According to the logbooks, the sample in question is known in the scientific world as *Bacillus pestis*, although readers might be more familiar with the term 'bubonic plague', the very pestilence that had wiped out much of England during the medieval period and the slayer of Pericles in ancient Athens. This particular strain had been isolated for study in the museum's laboratory and the vial in which it was stored was tightly sealed to avoid any escape.

"Now, gentlemen," Pons addressed us, holding the vial firmly in one hand. "We must proceed with great caution to the next stage, for it requires a considerable amount of preparation, as well as precision." Once again, Pons turned towards me. "Parker, we shall require protection from this strain of plague once it has been released. What

can you recommend?"

"I recall, Pons, that a man by the name of Hafkine had developed an anti-plague serum some time ago. I would imagine that a facility that keeps a strain of bubonic plague amongst its stock would have some of the serum on hand."

"And what do you propose, Mr. Pons?" Mr. Wells asked impatiently. "Will you try to trade that one small vial to the Martians for the freedom of the planet?" Pons wrinkled his nose slightly at Mr. Wells' sarcasm, but remained unperturbed.

"I fear not, Mr. Wells, for the Martians no doubt take considerable joy in our extermination. It is my aim to hopefully deposit this small amount of plague into the main camp of the Martians and simply wait for the plague to take effect. From that point onwards, the Martians will no doubt grow considerably weaker. Our efforts at resistance will likely be much more successful."

The first stage of our scheme had been completed that night, by which time it was too dangerous to begin such a mission due to both the lack of natural light for visibility and the possibility of Martian patrols. Instead, we agreed to commence our second stage in daylight, when it would be easier to move freely around London.

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN: *The First Assault upon the Martian Camp*

The chimes of Big Ben echoed through the silent streets of London the next morning, calling the hour to a dead city with a non-existent population. The hour was 8 am and I was considerably surprised that Big Ben was still working in spite of so much chaos. Mr. Wells shared my sentiment, but Pons wondered why such a great symbol had escaped destruction. It was his belief that the Martians were concerned with isolating the city by destroying all of the essential links that the city relied upon, including transport and electricity. Thus, it was possible that the Martians saw no need in destroying what was essentially a large clock. What benefit to the Martians would the destruction of such a monument provide? Pons had argued, and I was more than prepared to accept, his philosophy on the matter; if only to proceed with the business at hand, that being the assault upon the Martian camp.

We emerged cautiously into the open, each one of us blinking eyes that had become accustomed to

the darkness of the museum cellars for the past five days. The vast metropolis of London was now nothing more than a mere shadow of its former self. Automobiles and tramcars lay in the silent, empty streets as though a child had carelessly thrown them away in a fit of temper. Along a section of Kensington High Street, a red double-decker bus, one of the greatest images associated with the city, had smashed halfway into a tailor's shop, with only the rear of the damaged vehicle still visible.

"God in Heaven!" I heard Mr. Wells blaspheme beneath his breath. "It never once occurred to me that I should be facing the wrath of the very creatures I wrote of 40 years previously!"

"None of us can truly predict the future, Mr. Wells," Pons answered quietly, surveying the wreckage of the omnibus from a distance. "But I hardly believe that the Martians are directly responsible for this incident." He pointed downwards onto the street, where a circular indentation lay in the centre of the road. "A Martian was travelling along Kensington High Street, perhaps ignorant of the presence of a fast-moving vehicle that already occupied this stretch of road. The driver, having been suddenly caught off-guard by the presence of the Martian fighting-machine, swerved his vehicle in an attempt to avoid a collision, but unfortunately collided with this shop." Once Pons had concluded his analysis, Mr. Wells was dumbfounded by the knowledge of my companion and, mercifully, remained dutifully silent for the greater half of the day.

We travelled amidst the eerily quiet streets of London, working our way as far west towards Harrow, keeping a close scrutiny on any areas of open space we bypassed or encountered along the way. Although Pons never directly stated the fact, I am inclined to believe that the structures of London would have been too numerous for the Martians to level in order to establish a temporary base, and so any Martians within the London area would converge upon a large, open space where demolition of any previous structures was unnecessary, and so the establishment of a temporary settlement would be of little trouble.

