

The Adventure of The Limping Man – Limp
Detective Trails, December, 1929
Regarding Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of Solar Pons

Date

Copper/October 15-20, 1923

Patrick/October, 1923

Quotes

- *The whole, ridiculous jigsaw is clear as day, Parker; I have been only a little short of being obtuse.*
- *A remarkable but annoying affair in which I failed to distinguish myself.*
- *Recreation and rest do not necessarily imply mental and physical stagnation.*

The Case

Pons, nearly exhausted from a litany of non-stop cases, is persuaded by Parker to take a holiday at the country estate of one of Parker's friends. Melham Old Place is a neighboring estate. Three years previously, Sir Peter Melham set out for a trip to Prague and was never seen again. His daughter Maureen and his paralytic brother Andrew remained on in the house, which Andrew owned.

Maureen visits Pons and says that she has been awoken by the sound of someone walking with a cane in the hall outside of her room. She fears that it is her father, who limped, come back from the dead. She finally sees a figure at the end of the hall that quickly vanishes, but not before she is convinced that it is the image of her father. She implores Pons to clear up the mystery.

Comments

- Limp made its initial appearance in December of 1929, the same month that *The Adventure of The Late Mister Faversham* appeared in *The Dagnet Magazine*.

Limp was one of three pastiches that Derleth wrote in a single day, the other two being *The Adventure of the Viennese Musician* and *The Adventure of Gresham Old Place*. He states that he wrote three more tales before the week was out: *The Adventure of the Sotheby Salesman*, *The Adventure of the Black Cardinal* and *The Adventure of the Muttering Man*. A prolific week, indeed!

- Pons is overworked and his health at a breaking point. Parker suggests that they take a holiday at the country estate of a friend to allow Pons to recuperate. Fans of the Canon will recognize this device as having been previously used in the Holmes case, *The Reigate Squires* (also called *The Reigate Puzzle*).
- Parker is careful to avoid anyone knowing that Pons is in residence, wishing him to undergo a complete rest to restore his health. Pons, ever desirous of a challenging matter to look into, "immediately noised" his presence, sending a messenger over to Melham Old Place. Parker was not only Pons' companion and

chronicler, he served as the detective's physician when needed. Solar Pons could not have been an easy patient!

- One of Pons' most exasperating moments occurred in this case. He has baited a trap for the ghost and is waiting its appearance. With him is Maureen's boyfriend, Betterton, whom she invited without Pons' knowledge. As the spectre draws near, Betterton rushes out to grasp it; however, he is felled by a blow from its cane. Before Pons can react to this unplanned moment, Maureen faints in his arms and the ghost escapes. One can only imagine the brief instant of complete helplessness as Pons realizes he is stuck supporting Miss Melham while the ghost vanishes.
- Pons solves a three-year old mystery and provides the answer to the problem presented to him by Maureen Melham. However, Limp must be considered a failure for him. Pons watches Melham Old Place through binoculars, expecting events to unfold, after which, "What may come of that should be of considerable interest."

One man is killed and then the murderer commits suicide. Pons' comment can be regarded as a considerable understatement. The first two quotes above certainly reflect Pons' dissatisfaction with his handling of the matter.