

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

## THE PARASITE.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

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

### PART I.

**M**ARCH 24th.—The spring is fairly with us now. Outside my laboratory window the great chest-nut tree is all covered with the big glutinous gummy buds, some of which have already begun to break into little green shootlets. 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 stiff with their sap, and the moist heavy English air is laden with a faintly resinous perfume. Buds 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 brisker stream, the glands work harder, winnowing and straining. Every year Nature readjusts the 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 gnat. 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 physiology that he does into psychology, I should become a Claude Bernard, at the least. His whole life and soul and energy work to one end. He drops 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 it. Physiology is a recognized science. If I add even a brick to the edifice, every 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-madmen in the hope of finding one reliable witness, sifting a hundred lies on the chance of gaining one little speck of truth, collating old books, devouring new 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 charlatanism and the other half with hysteria we physiologists must content ourselves with the body, and leave the mind to our descendants.

No doubt I am a materialist. Agatha says that I am a rank one. I tell her that is an excellent reason for shortening my 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 education upon temperament, for by nature I am, unless I deceive myself, a highly psychic man. I was a nervous, sensitive boy, a dreamer, a somnambulist, 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 Wilson to claim me as their own. But my brain is soaked with exact knowledge. I have trained myself to deal only with fact and with proof. Surmise and fancy have no place in my scheme of thought. Show me what I can see with my microscope, cut with 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. A de-



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## PART II.

MARCH 26th.—Wilson was as I had anticipated, very exultant over my conversion, and Miss Penelope was also demurely pleased at the result of her experiment. Strange what a silent, colorless creature she is, and how often 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 her eyes follow me about the room.

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 must not be under the fear of the subject," said she, when I had expressed wonder at the remarkable instance of suggestion which she had shown me. "I had no direct influence upon Miss Maule 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 at the hour named it would go off of its own accord. If six months instead of twelve hours had been suggested, it would have been the same."

"And if the suggestion had been to assassinate 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 this matter of suggestion is only at the fringe of it? What do you consider the essential?"

"I had rather not tell you."

I was puzzled 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 the facts 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 cannot classify these powers."

"But 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 happy 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 all the same. For example, 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 no more about it than Miss Marden 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 projection, and to be able to project, and superposing their own, I find that the power varies with my own strength and health."

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

"Well, you might put it that way."

"I should express myself very badly."

"It merely feels like that."

"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 your own consciousness absolutely go, otherwise you might experience some difficulty in finding your way back again."

"I should find it difficult to express myself very badly, Professor Gilroy, but of course I don't know how to put these things in a scientific way. I am just giving you my own experience."

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

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 actions of people at a distance. Do I accept it? Certainly not. She must prove and improve before I yield a point. But if I am still a sceptic, I have at least ceased to be a scoffor. We are to have a sitting this evening, and she is to try to if she can produce any mesmeric effect upon me. If she can it will make an excellent starting-point for our investigation. No one can accuse me, at any rate, of complicity. If she cannot, we must try and find some subject who will be like Caesar's wife. Wilson is perfectly imperious."

TO 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 an organism which will respond, and at the same time a brain which will appreciate and criticize—that is surely a unique advantage.



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

DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.

I am quite sure that Wilson would give five years of his life to be as susceptible as I have proved myself to be.

There was no one present except Wilson and his wife. I was seated with my head leaning back, and Miss Penelope, standing in front, with a little to the left, used the same long sweeping strokes as with Agatha. At each of them a warm current of air seemed to strike me, and to suffuse a thrill and glow all through me, from head to foot. My eyes were fixed upon Miss Penelope's face; but as I gazed, the features seemed to blur and to fade away. I was conscious only of her own eyes looking down at me, gray, deep, inscrutable. Larger they grew, and larger, until they changed suddenly into two mountain lakes, towards which I seemed to be falling with horrible rapidity. I shuddered; and as I did so, some deeper stratum of thought told me that the shudder represented the rigor which I had observed in Agatha. An instant later I struck the surface of the lakes, now joined into one, and down I went beneath the water, with a fullness in my head and a buzzing in my ears. Down I went, down,

down, and then with a swoop up again, until I could see the light streaming brightly through the green water. I was almost at the surface, when the word "Awake!" rang through my head, and with a start I found myself back in the armchair, with Miss Penelope leaning on her crutch, and Wilson, his note-book in his hand, peering over her shoulder. No heaviness or weariness was in my head, but, on the contrary, though it is only an hour or so since the experiment, I feel so wakeful that I am more inclined for my study than my bedroom.

I see quite a vista of interesting experiments extending before us, and am all impatience to begin upon them.

MARCH 27th.—A blank day, as Miss Penelope goes with Wilson and his wife to the Buttrick and Wilsons and Mr. Perrin's *Animal Magnetism*. What strange, deep waters these are! Results, results, results—and the cause an absolute mystery! It is stimulating to the imagination, but I must be on my guard against that. Let us am all impatience to begin upon them. I know that the mesmeric suggestion is true; I know that mesmeric suggestion is true; I know that I am myself sensitive to this force. That is my present position. I have a large new note-book, which shall be devoted entirely to scientific detail.

