

"AUSTIN," SHE SAID, "I HAVE COME TO TELL YOU OUR ENGAGEMENT IS AT AN END."—DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.

THE PARASITE.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

AUTHOR OF "THE REFUGEES," "MECAH CLARKE," "ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES," ETC., ETC.

PART I.

MARCH 24TH.—The spring is fairly with us now. Outside my laboratory window the great chestnut trees are all covered with their glutinous, sticky buds, the smell of which have already begun to break into little green shuttlecocks. As you walk down the lanes you are conscious of the rich silent forces of Nature working all around you. The wet earth smells fruitful and luscious. Green shoots are peeping out everywhere. The twigs are strong and sup, and the moistmary Earth air is suffused with a faintly delicious perfume. But in the hedges, lambs beneath them—everywhere the work of reproduction going forward!

I can see it without and I can feel it within. We also have our spring, when the little arterioles dilate, the lymph flows in a living stream, the heart beats faster, while the brain quivers. Every part of Nature is a little whole machine. I can feel the ferment in my blood at this very moment, and as the cool sunshine pours through my window I could dance about in it like a goat. So I should, only that Charles Sadler would rush up stairs to know what was the matter. Besides, I must remember that I am Professor Gilroy. An old professor may afford to be natural, but

when fortune has given one of the first chairs in the university to a man of four-and-thirty, he must try and act the part consistently.

What a fellow Wilson is! If I could only throw the same enthusiasm into psychology that he does into pathology, I should become a Claude Bernard of the mind. His whole life and soul and energy work to one end. He draws to sleep collating his results of the past day, and he wakes to plan his researches for the coming one. And yet outside the narrow circle who follow his proceedings he gets so little credit for his work. He is received with a smile, and even a brick to the edifice, even one sees and applauds it. But Wilson is trying to dig the foundations for a science of the future. His work is underground, and does not show. Yet he goes on uncomplainingly, corresponding with a hundred semi-maniacs in the hope of finding one reliable person, sifting a hundred lies on the way, gathering one little result, and then collating old books, determining ones, experimenting, lecturing, trying to light up in others the very interest which is consuming him. I am filled with wonder and admiration when I think of him, and yet when he asks me to associate myself with his researches I am compelled to tell him that in their present state they offer little attraction to a man who is devoted to exact science.

If he could show me something positive and objective I might then be tempted to approach the question from its physiological side. So long as half his subjects are tainted with charlatany and the other half with hysteria his psychologists must content themselves with the body, and leave the mind to the charlatans.

No doubt I am a materialist. Agatha says that I am a rank one. I tell her that is an excellent reason for shortening our engagement since I am in such urgent need of her spirituality. And yet I may claim to be a curious example of the effect of a materialist education, for by nature I am, unless I deceive myself, a highly psychic man. I was a nervous, sensitive boy, a dreamer, a seamanbulist, full of impressions and intuitions. My black hair, my dark eyes, my thin olive face, my tapering fingers, are all characteristic of my real temperament, and cause experts like Professor Wilson to think me a semi-maniac. But I have exact knowledge. I have trained myself to deal only with fact and with proof. Surprise and fancy have no place in my microscope, cut my scalpel, weigh in my balance, and I will devote a lifetime to its investigation. But when you ask me to study feelings, impressions, suggestions, you ask me to do what is distasteful, and even demoralizing.

parture from pure reason affects me like an evil smell or a musical discord.

Which is a very sufficient reason why I am a little loath to go to Professor Wilson's to-night. Still, I feel that I could hardly get out of the situation without positive reinforcement from Mrs. Mardon. And Mrs. Mardon, of course I would not if I could. But I had rather meet them anywhere else. I know that Wilson would draw me into this nebulous semi-scientific of his if I could. In his enthusiasm he is perfectly impulsive to hints or circumstances. Not only that, of a positive, scientific and mathematical character, but to the more hazy, the more mysterious. Miss Mardon, would you have any objection to my putting you off?"

"Oh, I should love it!" cried Agatha. By this time all the company had gathered round in a circle—the last-fretted and last-arrived, the last to be seated, were seated second or even, as though it were something between a religious ceremony and a conjurer's entertainment. A red velvet-chair had been pushed into the centre, and Agatha lay back in it, a little flushed, and trembling slightly from excitement. I could feel it from the vibration of the wheat-ears. Miss Penclousa drew near her seat and stood over her, leaning upon her crutch.

And there was a change in the woman. She no longer seemed small or insignificant. Twenty years were gone from her age. Her eyes were shining; a tinge of color had come into her cheeks; her hair was dark and wavy; her figure was more useful, plumper, and more self-assured, and I, I fancy, a strong effect upon the children. Frankly, I must confess that my own needs whatiffer I can give it. I fear that, after all, much of my neurotic temperament survives, and that I am far from that cool, calm precision which characterizes Miss Penclousa. But I have had the good fortune which I have witnessed this evening have set my nerves thrilling so that even now I am all unstrung! My only comfort is that neither Wilson nor Miss Penclousa, nor even Agatha, could have possibly known my weakness.

And what in the world was there to excite me? Nothing; or, at least, I will seem ludicrous when I set it down.

The Mardens had got to Wilson's before me. In fact, I was one of the last to arrive, and found the room crowded. I had hardly time to say a word to Mrs. Mardon and to Agatha, who was looking charming in white and pink, with golden-brown hair in her hair, when Wilson came twitching at my sleeve.

