

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SEVEN PASSENGERS A Solar Pons story By August Derleth (From Regarding Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of Solar Pons, Copyright 1945 by August Derleth) Version 1.0 - January 26, 2002

THERE IS a certain name which, when mentioned in his presence, invariably causes my friend Solar Pons to look up with a challenging glint in his eyes but a certain grim tightness of his lips, starting in his mind a reminiscence which embraces some of the most interesting cases of his entire career as an investigator of those curious manifestations of criminal activity which reveal the workings of the human mind. Pons had several encounters with the work of the Baron Ennesfred Kroll, who first came to Pons' attention in a social capacity, for Pons had met him at a ball given at the German Embassy late in 1929, where Kroll, who was a social lion, was a compelling figure, despite his stooped shoulders and his sinister appearance, moving among the throngs at the Embassy ball with a singular ability to attract people to him. Pons regarded Baron Ennesfred Kroll as the prototype of the arch-criminal, and found himself ultimately involved in several adventures in which he recognized the hand of the baron, before he was enabled to trap him. Of these, perhaps two--those chronicled in my notes under the headings of "The Adventure of the Seven Passengers," and "The Adventure of the Lost Holiday,"--are most fascinating. The curious affair of the seven passengers was brought to Pons' attention early one morning in January, 1930. Pons had preceded me to the breakfast table that morning, and was engaged in reading the reports in the Times relating to the Naval Limitations Conference then in progress in London. "Anything new?" I asked, as I sat down opposite him. Pons shrugged. "Not in the city. An interesting murder in Kent, a robbery of some ingenuity in a small village south of London; beyond those, nothing. But here," he continued, tapping the paper at his elbow, "is an admirable opening for something of major interest." "What is that?" "The Naval Conference. I fancy an astute spy could cause a considerable disturbance among the envoys of the nations represented here, if he were to announce the plans of the Conference before the proper time." Pons had just tasted his egg, murmured the customary compliment for Mrs. Johnson, our estimable and long suffering landlady, and was about to go on with his breakfast, when there came a sudden ring at the doorbell. Ah!" exclaimed Pons, his face brightening. He pushed his chair slightly away from the table, and sat listening with a smile of anticipation to the deliberate footsteps of W. Johnson on the stairs. Her rap, was followed by the appearance of her head with its wisps of hair escaping from her heavy coils. "A gentleman to see you, Mr. Pons," she said, and thrust in our direction a card, which I took and handed to Pons. Pons' eyebrows raised a little in surprise, and a little gleam of satisfaction appeared briefly in his eyes. "Show him up, by all means, Mrs. Johnson." "I see you are pleasurably surprised," I observed. "Elementary, my dear fellow--but still, a deduction. We are about to have a visitor from Downing Street." He dropped the card on the table. "I should not be at all surprised if the Naval Conference has encountered some difficulties." I took up the card. "Mr. Evan Holdridge St. John," I read. "That is both an imposing and attractive name." "Withal somewhat affected, one might add. Do not be disconcerted to find him something of an elegant." At this moment there was a light, discreet tap on the door. Pons called out; the door opened, and a young man not quite six feet in height, a dark blonde, and by no means unhandsome, walked into the room. He was faultlessly dressed in morning clothes, and carried a stick and gloves. Certainly the word "elegant," which Pons had just used, was not in error in describing him. "Pray sit down, Mr. St. John," invited Pons. "Dr. Parker and I are still at breakfast, but I could not very well disregard a call from Downing Street, no matter at what hour." Our visitor, who had seated himself at Pons' invitation, leaned forward, supporting himself on his ebony stick, and glanced cursorily in my direction, biting his lips somewhat uncertainly. "I assure you Dr. Parker is the soul of discretion. Perhaps I am not amiss in supposing that you are working with the Naval Conference, and

that something has gone wrong?" St. John sighed, covered his eyes with one hand, and shook his head. "The bottom has fallen out of it. Everything has gone wrong," he said in a voice that trembled with conviction. "Dear me!" exclaimed Pons, leaning back and folding his hands. "What precisely?" "Important papers--I may say, the most important papers of the Conference so far--have unaccountably disappeared. