

THE PUNCTATION POINTS.

Six little marks from school are we. Very important, all agree. Filled to the brim with mystery. Six little marks from school.

THE FLYING DEATH.

A Story in Three Writings and a Telegram.

PART I.—THE TRACKS IN THE SAND.

DOCUMENT NO. 1. A Letter in Explanation of Harris' Hoax, Reporter for "The New Era," off on Vacation, to his Managing Editor.

MONTAUK POINT, L. I., Sept. 20, 1902.

Mr. JOHN CLARE, Managing Editor, The New Era, New York City.

Dear Mr. Clare: Here is a case for your personal consideration. You will see presently why I have not put it on the wire. It resolves itself into anything sufficiently reasonable to print, there will be time for that later; at present it is—or, at least, it would appear on paper—a bit of pure insanity. Let me just think it that, and myself the victim, I have two witnesses of character and reputation who will corroborate every fact in the case, and who go farther with the incredible inferences than I can bring myself to do.

My first thought was to preserve the evidence for a more careful examination. I hastily collected some flat rocks and had covered those tracks nearest the soft sand when I heard a hall. For the present I didn't want the others to know what I had found. I wanted to think it out, undisturbed by conflicting theories. So I hastily returned, and was putting on my shoes when the Bow Hill patrolman—his name was Sobenok—came out of the gully.

"See anything?" I called. "Nothing to the northward. Have you found anything?" "Nothing definite," I replied. "Don't cross the sand there. Keep along down. We'll go to the Sand Spit Station and report this."

But the man was staring out beyond my little column of rock shelters. "What's that thing?" he said, pointing to the nearest unsheltered print. "My God! It looks like a bird track. And it leans straight to the body," he cried, in a voice that jangled on my nerves. But when he began to look fearfully overhead into the gathering darkness, drawing in his shoulders like one shrinking from a blow, that was too much. I jumped to my feet, grabbed him by the arm, and started him along.

murder, that's what it is—bloody murder," and he bent over the dead man, with twitching shoulders.

"He's right," said Colton, who had been hastily examining the corpse. "This is no drowning case. The man was stabbed, and died instantly. Was he a friend of yours?" he asked of the patrol.

No; nor of nobody's, was Paul Serdholm, replied the man. "No later than last week we quarreled." He paused, looking blankly at us.

"I'll bet you five hundred to five dollars that the autopsy doesn't result in the finding of a bullet," cried Colton.

I accepted, and it was agreed that he should stay and report from the autopsy. At the station I talked with various of the men, and, assuming for the time that the case presented no unusual features of murder, tried to get some helpful clue. Motive was my first aim. Results were scant.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Colton gravely. "He wasn't killed by a bullet. It was a stab wound. A broad bladed knife, by the way, not driven with terrific power. The autopsy settled that. You lose your bet, Haynes." "Why?" he cried suddenly, "it wasn't unlike what a heavy, sharp beak would make. But—but—this Pteranodon—is that it?—Oh, the devil! I thought all those pterano-things were dead and buried under Adam's great-grand father was a protoplasm."

"Science hasn't proved that they were extinct," said the Professor. "But a scientific assumption is a mere makeshift, useful only until it is overthrown by new facts. We have prehistoric survivals—the gar of our rivers is unchanged from his ancestors of fifteen million years ago. The creature of the water has endured; why not the creature of the air?"

"Where did you find it?" I asked. "It formed a part of Mr. Stratton's stone

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The Great American Newspaper.

Elsewhere is noted that the New York Sun has again changed hands from Paul Dana, son of the great editor and Assistant Secretary of War under Stanton.

A New York newspaper asks if the 7,000,000 people in and around that city know much about the men who make the great metropolitan journals. In all probability they do not, nor the world at large, because journalism has become so impersonal that few know the editors or writers as they were in the days of the elder Bennett, Horace Greeley, or Henry J. Raymond.

Joseph Pulitzer, the owner of the World, spends his summers at Bar Harbor and much of the rest of the time abroad. He lays the course, in person, or by telegraph, but the man who runs the World is Bradford Merrill, James Gordon Bennett, of the Herald, does not set foot in this country twice in ten years. His home is in Paris and on yachts in the Mediterranean.

It is now 4 p. m., and I will send this over by the early wagon, which takes stuff to market. Then I'll get a couple hours' sleep and go back to the place before anyone else overruns it with tracks. It has come on to rain, and the trail will be wiped out. I fear, except the spots still protected by my rock shelters.

It seems like a nightmare—formless, meaningless. What you will think of it I can only conjecture. But you must not think that I have lost my senses. I am sane enough; so is Colton; so, to all appearance, is Professor Ravenden. The fact is, exactly as I have written them down, I have left no clue untouched thus far. I will stake my life on the absence of footprints. And it all comes down to this Mr. Clare; Pteranodon or no Pteranodon, as sure as my name is Haynes, the thing that killed Paul Serdholm never walked on human feet.

Robert Packer Linderman, who died recently from septic poisoning, was unusual fond of his children. There are six of them in the mansion on Fountain Hill, South Bethlehem. Christmas was celebrated in the old-fashioned way, with games around the large tree.

What a happy lot the dog or the ox or the pig must have. They never have to worry about a new dress or a new coat two or three times a year, and when once they establish the fashion it stays for all time. Nature helps dumb brute turn turns her back on man absolutely. Think of Tower coming home with his hair cut foot-ball pattern, and a sweater on, or the family cow in corsets and a heightening of her color from the use of powder and paste. The humane society would be on hands at once to relieve the domestic creatures. But man has no friend that he can depend on. He is a slave, and there is no ray of hope for him.

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