"You want something positive, Gilroy," said he, drawing me apart into a corner. "My dear fellow, I have a phenomenon—a phenomenon."

I should have been more impressed had I not heard the name before. His sanguine spirit turns every firefly into a star.

"No possible question about the *homo flores* this time," he said, in answer, perhaps, to some little gleam of amusement in my eyes. "My wife has known her for many years. They both come from the same old family. They have not been in Europe a dozen or two, and know no one outside the university circle, but I assure you that the things she has told us suffice in themselves to establish a claim upon an absolutely scientific basis. There is nothing like her, amateur or professional."

I like none of these mystery mongers, and the amateur least of all. With the paid performer you may pounce upon him and expose him the instant that you have seen through his trick. He is there to deceive you, and you are there to find him out. But what are you to do in a sudden, and unexpected, and trapping a suspicious lunatic? Are you to hurl coquettish over her evening frock when she steals round with her phosphorus bottle and her supernatural plaudits. There would be a scene, and you would be looked upon as a brute. So you have your choice of being that or a brute. I was in no very good humor as I followed Wilson to the lady.

Any one less like my idea of a West Indian could not be imagined. She was a small frail creature, well over forty, I should say, with a pale peacock face, and hair of a very light yellow. Her eyes were large and dark, and her expression, like her manner, retiring. In any group of ten women she would have been the last woman whom one would have picked out. Her eyes were perhaps the most remarkable, and also, I am compelled to say, her least pleasant, feature. They were gray in color—gray with a tinge of green—and their expression struck me as being melancholy, rather. I wonder if fortune is the word, or should I have said *fortune*? On second thoughts feline would have expressed it better. A cratch leaning against the wall told me what was painfully evident when she rose, that one of her legs was crippled.

So we were introduced. Wilson, I must say, did not even dream that my name was mentioned; she glanced across at Agatha. Wilson had evidently been talking. And presently, no doubt, thought I, she will inform me by occult means that I am engaged in a young lady with wheat-color in her hair. I wondered how much more Wilson had been telling.

"Professor Gilroy is a terrible sceptic," said he. "I hope, Miss Penclousa, that you will be able to convert him."

She looked keenly up at me.

"Professor Gilroy is quite right to be sceptical if he has not seen anything convincing," said she. "I should have been surprised if you had said, 'that you would yourself have been an excellent subject'."

"For what, may I ask?" said I.

"Well, for mesmerism, for example."

"My experience has been that mesmerists go for their subjects to those who are mentally unstable. All their relations are unstable, and they are not in the best of health, and are dealing with abnormal organisms."

"Which of these ladies would you say possessed a normal organism?" she asked. "I should like you to select the one who seems to you to have the best-balanced mind. Should we say the girl with pink and white?"—Miss Agatha Mardon, I think the name is."

"Yes, I should attach weight to any results from her."

"I have never tried how far she is impulsive enough. Of course some people respond much more rapidly than others. May I ask how far your scepticism extends? I suppose that you admit the mesmeric sleep and the power of suggestion?"

"I admit nothing. Miss Penclousa."

"Dear me, I thought science had got further than that. Of course I know nothing about the scientific side of it. I only know what I can do. You see the girl in red, for example, over there in the Japanese jar. I shall tell that she comes across to us."

She bent forward as she spoke and dropped her fan upon the floor. The girl whisked round and came straight towards us, with an inquiring look upon her face, as if some one had called her.

"What do you think of that, Gilroy?" cried Wilson, in a kind of ecstasy.

I did not dare to tell him what I thought of it. To me

it was the most bare-faced shameless piece of imposture that I had ever witnessed. The collision and the signal had really been too obvious.

"Professor Gilroy is not satisfied," said she, glancing up at me with her strange little eyes. "My dear fan is to get the credit of it all, I suppose. We will see more of that thing else. Miss Mardon, would you have any objection to my putting you off?"

"Oh, I should love it!" cried Agatha. By this time all the company had gathered round in a circle—the last-fretted and last-arrived, the last to be seated, were seated second or even, as though it were something between a religious ceremony and a conjurer's entertainment. A red velvet-chair had been pushed into the centre, and Agatha lay back in it, a little flushed, and trembling slightly from excitement. I could feel it from the vibration of the wheat-ears. Miss Penclousa drew near her seat and stood over her, leaning upon her crutch.

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"She is in the trance," said Miss Penclousa.

"Sleeping," I cried.

"Wake her, then," said he.

I laid my hand on the arm and shouted in her ear. She might have been dead for all the impression that I could make. Her body was there on the velvet chair. Her organs were acting her heart, her lungs. But her soul? It had slipped from beyond our ken. Whiditer had it gone? What power had dispossessed it? I was puzzled and disconcerted.

"So much for the mesmeric sleep," said Miss Penclousa. "As regards suggestion—whatever I may suggest: Miss Mardon will infallibly do, whether it be now or after she has awokened from her trance. Do you demand proof of it?"

"I demand it," said I.

"You shall have it," I said. "I saw a sample pass over her face, as though an amusing thought had struck her. She stooped and whispered earnestly into her subject's ear. Agatha, who had been so deaf to me, nodded her head as she listened."

"Awake," cried Miss Penclousa, with a sharp tap of her fingers upon the floor. The eye opened, the glazing cleared slowly away, and the soul looked out once more after its strange eclipse.

We went away early. Agatha was none the worse for her strange excursion, but I was nervous and unrested, unable to lie down. The number of experiments which Wilson was pouring out for my benefit. As I had gone to bed, Miss Penclousa slipped a piece of paper into my pocket.