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the entire future of the Conference rests upon these papers." "Not mislaid, of course?" Our visitor tapped his shoe impatiently with his stick. "Certainly not, Mr. Pons. The papers were stolen!" "Ah, that is more like it," said Pons. "Perhaps you would like to tell us exactly what occurred." St. John nodded and began at once. "We were on the train this morning, coming from . . ." Pons interrupted him with a grimace of exasperation. "Pray be so good as to start from the beginning, Mr. St. John. You say 'We'--who, besides yourself? You were on a train--it follows that you spent the night out of the city; yet you are presumably in close attendance upon the Naval Conference." Our visitor flushed, and his hand closed more tightly upon his stick, a gesture of which Pons took no notice. "I take it you are aware, Mr. Pons, that his lordship, the Minister of War, is convalescing at his country home near Windsor?" Pons nodded. "His lordship stipulated that he be fully acquainted with the happenings at the Conference; he desired complete, detailed reports in writing. Since it is largely upon Lord Stapleton that the ultimate results of this Conference rest, his lordship had no difficulty in obtaining his request. In consequence, it devolved upon seven carefully selected men to carry this report to him. Every evening, following the Conference, these seven men, of whom I was one, took a carriage at Paddington. Each man carried in a wallet, kept in his inner coat pocket, a portion of the detailed report in code. I myself carried the most important of the papers; the remaining six men carried the rest. I occupied a compartment alone; my companions divided two compartments between them. In this fashion we arrived at Windsor and reported to his lordship. We were required to spend the night there, and took an early morning train back to the city. "For the last six days, I was not alone in my compartment. An elderly gentleman, apparently a tradesman of some kind, occupied my compartment with me. This man did not attract my attention until I began to find that no matter how irregular our hours were at night, he managed somehow to take the same train we did, and showed up promptly at my compartment, for the occupation of which he had most courteously requested and continued to request. I had never in any way associated any suspicion with him, for he seemed a rather harmless and decrepit old person, but I admit to a certain vague uneasiness during the past week. "Yesterday, as the papers have been hinting all week, marked the crisis of the Conference, and as a consequence we carried in addition to yesterday's reports a fully detailed report of the entire work of the Conference to date. Thus far, the work of this Conference has been most rigidly excluded from the press, and it was considered best for this policy to continue for at least the period of a year. In the meanwhile, carefully censored reports were to be supplied the press. Should the press at this moment get hold of these genuine reports which were stolen from us this morning as we rode to the city, the entire work of the Conference would collapse." "It is difficult to conceive in what manner such a collection of papers could possibly be stolen from seven agents," said Pons with keen interest. St. John gestured with his hands. "They were stolen, Mr. Pons. I can tell you how they were stolen from me, but as for my companions--I do not know." He shrugged his shoulders. "And how were they stolen from you?" "Unfortunately," said our visitor in some embarrassment, "I believe I fell asleep. At least, I can remember drawing out of Windsor, and after that no more, until I came to my senses in the midst of the roar of Paddington Station." "You have no conscious knowledge of falling asleep?" "None!" exclaimed our visitor, shaking his head. "Absolutely none. I could not even swear that I had slept, but it must have been so. The compartment was very close, for the air was chill outside, and there was nothing open." Pons began to chuckle. "I fancy you have fallen victim to a

very clever little plot. Unfortunately, it is rather old, though to all appearances still very workable." "Indeed," said St. John, "what is it, then?" "You were drugged, and I daresay your companions were similarly treated, but they, unlike you, are unwilling to admit that they fell asleep at the post." "On the contrary, I ate and drank nothing which might have had such an effect on me," protested Mr. St. John. "Certainly not," agreed Pons. "You very probably inhaled it. Was the old gentleman in your compartment again this morning? Ah, I see in your eyes that he was. And he was nowhere in evidence when you came to your senses at Paddington." "You are quite right, Mr. Pons. My companion had vanished," answered our visitor, looking ruefully at Pons. Pons nodded abstractedly. "If I were to ask you to describe your traveling companion I should in all probability learn that his features were very indistinct; he probably wore dark glasses, perhaps also a beard, a heavy coat--an ulster, most likely--and no doubt also a scarf wound tightly about his neck and chin." St. John colored; he opened his mouth once, or twice as if to speak, but no words came. "Am I right, Mr. St. John?" Our visitor nodded curtly. "You might have seen the man, Mr. Pons. He wore an ulster, yes. He also wore a scarf and dark glasses. He had a moustache, but no beard. "Yes," he continued bitterly, "I have been taken in very thoroughly." "Well, you noticed his height, I am sure," said Pons, in a kinder tone. "That he could not easily hide from you." He stood a good six feet, Mr. Pons." "Very good. That is one point gained. Now, his voice--was it that of an old man?" "It certainly seemed so, though I now have no doubt it was disguised." Pons nodded thoughtfully. "By