

The Adventure of the Penny Magenta - Penn
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, November, 1954
The Return of Solar Pons, 1958

Date

Copper/Summer, 1926

Patrick/June, 1926

Quotes

- *It gives me pleasure to discover how handsomely your capacity for observation has grown, Parker.*

The Case

Athos Humphreys, owner of an antiques shop, comes to Praed Street. He tells Pons that his shop has been broken into the past three nights but nothing taken. Arthur Benefield had paid Humphreys to keep a manila envelope of stamps for him, but was hit and killed by an auto before reclaiming them. The stamps were not valuable. Pons is intrigued and visits the shop.

Comments

- The Penny Magenta was issued in 1856 by the government of British Guiana. The "rich American" owner referred to by Pons was Arthur Hind of Utica, NY. He paid over \$35,000 for the Penny Magenta. The first known purchase price of the stamp is \$1.50. John du Pont bought it in 1980 for \$935,000.

In 1997, du Pont was convicted of the third degree murder of Olympic wrestler David Schultz. He was eventually committed to a mental hospital where he remains today. du Pont is still the current owner of the Penny Magenta.

- The case opens with Pons making several deductions about his visitor. Parker silently identifies each of them as Athos Humphreys observes each telling characteristic on his own person. The usual amazement from this scene is totally absent. Humphreys quickly identifies the telltale signs. Parker either noticed them immediately, or identified them upon reflection and included them when he wrote up the case at a later time.
- Pons references the Edgar Allen Poe story, *The Purloined Letter*. This was one of C. Auguste Dupin's cases, in which the detective found a letter hidden in plain sight.
- Pons certainly has a unique way of summoning the police. He instructs Parker to go outside and fire his gun into the air, which would attract the attention of the previously briefed Inspector Taylor. It is unclear why Pons did not station Taylor either in view of the front door or inside the shop itself.

- Pons gains possession of the Penny Magenta by telling Athos Humphreys it is counterfeit, even though he is sure it is authentic. He accepts possession of the stamp in lieu of payment and then returns the stamp to its owner in exchange for a sizeable reward. This seems somewhat disingenuous on Pons' part.