"Pray forgive me," said she, "if I take means to overcome your scepticism. Open this note at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. It is a little private test."

"I will do that," I said. "But there is the note and it shall be opened as she directs. My head is aching, and I have written enough for to-night. To-morrow I dare say that what seems so inexplicable will take quite another complexion. I shall not surrender my convictions without a struggle."

"March 25th—I am amazed, confounded. It is clear that I must reconsider my opinion upon this matter. But first let me place on record what has occurred.

I had finished breakfast, and was looking over some diagrams with Wilson's pencil to be illustrated, when I saw him. He was leaning over the table, and I saw him at once and wished to see him immediately. I gazed at the clock, and saw with surprise that it was only half past nine.

When I entered the room she was standing on the hearth-rug facing me. Something in her pose chilled my heart, and checked the words which were rising to my lips. Her veil was off, and I saw that she was pale, and that her expression was unnatural.

"Austin," she said, "I have come to tell you that our engagement is at an end."

I staggered. I believe that I literally did stagger. I know that I found myself leaning against the bookcase for support.

"But—but—" I stammered—"this is very sudden, Agatha."

"Yes, Austin, I have come here to tell you that our engagement is at an end."

"But surely," I cried, "you will give me some reason. This is unlike you, Agatha. Tell me how I have been unfaithful to you."

"It is all over, Austin."

"But why? You must be under some delusion, Agatha. Perhaps you have been told some falsehood about me. Or you may have misunderstood something that I have said to you."

"It is all over, Austin."

"But why? You must be under some delusion, Agatha."

"It is all over, Austin. All is over."

Her voice was cold and measured, her manner strangely formal and hard. It seemed to me that she was absolutely resolved not to be drawn into any argument or explanation.

As for me, I was shaking with agitation, and I turned my face aside, so ashamed was I that she should see my want of control.

"You must know what this means to me," I cried. "It is the blasting of all my hopes and the ruin of my life. You surely will not inflict such a punishment upon me unheard-

You will let me know what is the matter. Consider how impossible it would be for me under any circumstances to tell you so. For God's sake, Agatha, let me know what I have done."

"It will not pass me without a word and opened the door. "It is a private room, Austin," said she. "You must not tell our engagement at an end." An instant later she was gone, and before I could recover myself sufficiently to follow her I heard the hill door close behind her.

I rushed into my room to change my coat, with the idea of hunting up Miss Mardon. But Miss Penclousa had told her that of my misfortune was to be. So I sat down in that chair of my misfortune again. It was so uncomfortable that I could hardly lay my head on it. Never shall I forget those horrible ten minutes. I had just pulled on my overcoat when the clock upon the mantel-piece struck ten.

"I was so occupied with the idea with Miss Penclousa's note. I was lying before me on the table, and the note it open, it was scribbled in pencil in a peculiar angular handwriting.

"*MY DEAR PROFESSOR GILROY* [it said].—*Pray excuse the personal nature of the test which I am giving you. Professor Wilson happens to mention the relation between you and my son, and I am desirous of testing it to see if nothing could be more convincing to you than if I were to suggest to Miss Mardon that she should call upon you at half past nine to-morrow morning and suspend your engagement for half an hour or so. Science is an exacting life, it is difficult to give up a scientific test, but I am convinced that this at least will be an action which will decide me most logically to do of my own free will. Forget anything that she may have said, as she has really nothing whatever to do with it, and will certainly not recollect anything about it. I wish this note to shorten your anxiety, and to assure you that my suggestion must have caused you*

"Yours faithfully,"

HELEN PENCLOUSA."

Really, when I had read the note, I was too relieved to be angry. I was angry, but it was only a momentary, a slight, indignant outburst of bad temper. I did not mean to be angry. But, after all, I had challenged her by my scepticism. It may have been, as she said, a little difficult to decide a test which would satisfy me.

And she had done that. There could be no question at all about it. For my hypothesis had been completely demolished. I had been drawn from me now onwards as one of the facts of life. That Agatha, who of all women of my acquaintance had the best-balanced mind, had been reduced to a condition of automatism appeared to me certain. A person at a distance had worked her as an engineer on a distance, and had taken her to task, and she had stepped in, as it were, had pulled her on one side, and seized her nervous mechanism, saying, "I will work this for half an hour."

And Agatha must have been unconscious as she came and as she returned. Could she make her way in safety through the streets in such a state? I put on my hat and hurried round to see if all was well with her.

Yes. She was at home. I was shown into the drawing-room, and found her sitting with a book upon her lap.

"You are an early visitor, Austin," she said, smiling.

"And you have been an even earlier one," I answered.

"How long?"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"You have not been out to-day?"

"No, certainly not."

"Agatha," said I, seriously, "would you mind telling me exactly what you have done this morning?"

She laid her head upon her hand, and I saw that she was getting on your professional hook, Austin. See what comes of being engaged to a man of science! However, I will tell you, though I can't imagine what you want to know for. I got up at eight. I breakfasted at half past, I came into this room at ten minutes past nine, and began to read *The Memoirs of Queen Victoria*. I was half asleep, and I dozed off, but I had the bad accomplishment of dropping to sleep over the pages, and I did you, sir, the very flattering one of dreaming about you. It is only a few minutes since I woke up."

"And found yourself where you had been before?"

"Why, where else could I find myself?"

"And you mind telling me, Agatha, what it was that you dreamt about me? It is really not mere curiosity on my part."