the way," he said suddenly, "you have not been long in government service?" "No, Mr. Pons, I have not." Pons appeared to meditate for some moments in silence. "You are thoroughly familiar with the effect the early publication of these reports might have?" he asked presently. "Quite, Mr. Pons. The publication of these reports at this time, aside from breaking up the Conference, would no doubt severely strain our relations with certain powers. There is no question of anything more serious, certainly, but this alone, after such long labor, is not easy to contemplate." "Which countries might pay a good price to obtain secret knowledge of these reports?" "Germany would pay perhaps the best price," returned Mr. St. John after a momentary hesitation. "Spain, Turkey, and Austria would be interested." "Very good. Then I think it reasonably sound to assume that the reports were taken not for the press, but for the purpose of selling them to another country. "Exactly," agreed our visitor. "Has it not struck you as somewhat disturbing that your strange traveling companion stole the papers of the very day that marked the crisis of the Conference?" "I confess it has, Mr. Pons." "Yes, it is certainly more than a coincidence." Mr. St. John leaned forward suddenly. "What do you mean, Mr. Pons?" he asked in some agitation. "Surely it must be obvious that, regrettable as it may seem, there has been a leak somewhere?" Our visitor came to his feet and began to pace the floor nervously. "But surely you don't suspect one of us?" "Until the papers are actually found, I must continue to suspect everyone who had knowledge of these reports to Lord Stapleton. Who, besides the seven of you knew of this arrangement?" "Only Lord Stapleton and the Prime Minister," answered Mr. St. John, his face clouding. "And the other six men with you--their names, please." "Mr. Harold Edson, Mr. James Greer, and Mr. Ewart Stephens occupied the compartment behind my own; behind them were Mr. Algernon Chambers, Mr. Michael Caermon, and Mr. Emmett McDonough. All these men have been in the government service for at least four years." Pons made a careful note of the names upon a pad at his elbow, and then for a few moments remained in pensive silence. At last he turned again to St. John. "You say you seemed to fall asleep, just out of Windsor--or better, you remember drawing out of Windsor. Now, Mr. St. John, do you remember whether your strange traveling companion left the compartment shortly out of Windsor?" Our visitor nodded emphatically. "He did. Yes, I remember that, because he had never left the compartment at any time before. He left just as we were leaving Windsor behind." "And did you hear anything that resembled a

popping sound--let us say, similar to the pop of a champagne bottle being opened?" For some moments St. John sat in silence. Then he said thoughtfully, "Yes, Mr. Pons, I believe I did. I heard such a sound just as my companion opened the door of my compartment to step into the aisle." "Ha!" exclaimed Pons in an undertone. "It was glass, then." He looked up at our visitor. "Has the carriage you used been sent out again?" "No. I anticipated you might wish to examine it, and had it ordered put on a siding. If you care to step out and walk this short distance, you may see the car at Paddington." "Later," said Pons. "For the present, you may as well return to the Conference. I will do my best, and if all goes well, I may be able to produce results within twenty-four hours. "I had hardly dared to hope for that, Mr. Pons." "If I need you again, I daresay I can reach you through Downing Street." St. John bowed and left the room. Pons strode rapidly to a window overlooking Praed Street and watched the young man walk to his car. He turned presently and said, "We have just time enough to get over to Paddington before lunch," looking at his watch. "You're coming, I hope." "Of course," I replied. "But you haven't finished your breakfast, after all." "I've no time now, Parker" said Pons, and rang for Mrs. Johnson to take the breakfast things away. At Paddington Station, Pons immediately found the official in charge, and we were quickly taken to the carriage, which had been put on a siding below street level. The carriage was, of course, no different from other first-class carriages of the Great Western Railway. After pointing out to us the compartment occupied by the government men, the official took his leave, and Pons immediately set about examining each compartment in turn. We entered the first compartment and Pons stood for a moment looking about him. Then abruptly he dropped to his knees and began a minute examination of the floor. I watched him crawl about in some amusement. "Ah, here it is!" he exclaimed at last. "What do you make of it, Parker?" I followed the direction of his gaze and noticed near the door the tiny fragments of crushed glass. "Glass," I said dropping to my knees at his side. "You were looking for it, then?" "Surely it was obvious that the seven passengers of these compartments were rather cunningly gassed. Mr. St. John heard a pop--that suggests gas in glass containers--cylinders, I see," he continued, bending forward and picking up a fragment of glass for closer scrutiny. "Note the thickness of the glass--I daresay a condensed gas was used, for this glass suggests pressure. I have no doubt we shall