

The Beginning of Solar Pons
The Gasogene, 1962
A Praed Street Dossier

Date

NA

Quotes

- *He (Holmes) remains for Pons a contemporary to whom Pons always refers as “the Master.”*
- *Thus Praed Street became the headquarters of Solar Pons, and specifically number 7 – for no reason but that his number came to mind and was set down, and number 7B, because Holmes was at 221B...*
- *I took special pleasure in establishing a new imprint-Mycroft & Moran, the directors of which were, of course, Mycroft Holmes and Colonel Sebastian Moran (“the second most dangerous man in London”)...*
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The Case

This is a marvelous essay by August Derleth, discussing how Pons came about and how precarious the detective’s published career was.

Comments

- It opens with a biographical entry of Pons appropriate for a Who’s Who listing of some sort. It contains information such as his place of birth, parents’ names, clubs belonged to and monographs published.
- In *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman*, Sherlock Holmes says, “Amberley excelled at chess – one mark, Watson, of a scheming mind.” We have no evidence of Holmes ever expanding that remark into a monograph. However, we can’t help but wonder if that statement did not set a spark in the mind of Solar Pons. For Pons did write a monograph upon the subject entitled *The Chess Problem and the State of Mind*, published in 1919. An oblique reference to a chess monograph in *The Adventure of the Three Red Dwarfs* is explained at the end of the story and implies that Pons had drawn upon his own work in the field.
- Derleth wrote Sir Arthur, asking if there were to be any more Holmes stories. He received a late, short reply that there would not be. He then wrote Doyle and said that he would try to write them. He made a notation on his desk calendar to write a story upon that day. Thus was the seed of Solar Pons planted.
- Derleth states that his intent was never to write parody, but pastiche. At the time, the latter were almost non-existent, while there were numerous parodies of Holmes. ‘Solar’ represented light, and ‘Pons’ as a bridge. Solar Pons meant ‘bridge of light.’ Derleth thought that he was particularly brilliant, though

maturity seemed to change his opinion. The day marked on his desk calendar arrived and he duly wrote *The Adventure of the Black Narcissus*.

- Derleth discusses how, flushed with success at the sale of the first few stories, he charged \$400 worth of books (a great amount in 1929). However, the stock market crash in October of that month resulted in the early demise of Solar Pons. While Derleth would get his degree and continue writing extensively, Pons would not appear again until 1944, when *The Adventure of the Norcross Riddle*, written in 1929, was included in Ellery Queen's *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*.
- The following year he self-published the first collection of Solar Pons stories, some of which had been written fifteen years before. The title was chosen from that notation made in his desk calendar so long ago; In Re: Sherlock Holmes.