"I merely had a vague impression that you came into it. I cannot recall anything definite."

"I have not been out to-day, Agatha, how is that you should dream about me?"

A pale look came over her face.

"Really, Austin, I do not know what is the matter with you this morning. One would almost think that you doubted my word. If my hoots are dusky it must be, of course, that you have been out with the girls, and not to me."

It was perfectly evident that she knew nothing whatever about the matter, and I reflected that, after all, perhaps it was better that she should not enlighten her. It might frighten her, and could serve no good purpose that I could see. I said no more about it, therefore, and left shortly afterwards to go to the office.

But I am immensely impressed. My horizon of scientific possibilities has suddenly been immensely extended. I no longer wonder at Wilson's enormous energy and enthusiasm. Who would not work hard who had a vast virgin field to hand? Why, I know the novel shape of a microscope, and I have seen a 1000-power objective lens, and I have seen a 3000-power lens, full with magnification. How petty do such researches seem when compared with this one, which strikes at the very roots of life and the nature of the soul! I had always looked upon spirit as a product, not a power, in the human body. But this morning I have seen living spirit, the soul. How I have seen it! I have seen it in the music of a violin, in the sound of a musical instrument upon a violin? The soul does not give rise to the soul, then, but is rather the rough instrument by which the spirit manifests itself. The windmill does not give rise to the windmill, then, but is rather the instrument by which the wind gives rise to the windmill.

And why should I not investigate it? I see that under yesterday's date I said, "If I could see something positive and objective, I might be tempted to approach it." I have now seen it, and I have my answer. The investigation would, I am sure, be of immense interest. Some of my colleagues might look askance at it, for science is full of unreasoning prejudices, but if Wilson has the courage of his convictions I can afford to have it also. I shall go to him in the morning—him and to Miss and to Miss Wilson. If she can show us more it is probable that she can show us more.

To be continued.

THE PARASITE.*

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

AUTHOR OF "THE REFUGEES," "MICAH CLARKE," "ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES," ETC., ETC.

PART II.

MARCH 29TH.—Wilson was, as I had anticipated, very critical of my conversation, and Miss Penelosa was also deeply pleased at the result of her experiment. Strange what a silent, colorless creature she is, save only when she exercises her power! Even talking about it gives her color and life. She seems to take a singular interest in me. I cannot help observing how she is really different.

We had the most interesting conversation about her own powers. It is just as well to put her views on record, though they cannot, of course, claim any scientific weight.

"You are on the very fringe of the subject," said she, when I had expressed a wonder at the remarkable influence of a woman who was not even near me. "I have no direct influence upon Miss Mardon when she came round to you. I was not even thinking of her that morning. What I did was to set her mind, as I might

set the alarm of a clock, so that she would name the word 'no' off of its own record. If six months instead of twelve hours had been suggested, it would have been the same."

"And if the suggestion had been to estimate me?"

"She would most inevitably have done so."

"But this is a terrible power!" I cried.

"It is, as you say, a terrible power," she answered, gravely; "and the more you know of it, the more terrible will it seem to you."

"May I ask," said I, "what you meant when you said that she was on the very fringe only at the fringe of it? What do you consider the essential?"

"I had rather not tell you."

I was surprised at the decision of her answer.

"You understand," said I, "that it is not out of curiosity I ask, but in the hope that I may find some scientific explanation for this act with which you furnish me."

"Frankly, Professor Gilroy," said she, "I am not at all interested in science, nor do I care whether it can or can not classify these powers."

"But this was what I was hoping—"

"Ah, that is quite another thing. If you make it a personal matter," said she, with the pleasantest of smiles, "I shall be only too glad to tell you anything you wish to know. Let me see. What was it you asked me? Oh, about the further powers. Professor Wilson won't believe in them, but they are quite true, as far as I know. For instance, it is possible for an operator to gain complete command over his subject—presuming that the latter is a good one. Without any previous suggestion he may make him do whatever he likes."

"Without the subject's knowledge?"

"That depends. If the force were strongly exerted, he would know it, and might be afraid. Miss Mardon did when she came round and frightened you so. Or, if the influence was less powerful, he might be conscious of what he was doing, but be quite unable to prevent himself from doing it."

"Would he have lost his own will power, then?"

"It would be overridden by another stronger one."

"Have you ever exercised this power yourself?"

"Several times."

"Is your own will so strong, then?"

"Well, it does not entirely depend upon that. Many have strong wills which are not detachable from themselves. The thing is to have the gift of projecting it into another person, and to make their own. I find that the power varies with my own strength and health."

"Practically you send your soul into another person's body."

"Well, you might put it that way."

"But that does not mean the body does."

"It merely feels lethargic."

"Well, but is there no danger to your own health?" I asked.

"There might be a little. You have to be careful never to let yourself become absolutely alone, go, otherwise you might experience some difficulty in finding your way back again. You must always preserve the connection, as it were. I am afraid I express myself very badly. Professor Gilroy, but of course I don't know how to put these things in a scientific way. I am only giving you my own experience and my own experiments."

Well, I read this over now at my leisure, and I marvel at myself. Is this Austin Gilroy, the man who has won his way to the front by his hard reasoning power and by his

boldness and originality?