find the remains of one of these cylinders in each of the three compartments occupied." Pons passed the fragment of glass to me and I examined it cursorily. "What do you think it might have been? St. John seemed entirely unaffected by the gas nor did he mention having smelled it." "Odorless, obviously odorless. I thought of carbon monoxide, but if I am not mistaken, the use of that gas would result in nausea and subsequent weakness for the victim." "Certainly if enough were administered to produce unconsciousness, it would--there are exceptions, of course." "Our most likely guess is, I daresay, ethylene. It is odorless and colorless, and its effect is similar to that experienced by St. John. It is extremely volatile. I have no doubt that a small cylinder of compressed ethylene would produce exactly the effect desired by St. John's strange traveling companion. Everything was closed, you remember. St. John's companion would only have to crush the cylinder as he left the compartment; in a short enough time, St. John would be sound asleep." "But the other compartments?" "That's a matter of conjecture, until we have seen the other six passengers. I daresay our man, having shown himself already so clever, could insinuate a cylinder in the other two compartments with comparative ease. He had only to blunder into them, excuse himself courteously, and crush a cylinder under foot as he withdrew." "Yes, it is certainly plausible." Pons rose to his feet. "It is, however, rather curious that none of the gentlemen was smoking. I should say that Mr. St. John's companion took a long chance." "But how can you tell?" I asked in astonishment. "Why, you have not even been in the other compartments!" "Ethylene gas is made up of carbon and hydrogen, a combination always inflammable, and in its compressed form, explosive; had one of the

seven government men been smoking when St. John's companion insinuated his cylinder of ethylene, I fancy there would have been a pretty disturbance." Pons now made his way to the adjoining compartment. I followed at his heels. An examination of this and the remaining compartment disclosed the remains of two more cylinders--in each case, just slightly beyond the door; a fact which gave further weight to Pons' deduction. However, nothing further was found, and Pons gave up the examination at last, taking with him only a few fragments of the thick cylinder glass found in the compartments. We left the carriage, and, after notifying the officials that the carriage could once more be put into service, proceeded to our room. Once there, Pons began to telephone the other six government men who had accompanied Mr. St. John on his journey that morning. In each case Pons found that sleep had overtaken the man, for, under Pons' questions, this admission came quickly. Pons verified his supposition regarding the insinuation of the glass cylinders into the compartments: St. John's singular companion had blundered into both the other compartments, apparently by mistake, had excused himself and gone out. Had the gentlemen heard a popping noise? Yes, it seemed they had. They smelled nothing, no. And everything was closed. Nor had they been smoking. Pons turned from the telephone after a considerable time and sat for some moments in deep thought. He rose at last and looked over at the clock on the mantel. "Time for lunch," I said. He shook his head. "Not for me. I can dispense with it." "But you've had hardly any breakfast," I protested. "No matter," replied Pons. "I find it's imperative I see an acquaintance out Hyde Park way at once. Take your lunch, Parker. Pray do not wait for me. It's possible that I shall find a few moments to drop into a restaurant somewhere." "Well, I hope so. I don't like to see you going off so without your meals." "Not a good policy, I agree. But I am just beginning to suspect that this matter is not quite as simple as it at first appeared." Pons put on his Inverness and stood at the door, meditatively drawing on his gloves. "I think I shall have the very devil of a time getting my hands on the man--or men, behind this thing." "Come, you are making too much of the matter," I protested. "Let us hope so." The door closed behind him. It was a considerable time after lunch that Pons returned. He came slowly into the room, on his face an expression that boded no good. "Something has gone wrong?" I hazarded. "On the contrary," said Pons shortly, "everything is working out too well." He threw off his Inverness and sat down opposite me. I looked at him questioningly. "As I told you," he began, "I left for Hyde Park. There are certain sections of the park where I can always find what the American press calls 'stool-pigeons'. I am acquainted with some of them, and at times they come in very useful, since most of them are from the better classes, and they serve me quite as well in their circles as Frick does in Limehouse and Wapping. One of them knows Mr. Evan St. John quite well. I learned from him that St. John has for some time past been intimate with a certain social figure of prominence." "And this figure?" "Is, I am sure, the man I should like to trap. If I am not in error, it is he who is behind this thing. We are quite familiar with him through the press--the Baron Ennesfred Kroll." "Impossible!" I exclaimed. Pons shrugged his shoulders. "Slowly, Parker! You will remember