

The Adventure of the Benin Bronze - Beni
The Chronicles of Solar Pons, 1973

Date

Copper/Late October, 1929
Patrick/NA

Quotes

- *I do not look upon myself as an agent of justice..*
- *One must have all the facts in order to reach any conclusion about them.*
- *I do not recall a crime more sanguinary in all my years of involvement in these little mysteries.*
- *The commission of murder, apart from that capital crime committed in passion – anger or jealous rage – or that committed in reaction to being surprised at orescaping from some other crime, like burglary – is not readily embarked upon.*

The Case

Miriam Morley visits Praed St. Thirty years before, her uncle, Randall Creighton, had been part of a military expedition that sacked the City of Benin in retribution for the native killing of a British envoy. Someone is threatening Creighton, and it appears to be revenge from the Benin massacre. Pons and Parker travel to Creighton Hall to investigate.

Comments

- Benin is a country in West Africa with ocean access, between Nigeria and Togo. It was sacked by the British in 1897, which Pons recounts to Parker. Pons erroneously states that Benin was a British Protectorate. That is incorrect; it was a part of the French colonial empire.
- Pons discovers the killer but does not reveal his identity to Inspector Danbury. He tells Parker that the victim “got what was coming to him.” Pons believes that Danbury should be bale to solve the case on his own. The final lines of the story, spoken by Pons, are intriguing: “I am merely a private enquiry agent. I do not look upon myself as an agent of justice, which in this case seems to have been served.”

What does Pons mean? Should “justice” have been “law?” If so, then finishing by saying that justice has been served would make more sense. When forced to choose between justice and the law, Pons seems predisposed towards justice.

- The Benin Bronze was a bust, approximately sixteen inches tall, of a Benin chieftain. Randall Creighton believed that his brother Paul had taken all seven of his bronzes to Sotheby’s for auction. Paul said that there were only six. Since the seventh Bronze is found with the dead body, this tidbit seems important, but is actually a well-laid red herring. Pons’ failed attempt to have Paul Creighton imitate an African frog is another example of adept mystery writing.