He begins in *HARPER'S WEEKLY* No. 1877.

devotion to fact! Here I am, gravely retelling the gossip of a woman who tells me how her soul may be projected from her body, and how, while she lies in a lethargy, she can control the motions of people and instances. Do I believe it? Certainly not. She may prove and disprove before I yield a point. But if I am still a sceptic, I have at least ceased to be a scoffer. We are to have a sitting this evening, and she is to try if she can produce any mesmeric effect upon me. If she can it will make an excellent starting-point for our experiments. We can account for any state of complicity. If she cannot, we must try and find some subject who will be like Caesar's wife. Wilson is perfectly impervious.

10 P.M.—I believe that I am on the threshold of an epoch-making investigation. To have the power of examining these phenomena from inside to have the nervous system will respond, and at the same time a brain which will appreciate and criticise—that is surely a unique advantage.

March 27th.—A blank day, as Miss Penelosa goes with Wilson and his wife to the Sierras. We begin Blinet and Ferri's *Animal Magnetism*. What strange, deep waters these men go into! But I am not so much interested in the theory, though it is only an hour or so since the experiment, I feel so wakeful that I am more inclined for my study than for bedfellow. I see quite a vista of interesting experiments extending before us, and am all impatience to begin upon them.

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Long talk with Agatha and Mrs. Mardon in the evening about our marriage. We think that the summer will (the beginning of it) would be the best time for the wedding.

Why should we delay? I grudge even these few months. Still, as Mrs. Mardon says, there are a good many things to be arranged.

More experiments, I am told again by Miss Penelosa. Experience much the same as before, save that insensibility comes on more quickly. See Note-book A for temperature, heat, magnetic pressure, pulse, and respiration, as taken by Professor Wilson.

March 28th.—Mesmerized again by Miss Penelosa. Experience much the same as before, save that insensibility comes on more quickly. See Note-book A for

temperature, heat, magnetic pressure, pulse, and respiration, as taken by Professor Wilson.

March 28th.—Mesmerized again by Miss Penelosa. Details in Note-book A. *Same as yesterday*, and a blank day. I grudge any interruption of our experiments. At present they merely embrace the physical signs, which go with slight, with complete, and with extreme insensibility. Afterwards we are to pass on to the phenomena of suggestion and of lucidity. Professors have demonstrated these things upon women at Nantes and at the Salpêtrière. I am to be the first to demonstrate when a woman demonstrates them upon a professor, with a second professor as a witness. And that I should be the subject!—the scientific, the model!

At least I am shown that my devotion to science is greater than to my own personal consistency. The eating of our own words is the greatest sacrifice which there ever was.

My neighbor, Charles Sadler, the handsome young demonstrator of anatomy, came in this evening to return a volume of *Virchow's Archives*, which I had lent him. He is very young, but, as a matter of fact, he is a year older than I am.

"I understand, Gilroy," said he, "that you are being experimented upon by Miss Penelosa?"

"Well, I am, but I have acknowledged it, when I told you I should not let it go any further. You will think me very impudent, no doubt; but, none the less, I feel it to be my duty to advise you to have no more to do with her."

Of course I asked him why.

"I am so pleased that I cannot enter into particularities freely as I could do with you," said he. Miss Penelosa is the friend of my friend, and my position is a delicate one. I can only say this, that I have myself been the subject of one of Miss Penelosa's experiments, and that they have left a most unpleasant impression upon my mind."

He could hardly expect me to be satisfied with that, and I tried hard to get something more definite out of him, but without success. It is curious how he comes to Jesus.

"Is it because he comes to Jesus?" he asked. "Or is he one of those men of science who feel personally injured when facts run counter to their preconceived opinions? He cannot seriously suppose that because I have some vague grievance, I am therefore to abandon a series of experiments which promise to be of great value to science. He was very annoyed at the light ray in which I treated his shadowy writings, and we parted with some little coldness on both sides.

March 29th.—Mesmerized by Miss P. (Note-book A.)

April 1st.—Mesmerized by Miss P. (Sphygmograph) by Professor Wilson.

April 2d.—It is possible that this course of mesmerism may be a little trying to the general constitution. Agatha says that I am thinner, and darker under the eyes. I am conscious of a nervous irritability which I had not observed

"I WAS CONSCIOUS ONLY OF HER OWN EYES LOOKING DOWN AT ME, GRAY, DEEP, INSCRUTABLE."

DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.

THE PARASITE.*

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

AUTHOR OF "THE REFUGES," "MICAH CLARK," "ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES," ETC., ETC.

PART III.

APRIL 9TH.—Victory! I have done splendidly! At seven o'clock last night I took a hasty dinner, and then locked myself up in my bedroom and dropped the key into the garden. I chose a cheery nook and lay down in these hours trying to rest, but still in a horrible state of trepidation, expecting every instant that I should become conscious of the impulse. Nothing of the sort occurred, however, and I woke this morning with the feeling that black nightmare had been lifted off me. Permit me to venture a few words of thanks. I am sure that it was useless to try to influence me. At any rate, I have beaten her once, and if I can do it once I can do it again.

It was most awkward about the key in the morning. Luckily there was an underground passage, and I added him to my list of enemies. Now, as he thought, I had just dropped it. I will have doors and windows screwed up,

heavy lichen-mottled walls of the old colleges. How sweet and gentle and soothed is Nature! Who would think that there lurked in her also such vile forces, such odious possibilities? For of course I understand that this dreadful thing which has sprung out at me is neither supernatural nor even preternatural. No; it is a man's fever which finds its origin in the body and the brain of the man. The mere fact that it ebbs with her strength shows how entirely it is subject to physical laws. If I had time I might probe it to the bottom, and lay my hands upon its antidote. But you cannot tame the tiger when you are beneath his claws. You can only try to run away from him. Ah! well, I have got into the glass and see my own dark eyes and clear-cut Spanish face, I long for a vitriol splash or a bout of the small-pox. One or the other might have saved me from this calamity.