Before I continue any further in the narration of our crusade, I wish to make the reader aware of exactly how desolate and despairing the city of London appeared to our eyes. For the reader, who is now doubt familiar of the demanding and arduous lifestyle of a city in which tasks can never



truly be said to be complete, it is perhaps difficult to imagine the isolation after the inhabitants have been massacred by an invading army, with the survivors fleeing in terror. The all-too familiar noises of automobiles hooting in traffic and tradesmen shouting their offers in markets were now replaced by an absolute stillness, in which the only sounds were the echoes of our footsteps and speech, broken occasionally by the cry of a bird flying overhead. We walked along deserted roads that, on a normal London day, would have been full of overzealous motorists knocking us down. Such images, on reflection, seem completely alien to my mind, and I find it difficult to describe such a scene to an audience which has never experienced them.

Much to the surprise of Pons, upon reaching our destination at Harrow some hours later, the Martian camp had thus far eluded us, despite our utmost scrutiny of the landscape. In order to quickly pacify his nerves, Pons lit his pipe and pulled deeply, savouring its sweet remedy before speaking to us both.

"Well, gentlemen," he began solemnly, smoking his pipe nonchalantly. "It appears that my initial premise was incorrect. Mr. Wells originally stated in his novel that Primrose Hill, the grassy common close to the Science Museum, was the original camp of the Martians. Like the bacteria, however, it appears that such a premise was incorrect, and I had assumed that Mr. Wells had mistaken Primrose Hill for a similar knoll here in Harrow, which was a place I recall quite clearly from my childhood. Alas, it appears that my hypothesis was also incorrect."

"Perhaps we've been going the wrong way about it, Pons," I suggested. "Maybe we should have journeyed to the east of London as opposed to the west. There are perhaps hundreds of parks and fields in Greater London, and it is possible that we have simply travelled in the wrong direction." I admit that my argument was weak, but I was more concerned with encouraging Pons. I wished to help him avoid a long slide into despair, as was his wont on occasions such as this. I was about to say more when Mr. Wells spotted something on the horizon and drew our attention to it. We were now considerably high upon the knoll previously mentioned by Pons and from it we could faintly see London in the distance. From the direction Mr. Wells was pointing, which seemed to be towards the Knightsbridge area, there was a soft, light-green glow against the deep-grey storm clouds

that were approaching the dead city.

Upon seeing this image, Pons bounded forward, speaking in a quickened voice to both of us. "Your theory appears to be correct, Parker!" he grinned, rushing down to the foot of the hill upon which we stood. "Assuming that it is indeed Knightsbridge, then it would appear that the Martians have made their home in Hyde Park! We haven't a moment to lose, men! We must act quickly before night falls!"

Owing to the haste Pons required, we chose to requisition an automobile in order to return to London more quickly. Fortune appeared to be with us, for in one of the houses in Harrow, a Ford two-ton box van, seemingly undamaged, had been left in the street. Mr. Wells, who fancied himself to be a good driver, took the wheel, with Pons giving directions and myself keeping a firm look-out for any obstructions in our path, both forward and behind. In the vehicle, which had previously been owned by "**R. DAHL GROCERIES**", our journey was considerably quicker and we arrived in Knightsbridge scarcely one hour later. Leaving the automobile in the security of a side street, we approached Hyde Park with the greatest caution. All three of us admitted to have been completely terrified at what lay before us.

The very centre of Hyde Park, no doubt through the work of the Martians, was now an enormous crater, with the edges of the pit having been built up some thirty feet from the rim. The greenish-glow appeared to emanate from within the pit itself, which we could not see into from our vantage point. Six Martian fighting machines, fully erect and keeping a sharp watch upon the crumbling buildings around them, stood sentinel at four separate edges of the walls. The green light appeared to pulsate in rhythm to a series of metallic clangs that echoed around the park like the repetitive tolling of a cracked bell. The fighting machines had demolished several buildings around Hyde Park, including a small section of the Albert Hall, as they travelled to and from their base while making further raids upon the country.

