

*The Adventure of the Trained Cormorant - Trai*  
*The Saint Detective Magazine, October, 1956*  
*The Return of Solar Pons, 1958*

Date

Copper/March 10, 1933

Patrick/Fall, 1932

Quotes

- Parker: *I must say, Pons, you have a distressing tendency to make a mystery where none exists, but I suppose that is only to be expected.*
- Pons: *You (Parker) have a disconcerting tendency to turn yourself into an alienist the moment your pet theory is challenged.*

The Case

Pons and Parker return to Praed Street to find Captain Andrew Walton sitting in the detective's chair. The retired seaman has brought a sealed packet that his trained cormorant, Adelaide, had fished out of the water. It included a letter, a copy of the letter and a note. Walton had been slow to mail the letter (already stamped) and discovered that a stranger was making inquiries about and possibly spying on him as well. After other events, including someone taking a shot at Adelaide, he came to Pons for help.

Comments

- What is a cormorant? It is a seabird of medium to large size with a long neck, not dissimilar to a Canadian goose. Cormorants are coastal birds and can be trained to fish.
- Did Pons instruct Mrs. Johnson to give carte blanche to prospective clients (a question I've wondered regarding Mrs. Hudson as well)? Presumably she let Walton into Pons' sitting room to await the detective's arrival. The captain certainly seemed at home, sprawled in Pons' own chair and having smoked a pipe while he waited.

Suppose someone wishing Pons ill watched his rooms, waiting for him to depart with Parker. The evildoer presents himself as a client and asks to wait. He is let into the sitting room. Perhaps Mrs. Johnson tells Pons up on his return that a visitor awaits him upstairs. But would Pons assume he needed to be cautious? Perhaps, but we are given no sign of that in this case. Upon entering the room, his nemesis acts, attacking him in some manner, whether with a gun, a sap, a knife or some other weapon. Surely this is an avenue worthy of further exploration?

- This was one of Doctor Watson's "untold tales" of Sherlock Holmes. It was mentioned in *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger*, referencing the story of the politician, the light house and the trained cormorant.

- Walton knew of Pons because the detective had “done a bit of work for Miss Norton,” who had “spoken highly” of him. Who was Miss Norton? If we assume she lived in the vicinity of Walton, then she was on the southern coast, somewhere near New Romney. What investigation did he make on her behalf?
- This is another case involving international intrigue. This should be a surprise since Pons’ older brother Bancroft holds an important position in the Foreign Office. That is not relevant here, however, as Solar brings the cases to Bancroft, not the other way around.
- Parke gives us a picture of Pons cogitating, “his keen eyes thoughtful, his brow furrowed, his lips pushing out and in, his hands clasped behind his back.”

Contained in that short description is a mannerism best known in another famous detective. Nero Wolfe, sitting silently and thinking on a case, would push his lips in and out or extended periods of time. The two men were contemporaries for a short period of time, though it seems unlikely that they were aware of this shared habit.

- According to Pons, Baron Ennesfred Kroll is behind the spy ring. Kroll had been outwitted by Pons the previous fall in *The Adventure of the Lost Holiday*. As a result, Kroll had been recalled to Germany. Apparently his failure was not looked upon too unfavorably by his superiors since he was put in charge of an important espionage activity. Though I doubt another failure went over too well..

Was Kroll especially upset that his niece’s husband was captured by the French police as a result of Pons’ meddling? Did the personal element stoke his fury at Pons even more?