I am inclined to think that I may have trouble to night. There are some things which make me fear so. One is that I met Mrs. Wilson in the street, and that she tells me that

would gravely discuss the possibility of my being a deliverer, and weigh it against the chances of my being in an early stage of lunacy. No, I shall get my comfort out of Wilson.

I am feeling wonderfully fit and well. I don't think I ever had such a grand spell. Of course I might not get this shadow off my life, but I hope I should be! You, a fairly wealthy, in the front rank of my profession, engaged to a beautiful and charming girl—have I not everything which a man could ask for? Only one thing to trouble me; but what a thing it is! I shall go mad.

Yes, that will be the end of it. I shall go mad. I am not far from it now. My head throbs as I rest it on my left hand. I am quivering all over like a scared horse. Oh, what a night I have had!

And yet I have some cause to be satisfied also.

At last I have got rid of the spectre of my own self. I again slipped my key under the door, imprisoning myself for the night.

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Then, flitting from side to side, with the restlessness of a squirrel, I kneeled in front of the door, to pull the key through with the sharp point of a quill pen. It was just too short, and pushed it further away.

Then with quiet persistence I got a paper-knife out of one of the drawers, and with that I managed to open the key.

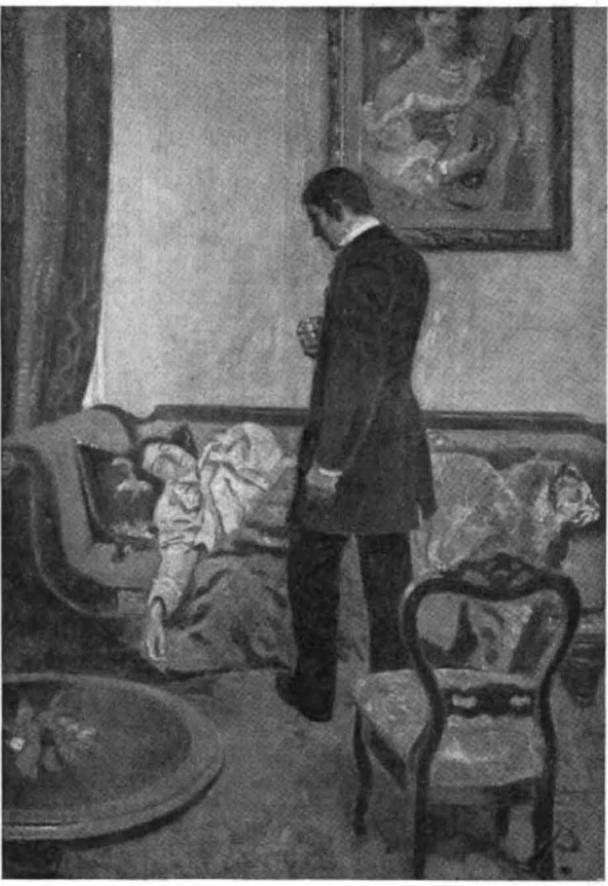
I opened the door, stepped into my study, took a photograph of myself from the bureau, wrote something across it, placed it in the inside pocket of my coat, and then started off for Wilson's.

It was all wonderfully clear, and yet disassociated from the rest of my life, as the incidents of events in the past can might be. A peculiar double consciousness possessed me. There was the predominant alien will which was bent upon my destruction, the will of its owner, and there was the feeble protesting personality, which I recognized as being myself, tugging feebly at the overwhelming impulse as though it were a man as a chain. I can remember recognizing these two conflicting forces, but I recall nothing of my walk, nor of how I was brought to the door.

Very vivid, however, is my recollection of how I met Miss Penclous. She was reclining on the sofa in the little boudoir in which our experiments had been carried out. Her head was resting on her hand, and a tiger-skin rug had been partly drawn over her. She looked up expectantly as I entered, and as the lamp-light fell upon her face I could see that she was very pale and thin, with dark hollows under her eyes. She gave her photograph which I had brought with me, and talked and talked and talked, of my love for her, of my grief over her illness, of my joy at her recovery, of the misery it was to me to be absent a single evening from her side. She lay quietly looking down at me with her eyes and her mouth open. Once I remember that she passed her hand over my hair, as one caresses a dog; and it gave me pleasure—the caress, I quivered under it. I was her slave, body and soul, and for the moment I rejoiced in my slavery.

And then came the blessed change. Never tell me that Providence is Prodigal. I was the brink of perdition.

My feet were on the edge. Was it a coincidence that at that very instant help should come? No, no; there is a Providence, and its hand has drawn me back. There is something in the universe stronger than this devil-woman with her tricks. Ab, what a balm to my heart it is to think so!



"I STOPPED, FOR THE WOMAN'S HEAD HAD FALLEN BACK. SHE HAD FAINTED."—DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.

Miss Penclous is better, though still weak. I find myself visiting my heart that the illness had been her last. The other is that Professor Wilson comes back in a day or two, and his presence would act as a constraint upon her. I should not fear our interviews if a third person were present. For both these reasons I have a presentiment of trouble to-night, and I shall take the usual precautions as before.