"At last!" Pons whispered. "The very heart of the Martian invasion of this country. Should this settlement fall, it could possibly spearhead the liberation of other nations already suffering from Martian rule. Naturally, gentlemen, what we are about to undertake will be one of the great turning-points in the history of this blessed isle, and I can only hope and pray that we are successful."

"How are we to get close to the pit, Mr. Pons?" Wells asked nervously. "I doubt that those Martian machines are so poor in their vision."

"He has a point, Pons," I agreed. "I fear that this will be a difficult challenge for us all."

"Perhaps a test is in order," Pons put in. "A test of their range of visibility and I do believe that the Albert Hall might prove useful." At first, both Wells and myself were somewhat confused as to what Pons meant, but no sooner had we entered the Albert Hall through the tradesman's entrance at the rear of the building did we come to understand Pons' logic. By using a large, empty trunk strapped to a portable trolley, which would be pushed towards the Martians in Hyde Park, we could determine if entry to the camp was as easy as we hoped.

From the cover of the side street near our requisitioned vehicle, we pushed the trolley, which gained speed as it rolled towards the park. A white flash from a Martian heat-ray temporarily blinded us and once our vision had recovered, we saw the smouldering remains of the trolley lying a short distance from the park entrance.

The skies opened and rain fell, forcing us to retire to the dry safety of the grocery vehicle. The bells of Big Ben struck eight times, though we were the only humans to hear it. None of us wasted breath on uplifting speeches, instead deciding upon individual plans in order to begin the second assault the following morning. That night was perhaps the coldest night of the entire invasion.

#### CHAPTER TWELVE: *The Second Assault upon the Martian Camp*

Throughout the night, the front of our automobile was occasionally illuminated by the pulsating light from the pit, which cast a haunting glow over the rooftops of the surrounding buildings. Occasionally, I found myself stirring as a result of this light, but by placing my hat upon my face I found that the light was easily blocked out and my rest was not so easily disturbed afterward.

Pons awoke us sometime after dawn, standing upon pavement still slick from the previous night's storm. A resolute but anxious expression was affixed to his face.

"We must hurry," he told us in a firm voice. "The

storm has provided a stroke of luck for us and we must use it as quickly as possible!" At that moment we were not concerned as to how this luck had been attained, but simply acted as Ponds directed. Once again, we gazed out at the Martian pit in Hyde Park, but to our surprise, the six Martian sentries were not there! Trembling, we ran across to the rim of the crater and slowly clambered up the muddy embankment towards the brim of the camp. Our clothing was badly soiled by the experience but we reached the very fringe of that thirty-foot wall quite quickly and we were stunned by the vision of the camp below us.

Although we looked down for only a few seconds, I remember the layout of the camp in great detail; a stark contrast to the little detail I recall of silent London. The pit itself had a diameter that must have equalled almost the entire length of Hyde Park itself. Within the pit, at the very centre of the crater, was a large, metallic-blue machine shaped like a large milk bottle. From its summit came the pulsating glow that had disturbed my slumber in the night. At the foot of this machine were four large pipes, attached to the device at one end. Presumably the other end of the pipes could be connected to the Martian machines in the same manner that an automobile hooks up to a petrol pump. The Martians themselves were scattered in small groups around the pit and were chattering in a series of deep, sonorous hoots. Fortunately, none of them appeared to notice us. I cannot recall if there were any other machines (3) in that pit, for it was the central device that I was focused on.

"We must act quickly," Pons grunted, straining to release the vial from the confines of his coat pocket. "I shall explain all once this part of our task has been completed." With a flick of his wrist, the vial containing the small strain of plague fell into the Martian camp and hit the soft, marshy ground. We heard the faint tinkle of breaking glass. Success! None of us stayed to observe its sudden effects, for we made haste back to the safety of our van, which Pons immediately drove a short distance further from the Martian camp, stopping in another side-street facing Harrods.

"Why the sudden departure, Mr. Pons?" Mr. Wells asked in a wheezy tone. "The effects of a disease do not occur so quickly in organic bodies."

"Indeed not," agreed Pons, whose hands were still firmly clutching the steering wheel of the vehicle.

