



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXXII -- The Adventure of the Priory School

The smiling and beautiful countryside strikes again! The sheep may safely graze, but the people and even the cows are not what they seem out on the morasses and moors surrounding the most exclusive preparatory school in England. It's a good thing that we can count on Sherlock Holmes to shine the light of reason into to the darkness of the human heart, and if he was able to pocket a tidy sum while he was at it, who are we to quibble? Well, the Hounds of the Internet thrive on a diet of Quibbles and Bits, so please join the pack as we pursue the wild and Wilder life along the track that leads to Holderness Hall from "The Priory School."



Educator of the Year: It seems to me that the real hero of this story is Dr. Thorneycroft Huxtable. He may be large, pompous and a bit comical to our eyes, but his heart is in the right place, and it was only due to his efforts that Holmes was brought into the case at all. Unlike all the other people surrounding poor little Lord Saltire, Dr. Huxtable kept the child's well-being foremost in his mind throughout the crisis. And listen to Dr. Huxtable's astute observations on the boy's father: "His Grace is never very friendly with anyone. He is completely immersed in large public questions, and rather inaccessible to all ordinary emotions. But he was always kind to the boy in his own way." The good doctor was no fool.

Yes, this paean to Thorney is leading to some questions. First of all, does it seem to anyone else as if Dr. Huxtable knew the Duke fairly well even before Lord Saltire enrolled in the Priory School? The closeness of the school to Holderness Hall suggests that there might have been opportunities for the two men to have met many times over the years since Dr. Huxtable founded the school. How much did Dr. Huxtable know about the family relationships at the Hall? Was he responsible for persuading the Duke to enroll his heir at the

school, so as to get him away from the unhappy situation at home? And did Huxtable have some suspicions that the disappearance of Lord Saltire was anything but an “ordinary” type of kidnaping? Was that why he took the first opportunity to call in expert help from the outside?

The consequences: Once Holmes had located the missing boy at the Fighting Cock Inn, why did he leave him there overnight? Granted that Reuben Hayes had fled the scene, but after what had happened already, how could Holmes be certain that Lord Saltire would not be harmed, either by James Wilder or even by the Duke himself?

And while we’re second-guessing Holmes, are the Hounds satisfied with his decision to let James Wilder go free? Was it enough punishment for him to lose his home and his last hope of inheriting his father’s estate? Was Holmes moved by the Duke’s plea on his son’s behalf, or do you think he was influenced by that 6,000 or 12,000 cheque? Or was Holmes thinking ahead to consequences of Wilder’s criminal trial upon Lord Saltire, who had been through so much already? Do the Hounds think that this was the last seriously evil deed that James Wilder ever committed?

As for Reuben Hayes, was Holmes correct in saying that the gallows awaited him? Was it not possible that the Duke hired a clever counsel who might have gotten the sentence reduced to a prison term on the grounds that the attack on Heidegger was not intended to cause his death? This is not to say that such an argument is just; only to discuss the possibility that it might have been successful. What say the Hounds?

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