

The Adventure of the Priory School.

(Continued.)

Dunlop. Before we start to investigate that let us try to realize what we do know, so as to make the most of it and to separate the essential from the accidental."

"First of all, I wish to impress upon you that the boy certainly left of his own free will. He got down from his window, and he went off either alone or with some one. That is sure."

"I assented. "Well, now, let us turn to this unfortunate German master. The boy was fully dressed when he fled. Therefore he for a what he would do. But the German went without his socks. He certainly acted on very short notice."

"Undoubtedly." "Why did he go? Because from his bedroom window he saw the flight of the boy; because he wished to overtake him and bring him back. He seized his bicycle, pursued the lad and in pursuing him met his death."

"So it would seem." "Now I come to the critical part of my argument. The natural action of a man in pursuing a little boy would be to run after him. He would know that he could overtake him. But the German does not do so. He turns to his bicycle. I am told that he was an excellent cyclist. He would not do this if he did not see that the boy had some swift means of escape."

"The other bicycle." "Let us continue our reconstruction. He meets his death five miles from the school—not by a bullet, mark you, which even a lad might conceivably discharge, but by a savage blow dealt by a vigorous arm. The lad, then, had a companion in his flight. And the flight was a swift one, since it took five miles before an expert cyclist could overtake them. Yet we survey the ground round the scene of the tragedy. What do we find? A few cattle tracks, nothing more. I took a wide sweep round, and there is no path within fifty yards. Another cyclist could have had nothing to do with the actual murder, nor were there any human footmarks."

"Holmes," I cried, "this is impossible!" "Admirable!" he said. "A most illuminating remark. It is impossible as I state it, and therefore I must in some respect have stated it wrong. Yet you saw for yourself. Can you suggest any fallacy?"

"He could not have fractured his skull in a fall?" "In a morass, Watson?" "I am at my wits' end." "Tut, tut! We have solved some worse problems. At least we have plenty of material, if we can only use it. Come, then, and, having exhausted the Palmer, let us see what the Dunlop with the patched cover has to offer us."

"We picked up the track and followed it onward for some distance, but soon the moor rose into a long, heather tufted curve, and we left the water course behind us. No further help from tracks could be hoped for. At the spot where we saw the Dunlop tire it might equally well have led to Holderness Hall, the stately towers of which rose some miles to our left, or to a low gray village which lay in front of us and marked the position of the Chesterfield highroad."

"As we approached the forbidding and squalid inn with the sign of a gamecock above the door Holmes gave a sudden groan and clutched me by the shoulder to save himself from falling. He had had one of those violent strains of the ankle which leave a man helpless. With difficulty he limped up to the door, where a squat, dark elderly man was smoking a black clay pipe."

"How are you, Mr. Reuben Hayes?" said Holmes. "Who are you, and how do you get my name so pat?" the countryman answered, with a suspicious flash of a pair of cunning eyes. "Well, it's printed on the board above your head. It's easy to see a man who is master of his own house. I suppose you haven't such a thing as a carriage in your stables?"

"No, I have not." "I can hardly put my foot to the ground." "Don't put it to the ground." "But I can't walk." "Well, then, hop."

Mr. Reuben Hayes' manner was far from gracious, but Holmes took it with admirable good humor. "Look here, my man," said he. "This is really rather an awkward fix for me. I don't mind how I get on." "Neither do I," said the morose landlord.

"The matter is very important. I would offer you a sovereign for the use of a bicycle." The landlord pricked up his ears. "Where do you want to go?" "To Holderness Hall."

"Pals of the dook, I suppose?" said the landlord, surveying our mud stained garments with ironical eyes. Holmes laughed good naturedly. "He'll be glad to see us anyhow." "Why?" "Because we bring him news of his lost son."

The landlord gave a very visible start. "What, you're on his track?" "He has been heard of in Liverpool. They expect to get him every hour."

"I could take a note back." "But I need your company and assistance. Wait a bit! There is a fellow cutting post up yonder. Bring him over here, and he will guide the postman."

I brought the peasant across, and Holmes dispatched the frightened man with a note to Dr. Huxtable. "Now, Watson," said he, "we have the up-to-date clues this morning. One of the bicycles with the Palmer tire, and we know what that has led to. The bicycle with the patched

(Continued on last page.)

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F. M. CHRISMAN, Administrator. Dated August 17th, 1905.

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