"But it is the fear of the Martian sentries returning with a fallen comrade," It was then that Pons informed us of the stroke of luck provided by the storm of the previous night. Pons had also been disturbed by the greenish glow from the Martian camp and for a short time was wide-awake as a result. Through the storm, Pons perceived a sudden flurry of activity from the camp, and from out of the pulsating green light, a large, near-spherical object rose into the sky. To my companion's horror, he realized that the Martians were performing a trial for a new form of flying machine.

The flying machine omitting a high-pitched whining sound and began to circle the area during the storm, briefly disappearing into the camp. All the time, Pons was alert, ready to take action if possible, but not alerting either Mr. Wells or myself in order to avoid causing a panic that would draw the unwanted attention of the Martians. After a few minutes, the flying-machine rose out of the pit once again, but was now equipped with a Martian heat-ray on the front of the aircraft. It circled, destroying a few insignificant buildings with practice shots, until a bolt of lightning struck the airship. It careened out of control, spewing thick, green steam, and crashed in a distant part of Knightsbridge. The Martian sentries were quick to act, and it was after all six Martians had disappeared that Pons alerted us.

With our work completed, Pons suggested that we journey northwards and thus to the barricade established in central England. It would take a few days before the plague could complete its work and there was little else for us to do but get to safety. The decision was unanimous and we replenished our fuel and continued on the main road towards Birmingham.

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN: *Our Discovery in St. Albans*

The journey northwards was a slow and difficult one as a result of the damage done by the Martians in the first stages of the invasion. With Pons at the helm, we were most assuredly safe, but the challenges in the roads we passed over were by no means simple ones. In the ensuing chaos, some roads were impassable because of a nasty accident, or in some cases, a line of vehicles that had been hastily abandoned by their owners. At railway crossings, matters were no better. The Martians, with the aid of their titanic war machines, had torn up large sections of railway track, with the pieces flung carelessly aside and block-

ing the approach to the crossings. In other areas, express trains had derailed with a great and terrible loss of life. The twisted wreckage of the locomotives and the splintered remains of the carriages barred the way for the few survivors in this dead country.

By night, approximately twenty-seven days since the beginning of the Martian invasion (4), we had reached the town of St. Albans in Hertfordshire, which had also succumbed to the invading Martians. The scenes here echoed that of London; a silent, dead town devoid of life beyond a handful of squirrels, cats and dogs hiding in trees and alleyways. The work of the heat-ray and the black smoke was clear for all to see, and the charred, twisted remains of their victims still lay festering in the streets.

"Wait!" Mr. Wells jerked up suddenly, his face alive with emotion. "Stop for a moment and turn off the engine!" Pons complied and we silently listened to the stillness of the town. Once the noise of our engine had died away altogether, however, there came a faint cry from above the whistling of the trees.

"Ulla..." the voice wailed like a lost soul over the empty houses. "Ulla..."

"Egad!" I babbled. "What the dickens is that noise?"

"I have a feeling that we are soon to find out, Parker," Pons replied, his face almost as surprised as that of Mr. Wells. Our vehicle started once again, we followed the shrill cries around the deserted streets of St. Albans. My mind was a complete blank on the matter but both Pons and Mr. Wells appeared to be of the same opinion. I asked both of them about it. Wells was quick to brush me off and Pons simply said, "Wait and see, Parker, for whilst that noise may seem disturbing, I feel that it might be the sweetest sound to have ever passed our ears."

At last, we reached a small stretch of land on the banks of the River Ver, where a lone Martian war machine stood in an awkward position; semi-upright with one of its three, spider-like legs half-submerged into the river. The hood of the machine was partly open, with red liquid (presumably blood) dripping from within. In the light of the day, we could see the Martian creature writhing in agony inside, screeching that last note of defiance for all to hear.

"Ulla, Ulla, ULLA..."

The howling reached a crescendo and then fell silent. The Martian, partially visible from inside his machine ceased to move. He fell with a sickening splash into the river, smearing the surface with a thick puddle of the red liquid. Pons and Wells rejoiced, but I was much in the dark. I finally approached them, a puzzled look on my face.

