

The Adventure of The Frightened Baronet – FriB
In Re: Sherlock Holmes, 1945
Regarding Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of Solar Pons

Date

Copper/Early Autumn, 1922

Patrick/August, 1922

The Case

Sir Alexander Rowan Taber, convinced that he is haunted by a curse, sends for Pons. Rowan had deposited at the British Museum the Eye of Siva, a cursed jewel taken from an Indian temple. Visions, voices, sounds and other signs indicate that the curse upon the stone has become active and will claim Taber. Chiltern Manor is full of suspects, including Sir Alexander's daughter, her fiancée, his son, his brother and his sister. Parker and the family presume that Sir Alexander is losing his sanity, while Pons pursues a more mundane avenue.

Quotes

- Pons: *Perhaps you have not pursued the facts to their obvious conclusion. Or, even more likely, you have started out on a wrong premise.*
- *London was lost in fog, a heavy autumnal curtain, shuttering the city away from our lodgings in Praed Street, and at first there was only the distant hum of diminished traffic which that was the pulse of the city, and the several small noises of water dropping; then I heard the curiously muffled sound of hoofbeats, traveling a short distance, stopping, then coming forward again. (Parker's narration)*

Comments

- This case echoes the Golden Age mysteries with a country estate full of suspects. It is enhanced by the supernatural aspect of the curse and features a trap sprung by Pons at the conclusion. Though a bit cluttered, *The Frightened Baronet* must rank among the most enjoyable Pons tales.
- The story begins with "From the chess problem in which he had been absorbed..." Chess is referenced several times in the Pontine Canon. It seems natural that an ordered mind like Pons' would be attracted by the orderly logic of the game, while also appealing to his intuitive side. Pons' monographs include *The Chess Problem and the State of Mind*.
- Pons makes several deductions related to Sir Alexander's manservant and also about the urgency of the matter and the effect it is having upon Rowan. It is one of many fine examples throughout the Pontine Canon of how well Derleth mastered the form.
- The reader discovering Solar Pons by starting out with the Pinnacle paperback edition, comes across the Parker narration in the 'Quotes' section above on the

seventh line of the first story. It is a foggy night in London; Pons and Parker receive a visitor with an urgent summons and Pons makes and then explains to Parker several deductions. Surely the fan of Sherlock Holmes feels that it is 1895 again. *The Frightened Baronet* positively reeks of atmosphere, both at Praed Street and at Chiltern Manor.

- Luther Norris includes this tale among his ten favorites.