April 10th.—Well, well, I take the same precautions to-night as I did to-night. God, all we poor folk are! I really could not face the doctor again. I locked my door and thrust the key underneath it, so that I had to ask the maid to let me out in the morning. But the precaution was really not needed, for I never had any inclination to go out at all. Three evenings in succession at home. I am surely not the only man in the world, for Wilson will be here either to day or to-morrow. Shall I tell him of what I have gone through or not? I am convinced that I should not have the slightest sympathy from him. He would look upon me as an interesting case, and read a paper about me at the next meeting of the *Physical Society*, in which he

leaves me as I think of it. I present it passionately to my lips. Then I take it off and lay it on the sofa, retaining her hand. I give her the photograph which I had brought with me, and talked and talked and talked, of my love for her, of my grief over her illness, of my joy at her recovery, of the misery it was to me to be absent a single evening from her side. She lay quietly looking down at me with her eyes and her mouth open. Once I remember that she passed her hand over my hair, as one caresses a dog; and it gave me pleasure—the caress, I quivered under it. I was her slave, body and soul, and for the moment I rejoiced in my slavery.

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As I looked up at her I was conscious of a change in her. Her face, which had been pale, was now ghastly. Her eyes were dull, and the lids drooped heavily over them. Above all, the look of serene confidence had gone from her features. Her mouth had weakened. Her head had drooped, and I watched the change over my own spirit-flattened, and still I struggled hard to tear itself from the grip which held it—a grip which from moment to moment, grew less secure.

"Austin," she whispered. "I have tried to do too much. I was not strong enough. I have not recovered yet from my illness. But you will not let me go. I am still a threat to you. You will leave me, Austin. This is only a temporary weakness. If you will only give me five minutes, I shall be myself again. Give me the small dessert from the window."

But I had regained my soul. With her waning strength she had at last cleared away from me and left me free. And I was aggressive—bitterly, fiercely aggressive. For once, at least, I could make this woman understand what my real feelings towards her were. My soul was filled with a hatred as bestial as the love against which it was a reaction. It was the savage, murderous, animal soul of the serpent. Her face had turned from her hands and bent over her face in wistful. She drew her hands up as if to avert a blow, and cowered away from me into the corner of the settee.

"The brandy!" she gasped. "The brandy!"

I took the decanter and poured over the roots of a palm in the window. Then I snatched the photograph from her hand and tore it into a hundred pieces.

"You vile woman!" I said. "If I did my duty to society you would never leave this room alive."

"I love you, Austin—I love you," she wailed.

"Yes, I love you," I said, and Charles Sadler before. And how many others before?"

"Charles Sadler!" she gasped. "He has spoken to you? So, Charles Sadler—Charles Sadler?" Her voice came through her white lips like a snake's hiss.

"Yes, I know you, and others shall know you too. You should be afraid of me, and I will be afraid of you. You used your vile power to bring me to your side. You may perhaps do so again, but at least you will remember that you have heard me say that I love Miss Marlowe from the bottom of my soul, and that I leave you, savor you. The very sight of you and the sound of your voice fill me with loathing."

She thought for a moment that I was repeating. That is how I feel towards you, and if I play my tricks to your tricks to draw me again to your side, as you have done to-night, you will at least, I should think, have little satisfaction in trying to make a lover out of a man who has told you his real opinion. You will know that what you will tell me in my mouth, let you cause him to remember."

I stopped for the woman's head had fallen back, and she had fainted. She could not bear to hear what I had to say to her. What a glow of satisfaction it gives me to think that, come what may, the future she can never consider, save my own, will be forever closed to her, and she will never in the future. What will she do next? I dare not think of it. Oh, if only I could hope that she will leave me alone! To-day I think of what I said to her—Never mind; I have been stronger than her for once.

April 12th.—I hardly slept last night, and found myself in the same condition as ever this morning. I was compelled to ask Pratt-Haldane to do my lecture for me. It is the first that I have ever missed. I rose at mid-day, but my head is aching, my hands quivering, and my nerves in a pitiable state.

Who should come round this evening but Wilson! He has just come back from London, where he has lectured, read papers, convened meetings, exposed a medium conducted a series of experiments on thought-transference, entertained Professor Blieot of Paris, spent hours gazing into a crystal, and obtained some evidence as to the passage of matter through matter. All this he poured into my ears in a single gust.

"But you?" he cried at last. "You are not looking well. And Miss Penelope is quite prostrated to-day. How about the experiments?"

"I have abandoned them."

"Tut, tut! Why?"

"The subject seems to me to be a dangerous one."

Out came his big brown note book.

"This is of great interest," said he. "What are your grounds for saying that it is a dangerous one. Please give your facts in chronological order, with approximate dates, and names of reliable witnesses, with their permanent addresses."

"First of all," I asked, "would you tell me whether you have collected any cases where the mesmerist has gained a command over the subjects and has used it for evil purposes?"

"Dang!" he cried, exultantly. "Crime by suggestion—"

"I don't mean suggestion. I mean where a sudden impulse comes from a person at a distance—an uncontrollable impulse."

"Obsession," he shrieked, in an ecstasy of delight. "It is the rarest condition. We have eight cases, five well tested. You don't mean to say—" his exultation made him hardly articulate.

"No, I don't," said I. "Good evening. You will excuse me, but I am compelled to leave you now, as I go to my rail of handiwork, his pencil and his note-book. My troubles may be hard to bear, but at least it is better to bring them to myself than to have myself exhibited by Wilson like a freak at a fair. He has lost sight of human beings. Everything to him is a caper and a phenomenon."