"My dear Parker!" Pons grinned at me, speaking rapidly. "Had only you read Mr. Wells' book! The Martians have succumbed to a disease, my friend! Not the plague we unleashed in London, true, but it seems that our work in London might not have been so urgent! Do you not understand, Parker? The disease in question was not the result of some fantastic germ bomb; it was nothing more than the common cold! Yes, Parker! The very disease to which we have adapted throughout the centuries, but an aspect of this world that the Martians were unprepared for,"

Upon hearing all of this, I soon found myself rejoicing in celebration. As we had toiled in the uninviting conditions of a ruined London, Mother Nature had already set to work upon the downfall of our antagonists. The longer that stayed upon this fertile world, plotting and scheming for the next course of action, they were slowly dying, completely oblivious to the fact. Our world was saved not by any one person, but by the miniscule, unappreciated things of the Earth, which almighty God, in his infinite wisdom, had placed upon this world.

#### EPILGOUE: *The Aftermath of the Invasion*

It did not take long for the Martians across the world to succumb. The Martians in Great Britain and France were the first to perish, with the Australian and Russian contingents following suit shortly thereafter. The United States quickly recovered on November 1<sup>st</sup>, two days after the catastrophic invasion of North America. As far as can be ascertained, the Martians in China were the last to perish from the common cold.

All of those dear to us who had fled the British Isles to seek safe haven in Finland (one of the few nations to escape catastrophe in the invasion), were swiftly returned with charitable supplies of food and drink provided by the sympathetic Finnish people. To name but a few of those who returned to us: Bancroft Pons, Inspector Jamison, and my beloved Constance. They welcomed us

with open arms, with all parties relieved to find the others perfectly safe and sound after so much chaos and destruction.

The Martian invasion of 1938 also had far reaching consequences for the rest of the world. Germany, another nation unaffected by Martian attacks, mocked the ravaged countries, citing their defeat as a "weakness of democracy". When the Second World War broke out one year later, the Germans used the section of the Maginot Line destroyed by the Martians to invade France. The weaknesses of China and Russia so soon afterwards led to their conquests by the Axis powers in the early stages of the war. Martian technology was rumoured to have been used by the war departments of all nations involved during the Second World War. An informant in the military once informed me that both the Atomic Bomb and the Jet Engine (5) were supposedly based upon remnants of the invading forces.

Even as I pen this now, it is amazing how much Pons and I experienced in those long days of imprisonment and fear. Whilst we never heard from Mr. H.G. Wells (6) again, we often recalled those fantastic events during our escapades in later years. Who could forget those first cylinders landing in Greater London so unexpectedly, the five long days beneath the Science Museum or the dying Martian in St. Albans? Though our lengthy and marvellous adventure was not one concerning an enigmatic case that purely challenged Pons' intellect, the adventure of the war of the worlds will always, to me, be one of the greatest escapades it has been my pleasure to have played a part in.

THE END

FOOTNOTES ON FOLLOWING PAGE



(1) A form of poison gas used by the Martians during their invasion. A post-invasion analysis found the Black Smoke to consist of airborne microbes which, once inhaled by a victim, would pass into the bloodstream through the lungs and replace the haemoglobin of red blood cells in the body, thus starving any organic life of oxygen from within.

(2) Readers unfamiliar with the Crystal Egg and its association with Mr. H.G. Wells are advised to read Part One of this account.

(3) A post-invasion document on Martian technology referred to this as the **Heavy Element Engine**, and was found to indeed provide power to the Martian war machines. This dexterous machine was found to have extrapolated vital components from common soil and manipulated their chemical qualities to the point where they could be used as an unusual fossil fuel for the machines.

(4) Here, the date of the invasion was October 20<sup>th</sup> 1938, thus making the present October 27<sup>th</sup>. In the United States, the invasion did not begin until October 30<sup>th</sup>, but this is in fact the final stage of the invasion, and October 20<sup>th</sup> is the correct beginning for the overall Martian invasion of the Earth.

(5) The atomic bomb is credited to Firsch, an Austrian, Bohr, a Danish, and Peieris, a German. The jet engine is credited to Sir Frank Whittle, who was British and not American, as many people believe.

(6) Mr. H.G. Wells peacefully passed away in 1946 at the age of 80 years.

