

The Adventure of the Little Hangman - Litt
The Saint Detective Magazine, September 1957
The Return of Solar Pon, 1958

Date

Copper/Early May, 1929

Patrick/Summer, 1929

Quotes

- *My nature abhors a vacuum and such a holiday as this is indeed nothing less.*
- *Constable Borrow: No, Mr. Pons. There's been a murder.*
Pons: Ah, Constable, you have no idea how sweetly your words fall upon my ear, after three days spent with the beauties of the North Devon coast.
- *My chronicler has done his best to glorify my little exploits, which are nothing more than the proper use of a well developed faculty of observation coupled with common sense deduction – mere exercises in logic, Constable.*

The Case

Pons and Parker are taking a holiday in Ilfracombe, the doctor having determined that previous cases had unduly tired the great detective. Constable Ronald Borrow of Combe Martin asks for help in finding the killer of Kingsley Pollitt, who had been hung. Pollitt had murdered Helen Blayre, served ten years, and was then freed on a legal technicality. He had returned to Combe Martin to stay with his brother. Someone had hung Pollitt and his body was found on a hill called the Little Hangman, the scene of the murder.

Comments

- Pons has one of the most entertaining conversations found anywhere in the Canon. Mr. Hernshaw is a retired executioner living in Combe Martin. He had expressed his disappointment that Pollitt was pardoned. For Pollitt had a thick neck and Hernshaw had viewed it as “a genuine challenge” to a man of his skill.

Parker finds the whole conversation “extraordinary,” while Pons is so amused he struggles to keep from smiling.

- Another case featuring the “Pons Principle.” Pons takes the opposite of a prevailing assumption:
“I submit, Mr. Borrow, that your conclusion is as much in error as the conclusion of those who read this letter before you.... You have all made a readily understandable error in concluding that the pronoun ‘we’ referred to Helen Blayre and Kingsley Pollitt. I suggest it did not. I submit that it referred to someone else.”

Everyone assumed that Kingsley Pollitt killed Helen Blayre because she ended their engagement. However, Pons assumes her use of ‘have’ instead of ‘had’ in a letter to Kingsley indicates that she was engaged

to someone else. Only Pons is astute enough to deduce this, leading him to the killer's identity.

- Parker mentions one of Pons' unchronicled cases, "the puzzles of the Lost Metternich." There is no other mention of this case in the Canon.
- Combe Martin is a small UK resort situated in a sheltered valley at the western fringe of the Exmoor National Park in North Devon.