

The Adventure of the Black Cardinal - BlkC
Gangster Stories, March, 1930
The Reminiscences of Solar Pons

Date

Copper/Early January, 1929 or 1930
Patrick/NA

Quotes

- Pons: ...*Were you not instructed to stop anyone who emerged?*
Wilson: *Sir, only clergymen.*
Pons: *Ah, the glory of Scotland Yard! A pox on Jamison's literal mind!*

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The Case

A man known as 'The Black Cardinal' is posing as a Roman Catholic holy man and stirring up anti-religious feeling against the Church throughout Europe. Pons is hired by the Vatican to find the man, who is believed to be in England.

Comments

- This case presents us with one of the most unlikely weapons in the Pontine Canon. Pons mans a machine gun in a British plane. Having sighted the villain fleeing in a motorboat, the plane prepares to do a strafing run.

- Pons mentions 'Pascendi,' a papal encyclical issued by Pope Pius X on September 8, 1907. He is referring to 'Pascendi Dominici Gregis' (On the Doctrine of the Modernists), a fifty-seven point admonition of the Modernists, who are labeled 'Enemies of the Cross of Christ.'

It was followed on November 8, 1917, by 'Praestantia' (On the Bible Against the Modernists). The Catholic Encyclopedia includes a definition of Modernism as a "radical transformation of human thought in relation to God, man, the world, and life, here and hereafter." The Catholic Church does not encourage progressive thinking or action and the Modernist movement, centered in France and Italy, was stamped out.

- Pons further states that Benedict XV condemned Integralism (the group that rose up within the Church to battle Modernism) in his November 1, 1914 encyclical, Ad 'Deatissimi Apostolorum' (Appealing for Peace). In fact, Benedict reaffirms Pius X's condemnation of Modernism, renewing the condemnation of Modernism as "the synthesis of all heresies." Regarding the spirit of modernism, Benedicts says, "Let there be no innovation; keep to what has been handed down."

As the translation of the encyclical's title indicates, Benedict's message is one of peace and unity. However, he is not admonishing those opposed to Modernism.

He is reinforcing that it is a heresy and those practicing it must return to their doctrinal beliefs.

- Pons tosses out a tantalizing sentence: “I dispatched Frick and some of his friends to make some rounds of the underworld.” Apparently Frick was known to Parker, since he does not ask any followup question related. But we do not encounter him elsewhere in the Pontine Canon. Who was this mystery man? Certainly some type of underworld contact, such as Sherlock Holmes’ Porlock or Shinwell Johnson. But what did Frick do? How frequently did he work for Pons? It would appear not very often, since Parker did not see fit to mention him in any other case.
- We again meet Bancroft Pons. In fact, without Bancroft’s ability to quickly pull strings, the Black Cardinal would likely have escaped to America.
- Assuming that this case did take place in 1929 or 1930. Pius XI would have been the Pope at that time.
- Pons clearly considers the Black Cardinal to be a dangerous adversary. Yet he allows himself and Parker to rush to confront him, without being armed! Why did Pons not exhort Parker to bring his service revolver with him? Such poor planning resulted in the Black Cardinal gaining the advantage on the two men by leveling his own pistol at them. He is thus able to make his escape from the building.