## FEATURED CASE

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

*The Adventure of the Spurious Tamerlane*The Saint Mystery Magazine, December,  
1964*The Casebook of Solar Pons*Date - July, 1925QuotesParker: *You astound me!*Pons: *It is surely not the first time.*

Pons: *You will remember my credo: when all the impossible explanations have been eliminated, then whatever remains, improbable as it may be, must be the truth.*

The Case

Used bookseller, Joshua Bryant, asks Pons to come down to his stall. Upon his arrival, Pons learns that someone had slipped an extremely rare copy of Edgar Allen Poe's *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Pons quickly establishes that it is a fake and sets out to find who left it, and why.

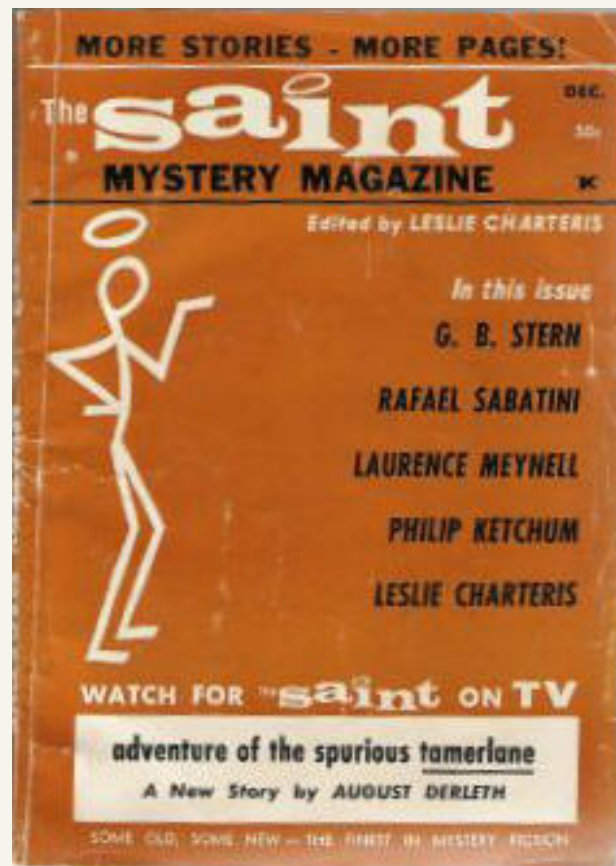
Comments

Pons asks Parker to look at a note and speculate upon its sender, Joshua Bryant. Parker correctly deduces that Bryant is a second-hand book dealer. Pons congratulates Parker in what certainly seems to be a sarcastic manner. "At any time now I can retire to Sussex and keep bees! Is it not remarkable what a little exposure to ordinary ratiocination will do for one."

Pons' reference to beekeeping in Sussex can also be viewed as a jibe at Sherlock Holmes, since nowhere else does Pons evince an interest in such a retirement activity.

Pons echoes a comment from another case. In *The China Cottage*, when asked if he is a collector, Pons replies, "Only of life's oddities." In this case, Lady Heltsham asks Pons if he is a collector of books. "Say, rather, of circumstances, events and curious happenings," is Pons' response this time.

Pons performs a sleight of hand trick by basically pointing in another direction and saying "Hey, look over there," which Lady Heltsham does. While his switching the spurious Tamerlane for the original is nicely done, it is amusing to see him utilize a trick which is almost a parody of the misdirection technique.



Pons continues investigating on behalf of Lady Heltsham, though without her knowledge. In fact, it is not certain that a crime has even been committed. Pons' investigations reveal his altruistic character. However, conversations between Parker and Pons point towards blackmail as the root problem in this case.

Pons calls upon his brother Bancroft to assist. Bancroft agrees to have Lady Heltsham's mail opened and her telephone tapped. This is quite a bold move regarding the wife of an influential nobleman, even though it is ostensibly for his benefit.

Pons and Parker break into an apartment using a skeleton key, then steal some documents. Upon their return to Praed St, the two are guilty of breaking and entering and burglary. The case bears some similarities to the Holmes adventure, *The Master Blackmailer*.



August Derleth.

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