

The Adventure of the Troubled Magistrate - Trou
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, February, 1961
The Reminiscences of Solar Pons, 1961

Date

Copper/November, 1933

Patrick/1931

Quotes

- *Justice is a comparatively rare commodity, perhaps because it is so difficult of definition.*
- *I am always suspicious of coincidences, no matter how frequently they take place. The may not be the work of the Prime Mover.*
- *I submit, Parker, that the fantasies of the human mind are virtually unlimited.*

The Case

Violet Anstruther visits Praed Street with concerns about her father, the magistrate at Ross. She feels he has been acting strangely, and it may be connected to some accidents that have occurred in their village. Three defendants appearing before him had their cases dismissed or received minimal sentences. Those three persons died of accidents not long after. Pons is intrigued and travels to Ross to investigate.

Comments

- Pons describes petitions for capital punishment as “ridiculous.” In order to draw out Fielding Anstruther at the dinner table, he takes a harsh view of capital punishment abolitionists, calling their belief “unnatural.” Pons continues on in such strong terms that Anstruther refers to his views as “medieval.”

We find similar comments from Pons in the December 11, 1919 notebooks entry, but he is sincere this time. “We are coming dangerously close to a world in which everything is done in behalf of the law-breaker – and at the expense of the law-abiding citizen. That is the road to anarchic chaos. It is the end result of indulgence in idealistic sentimentality, not of rational thought. He goes on at some length, stating that “we are reversing Darwin.” Pons clearly favored punishment over rehabilitation.

He even endorses some degree of vigilante justice over “the mass of do-gooders – the self-appointed humanitarians, the psychoanalysts. The sociologists.” This attitude of Pons’ is on ripe for further exploration.

- It is quickly obvious that someone is “avenging” wrongs done when Justice Anstruther had dismissed certain cases. Hester Spring, accused of smothering her baby, “accidentally” smothered herself after drinking. Algy Burke, who served only four months for running down a man with his car was killed in a hit and skip.

This would have been a relatively uncommon concept in 1961. Today, with the proliferation of movies and television series', such a plot can be seen twice in the same week.

- Pons says that his field is sociology, adding "I am, in a very real sense, a student of my fellowman." This is a bit reminiscent of something he said to Lady Heltsham in the Adventure of the Spurious Tamerlane, when said that he was a collector of "circumstances, events and curious happenings."
- Derleth pays a tip of the deerstalker to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle by having Solar Pons assume the identity of 'Professor Moriarty of Kings College.' Moriarty, of course, was the arch-nemesis of Sherlock Holmes.
- Another case in which we see Parker leave his wife and practice at short notice and traipse off on an adventure with Pons. To be the wife or a patient of Dr. Parker meant to be neglected.
- "Anstruther" was also the name of a doctor who filled in for Dr. Watson when he, like Parker, left his practice to assist with an investigation.
- Pons implies that Parker failed to notice an important clue in Percy Dixon's medical chart. This annoys Parker very much. After the case is solved, Pons tells Parker "It was not, you see, what *was* on the hospital chart that was important – but what was *not*." This is reminiscent of the famous incident from *Silver Blaze* and the dog that did not bark in the nighttime.

The coroner had said that Dixon's body had the mark of a hypodermic injection, yet there was no note of such on the chart. It is amusing to note that Parker completely ignores his failure to notice this when Pons points it out to him.