April 13th.—Yesterday was a blessed day of quiet, and I enjoyed an uneventful night. Wilson's presence is a great consolation. What can the woman do now? Surely when she has heard me say what I have said will she conceive the same disgust for me which I have for her. She could not—she must not—she will not—she will not—she will not—she has no right to be free from her lover's hold over her life! Might she not use these powers of hers for revenge. Tut! why should I frighten myself over shadows? She will forget about me, and I shall forget about her, and all will be well.

April 14th.—My nerves have quite recovered their tone. I truly believe that I have exorcised the creature. But I must confess to living in some suspense. She is well again, for I hear that she was driving with Mrs. Wilson in the High Street in the afternoon.

April 15th.—I do wish I could get away from this place altogether. I shall fly to Agatha's side the very day that the term closes. I suppose it is pitifully weak of me, but this woman gets upon my nerves most terribly. I have seen her again, and I have spoken with her.

It was just after lunch, and I was smoking a cigarette in my study, when I heard the step of Wilson in the corridor. The passage. I was languidly conscious that a second step was audible behind, and suddenly, troubled myself to speculate who it might be, when suddenly a slight noise brought me out of my chair with my skin creeping with apprehension. I had never particularized myself before in the eyes of any man, but the tap of a pencil was like my quivering nerves told me that I heard it now in the sharp wooden clack which alternated with the muffled thud of the footfall. Another instant and my servant had shown her in.

I did not attempt the usual conventions of society, nor did she. I simply stood with the smouldering cigarette in my hand, while she stood in the doorway, looking at me, and at her look I remembered how in these very pages I had tried to define the expression of her eyes, whether they were furrow or fleere. To-day they were fleere—giddily and inexorably so.

"Well, what is the result?" "Are you still of the same mind as when I saw you last?"

"I have always been of the same mind."

"Let us understand each other, Professor Gilroy," said she, slowly. "I am not a very safe person to trifl with, a young man like now. You who asked me to come into a series of experiments with you, it was you who won my affections, it was you who paid for your love for me, it was you who brought me your own photograph with words of affection upon it, and finally it was you who on the very same evening thought fit to insult me most outrageously, addressing me as no man has ever dared to speak

to me yet. Tell me that those words came from you in a moment of passion, and I am prepared to forget and to forgive them. You did not mean what you said, Austin? You do not really hate me?"

I might have paled this deformed woman—such a longing to be suddenly through the menace of her eyes. But then I thought of what I had gone through, and my heart set like flint.

"If ever you heard me speak of love," said I, "you know very well that it was your voice which spoke, and not mine. The only words of mine which I have been able to say to you are words which you have heard when I said to myself 'I know. Some one has set you against me.' It was he." She tapped with her crutch upon the floor. "Well, you know very well that I could bring you this instant crashing like a house of cards if you would let me. You will not find me like an ordinary man."

"How I care what you are doing, Professor Gilroy."

"You sound in a terrible position. You have not yet realized the hold which I have upon you."

I shrugged my shoulders and turned away.

"Well," said she, after a pause. "If you despise my love, I will see that you do not. I will not be easily beaten. The day will come when you will come screaming to me for pardon. Yes, you will groan on the ground before me, proud as you are, and you will curse the day that ever you turned me from your best friend into your most bitter enemy. Have a care, Professor Gilroy." I saw a white hand taking some small object from a fob which was secured to a soiled waistcoat. It was in its possession. An instant later she was gone, and I heard the quick hobble and tap receding down the passage.

But she has left a weight upon my heart. Vague presentations of coming misfortune lie heavily upon me. I have seen the face of the woman, and I feel the walls of empty anger. I can remember those relentless eyes easily to think of. What shall I do?—what shall I do? I am no longer master of my own soul. At any moment this louthouse parasite may creep into me, and then—? I must become like my beloved servant. I must tell it or go mad. If I have some one sympathetic and adviser, Wilson is out of the question. Charles Sadler would understand me only so far as his own experience carries him. Pratt-Haldane! he is a well balanced man, a man of great common sense and resource. I will go to him. I will tell him everything. He may be able to help me.

4:45 P.M.—No, it is useless. There is no human help for me. I must fight this out single-handed. Two courses lie before me. I might become this woman's lover. Or I must endure such persecutions as she can inflict upon me. Even if none come, I shall live in a hell of apprehension. But she is not alone. She has a son, a son who is a syphilitic and a rascal. If I have some one sympathetic and adviser, Wilson is out of the question. Charles Sadler would understand me only so far as his own experience carries him. Pratt-Haldane!

Pratt-Haldane was most amiable and listened with all politeness to my story. But when I looked at his heavy features, his slow eyes, and the pedantic study furniture which surrounds him, I could hardly tell him what I had come to say. It was all so substantial, so material. And besides, what would I myself have said, a short month ago, if one of my colleagues had come to me with a story of this kind? I would have said, "Pray tell me more. I am more patient than he was." As it was he took notes of my statement, asked me how much tea I drank, how many hours I slept, whether I had been over-working much, and I had sudden pangs in the head, evil dreams, ringing in the ears, flashes of light, and so on. He then said, "I am not a medical man, but if that brain congestion was at the great a moment of my trouble. Finally he disengaged me with a great many platitudes about open-air exercise and avoidance of nervous excitement. His prescription, which was for chloral and bromide, I rolled up and threw into the gutter.

Now I look for help from any human being. I can but grip my courage with both hands and pray that an honest man may not be abandoned.

To be continued.