the German Embassy ball last December and you will recall that I was much interested in Baron Kroll." "I recall it perfectly." "Aside from a purely personal interest, I acted on advice from the C. I. D. The Baron has been engaged in several rather dubious matters on the Continent; understand, nothing definite has ever been proved against him, but it remains that more than once someone in his household has been arrested for a serious crime. Strangely enough, the criminal, after pleading guilty and being sent to prison, has in most cases been released. Some power has been at work, and no one who knows him has much hesitation in designating that power as Baron Kroll. "I took the liberty this afternoon of forcing myself into the presence of the Prime Minister, whose initials you might have seen had you turned over St. John's card this morning when you examined it. I enquired about St. John. It appeared that not much was known of him; he had been

suggested for the position he holds by no less a person than the Earl of Dolchester. He comes of a very good family, but of his capabilities, the Prime Minister knew nothing except what the Earl had written him. I got the Earl on the wire. He was somewhat embarrassed; it had been suggested to him that St. John would be highly capable in this government position. Might I know who had suggested it--I might, providing I was discreet. It was Lady Djuna Howard, the Earl's attractive niece. "To come to the point, I learned that St. John's capabilities had been suggested to Lady Howard by Baron Kroll." "You have got into the thick of it." "Not a doubt of it. But I have had extraordinary luck; let us hope that it continues. My first step, of course, was to urge the Prime Minister to keep all important matters from St. John." "You think him an accomplice, then?" "He is certainly responsible for the leak. But I doubt very much that he is consciously an accomplice. I daresay he is unwittingly the tool of Baron Kroll. In all probability, St. John relates minor state secrets to Baron Kroll never suspecting that the Baron is other than the soul of honesty." "Do you suggest, then, that St. John's traveling companion was the Baron?" "No, certainly not. You underrate the Baron, Parker. But I have no doubt that it was one of his agents. I daresay the Baron was many miles removed from the scene of the theft, even though he may now have the papers in his possession." "Is there no way of verifying that?" "Yes," replied Pons. "With the assistance of a most gracious lady, the Yard has been in constant touch with the movements of the Baron." "Why not call Jamison, then?" "I fancy he will only confirm my assumption." He reached for the telephone and called the Yard, asking for Inspector Jamison, whose voice presently sounded on the wire. There was a brief conversation, after which Pons turned from the instrument with lips tight in anger. "As I thought--the Baron spent the entire week at the Earl of Dolchester's country house; he is expected to return to the city some time today." "You are planning to watch him?" "Jamison kindly lent me Constable Mecker, who has been keeping the Baron's house in Park Lane under eye since early this afternoon." "Why that glumness, then?" "Baron Kroll is wiler than you think, Parker. I fear very much I shall not be able to bag him." "And the Conference papers?" "I daresay I shall manage them. I shall deliver them to St. John within the time promised. It is already obvious that the Baron, though the author of the daring and successful plan to get the papers, has no intention whatsoever of appearing personally in the matter. Therefore, the papers, which were stolen by one of Baron Kroll's men, must be delivered to another German agent, who will in turn send them to Berlin. I daresay I can name the fellow who will clear them." "And who is he?" "He goes by the name of Hilary Blount, and he lives at Seventeen, St. Anne's Court, Soho. He is better known to the C.I.D. as Stefan Braun, one of the most capable German espionage agents with whom the Yard has had to contend." "If you know him, surely he could be arrested on some pretext or other?" "And so ruin the only immediate chance of getting back the papers? No, my dear Parker, it won't do. Braun must have a free hand for the time being. We shall not have long to wait. Unless I am very much mistaken, Kroll's agent will attempt to dispose of the papers as quickly as possible: they are wanted badly by the Home Office, and Braun knows that they will be brought to him. I have no doubt the arrangement has been made by Baron Kroll, who will send to Braun the man who managed to make off with the papers this morning. The pattern is only too painfully clear. If the thief himself is caught, he will no doubt plead guilty, without a breath of suspicion to touch Baron Kroll, who will then immediately turn about and set the wheels moving in the prisoner's behalf. It's a sorry business, but I can do nothing in the face of diplomatic maneuvers such as those of which Baron Kroll is capable. Nor can we wait an the chance that Baron Kroll may get in touch with Braun; for the papers must be returned before Braun gets a good look at them. If that were not so, perhaps I might have sufficient time to play the game long enough so that in the end I could bag the Baron." "What if Braun meets the Baron's accomplice somewhere?" "He will be followed if he leaves his house." "And the Baron?" "Anyone leaving his house will also be traced. Mecker has enough men

