

The Adventure of the Bishop's Companion - Bish
The Chronicles of Solar Pons, 1973

Date

Copper/May, 1932
Patrick/NA

Quotes

- *I think we may safely assume that Mrs. Parton is one of those individuals who are forever looking about to see how much they can get for nothing – a group of which most of mankind appears to belong..*
- *Dead?*

The Case

Mrs. Parton visits Praed Street. Her grandson had been baptized by Bishop Lamson, who then billed her five pounds. She was outraged and refused to pay. Pons, bored and intrigued by a few details in the case, such as the recent death of the Bishop's companion, decides to visit Sussex and look into the affair.

Comments

- Pons mentions that Mrs. Parton had helped in the “affair of the Gentle Entemologists.” This is an unchronicled case that is not mentioned anywhere else in the Pontine Canon.
- “I am always free for any adventure of yours,” Parker says when asked if he will join Pons for the trip to Sussex. Parker was not yet married to Constance Dorrington, though certainly engaged. Though his practice is not mentioned in the story, presumably he had at least a few patients to tend to. Yet we see, as we do throughout the Pontine Canon, Parker dropping everything to work on a case with Pons. As Pons was particularly busy in the spring and summer of 1932, Parker must have been neglecting his own affairs quite a bit. Expect to see an essay on this topic in a future edition of *The Solar Pons Annual*.
- The first two paragraphs describing Pons' arrival in Wilder's Weald contains some marvelous imagery. Though Derleth had a propensity for long sentences, he could paint a beautiful picture. Derleth could have written some version of “Upon arrival, we found George Moulton's defaced headstone in the cemetery.”

Instead, the reader is treated to, “He went around the cemetery, where we found the defaced stone that marked George Moulton's grave, and there we stood looking at it, while the wind carried through the cemetery the fragrance of the fields, and a lark sang overhead against the background music of a dog's voice rising at a distance.”

Long sentences really are a common element of the Pons stories. But Derleth's writing style was so strong and pleasing that the reader does not feel inundated with the weight of so many words. Derleth was a master of the craft of writing.

- Pons asks an odd question in this case. We read "For it (the bed) was literally drenched in blood – the Bishop's blood – sheets, blanket, spread – blood spattered the bedstead, the adjacent wall, the carpet – and what had been Bishop Lamson lay in the middle of it, asprawl on his back on the bed, his arms flung wide, his throat cut, and repeated stab-wounds in his chest and abdomen, so that his pajamas were soaked in blood."

Parker examines the body and then Pons channels the ghost of Nigel Bruce; for he says "Dead?" What else is there to say in comment? Likely Pons said something like "How long dead?" or "When was he killed?" or some such and Parker shortened it for publication. With the description above, can one really believe that Pons asked "Dead?"

- Though only Pons realizes it, Bishop Lamson is actually dead and buried in a grave where the headstone has been defaced. Pons tells Parker that he fears "the Bishop is in it up over his head."

"Incredible!" replies Parker. To which Pons agrees and rubs his hands "energetically." Parker has no idea that Pons is humorously referring to the fact that the Bishop is literally in over his head: about six feet under! This is an example of Pons' frequently present sense of humor. He provides a subtle clue to Parker, who completely misses it. Surely Pons is laughing inside.

- Who is Constable Cowles? What exactly does Pons notify him of? Inspector Jamison initiates the wide range search for the killer. And Pons lets Jamison know that the real jewels are still hidden in St. Christopher's Church. If Constable Cowles was a local authority, why didn't Pons inform him about the jewels. And after finding the jewels, why did Pons wait three days to let the police know about them? Pons' relations with the official force are a bit curious in this affair.