at his disposal; I saw to that. Mecker himself has instructions to follow anyone answering to the rather vague description of St. John's strange traveling companion. No one can get into the Baron's house today without going to considerable trouble, apart from Baron Kroll himself. I daresay we are safe in that; but I am equally certain that the Baron will take no chance whatever; the arrangements have already been made and need only to be carried out. Kroll's agent has the papers; Braun is to have them. We are wasting time covering Kroll's Park Lane house; it is the house in St. Anne's Court we must watch. "Braun lives alone, as most men of his occupation do. He has a charwoman by day, sometimes a butler; at night he is always quite alone. Moreover, there is an off chance that the Baron may have the papers sent to another agent in the employment of Berlin--even so, all known agents are being watched. But come, let us have dinner, and then join the men who are watching the house in St. Anne's Court." Number Seventeen, St. Anne's Court, was a small house of one storey, set quite close to the street. It had an innocuous appearance, and was not a new building; so much was evident despite the early darkness. One of Jamison's men was in evidence some distance down the court, and another at the corner of Wardour Street not far away. Pons and I took up our position across the court in the shadow of a protecting doorway, and from this position it was easy to see beyond the partly-drawn shade, a solitary figure occasionally cross the single lit window. We had not been in hiding for many minutes, when the door of the house opposite opened, and a short, rather heavy man stood framed in a faint light from behind. This was undoubtedly the German agent, Braun. He stood there briefly, and had just turned to reenter the house when a taxicab careened around the corner from Wardour Street and screeched to a halt before number seventeen. Braun remained on the threshold, one hand on the doorjamb, as if hesitating to close the door. A tall, cloaked figure left the taxi-cab, said a few words to the driver, and ran rapidly up into the house, past Braun. The door closed; the taxi-cab drove forward and took its stand at the farther end of the court. Pons immediately led the way across the court, where we were joined by Mecker, who had left his car in the adjoining street. Mecker and Pons held a whispered conversation, after which Pons crouched before the door of Braun's house and looked through the keyhole. "Locked?" asked Mecker. Pons shook his head. He reached silently to the knob, turned it, and the door opened for us. The sound of voices came into the hall from an inner room, from under the door of which light shone in a bright line. This door, too, was unlocked, and in a moment Pons had thrown it back. The three of us, Mecker and myself with weapons drawn, sprang into the room. "Up hands, Gentlemen!" cried Mecker. The two men in the room presented a picture of contrasts, for, while Braun showed his consternation in the fear and convulsive working of his face, the tall man who had come with the papers remained impassive; if anything, he seemed to regard the three of us with scorn. Pons went directly to the table. "Ah, I fancy these are the papers we want, Gentlemen." He gathered up three packets, examined them briefly, and stuffed them into his inner coat pocket. Indicating Braun casually, he said to Mecker, "Your man. Espionage." Then he turned to the other. "Your name?" "John Hirsch," snapped our prisoner. "Employed by Baron Kroll?" "Say, rather, a free-lance, Mr. Solar Pons." "You prefer to deny your relationship with the man Kroll?" "I do not know him." Pons shrugged. "Hirsch, you are guilty of high treason, but there is an opportunity to grant you a kind of immunity. What part did Baron Kroll play in your well-executed plan? A statement implicating the scoundrel behind you--and perhaps, who knows--we may be able to overlook your part in this little plan. Come, man, what do you say?" "I say, sir, go to the devil!" "Ah, very well, then. We shall see to it that Baron Kroll can manage nothing in your behalf. Your man, Mecker." Outside once more, Pons strode along in deep and silent thought. "At least," I broke in presently, "you have recovered the papers." "Ha! that is all you see, Parker?" "But surely--you have explained everything else?" "Ah, indeed! It does not occur to you that I was meant to recover the papers?" "Candidly, no; the motive for that would be beyond

me. "And that we were meant to arrest Braun and get him out of the way? The German government has that way of disposing of men whose services are no longer welcome since they are too well-known to the police. I fear it is all very elementary; we have served as we intended to serve; neither Braun nor Hirsch will find a finger lifted in his behalf; and in the meantime, Baron Kroll will plan and execute coups of more significance to the rising desire for vengeance within Germany. "But, if not this time, there will always be another time for Baron Kroll, and still another, no doubt, and so on, until it is our turn. Let us just be patient and wait upon time."

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