Long talk with Agatha and Mrs. Marden in the evening about our marriage. We think that the summer we (the beginning of it) would be the best time for the wedding. Why should we delay? I grudge even those few months. Still, as Mrs. Marden says, there are a good many things to be arranged.

MARCH 28th.—Mesmerized again by Miss Penelope. Experience much the same as before, save that insensibility came on more quickly. See Note-book A for temperature of room, latrunc pressure, pulse, and respiration, as taken by Professor Wilson.

MARCH 29th.—Mesmerized again. Details in Note-book A.

MARCH 30th.—Sunday, 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 hope to pass on to the phenomena of suggestion and of lucidity. Professors have demonstrated these things upon women at Nancy and at the Salpêtrière. It will be more convincing when a woman demonstrates them upon a professor, with a second professor as a witness. And that I should be the subject—I, the sceptic, the materialist! At least, I have 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 truth ever requires of us.

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

"I understand, Gilroy," said he, "that you are being experiment upon by Miss Penelope? Well," he went on, "I had acknowledged it. If I were you, I should not let it go any further. You will think me very impertinent, so do not, but, note the last word, I feel it to be my duty to advise you to have no more to do with her."

MARCH 31st.—Mesmerized by Miss P. (Note-book A.)

Of course I asked him why.

I am so placed that I cannot enter into particulars as freely as I could wish," said he. "Miss Penelope 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 some of the woman'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 conceivable that he could be jealous at my having superseded him in the eyes of the woman who felt personally injured when facts run counter to their preconceived opinions? He cannot seriously suppose that because he has some vague grievance, I am therefore to abandon a series of experiments which promise to be so fruitful of results. He appeared to be annoyed at the light way in which I treated his shadowy warnings, and we parted with some little mutual ill-will.

April 1st.—Mesmerized by Miss P. (Note-book A.)

April 2nd.—Mesmerized by Miss P. (Sphygmographic chart by Professor Wilson.)

April 3rd.—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, and more nervous, and conscious of a nervous irritability which I had not observed

In myself before. The least noise, for example, makes me start, and the stupidity of a student causes me an exasperation instead of amusement. Agatha wishes me to stop, but I tell her that every course of study is trying, and that one can never attain a result without paying some price for it. When she sees the sensation which my forth-coming paper on "The relation between mind and matter" may make she will understand that it is worth a little nervous wear and tear. I should not be surprised if I got my F.R.S. over it.

Mesmerized again in the evening. The effect is produced more rapidly now, and the subjective visions are less marked. I keep full notes of each sitting. Wilson is leaving for town for a week or ten days, but we shall not interrupt the experiments, which depend for their value as much upon my sensations as on his observations.

April 24th.—I must be carefully on my guard. A complication has crept into our experiments which I had not reckoned upon. In my eagerness for scientific facts, I have been foolishly blind to the human relations between Miss Penclosa and myself. I can write here what I would not breathe to a living soul. The unhappy woman appears to have formed an attachment for me.

[illegible][illegible]

TO P. M.—Well, well, what a thing of straw I am! I am coming to know myself better of late, and the more I know, the lower I fall in my own estimation. Surely I was not always so weak as this. At four o'clock I should have smiled had any one told me that I should go to Miss Pen-closa's to-night, and yet at eight I was at Wilson's door as usual. I don't know how it occurred. The influence of habit, I suppose. Perhaps there is a mesmeric craze, as there is an opium craze, and I am a victim to it. I only know

that as I worked in my study I became more and more uneasy. I fidgeted. I worried. I could not concentrate my mind upon the papers in front of me. And then at last, almost before I knew what I was doing, I seized my hat, and hurried round to keep my usual appointment.

We had an interesting evening. Mrs. Wilson was present during most of the time, which prevented the embarrassment which one at least of us must have felt. Miss Penelosa's manner was quite the same as usual, and she expressed no surprise at my having come in spite of my note. There was nothing in her bearing to show that yesterday's incident had made any impression upon her, and so I am inclined to hope that I overrated it.

*April 16 (wednesday)*—No, no, no, I did not overrate it. I can no longer attempt to conceal from myself that this woman has conceived a passion for me. It is monstrous, but it is true. Again to-night I awoke from the mesmeric trance to find my hand in hers, and to suffer that odious feeling which urges me to throw away my honor, my career, every thing, for the sake of this creature, who, as I can plainly see, is

When I am away from her influence, possesses no single charm upon earth. But when I am near her I do not feel that I am in the presence of something so common as a woman. I think I had rather not think of her. She paralyzes my better nature, too, at the moment when she stimulates my worse. Decidedly it is not good for me to be near her.

Last night was worse than before. Instead of lying in bed, actually sat for some time with my hand in hers, talking over the most intimate subjects with her. We spoke of Agassiz among other things. What could I have been dreaming of? Miss Penciosi said that she was conventional with me, but with you, she spoke more or less in a disparaging way of her, and I did not protest. What a creature I have been!

Weak as I have proved myself to be, I am still strong enough to bring this sort of thing to an end. It shall not happen again. I have sense enough to fly when I cannot fight. From this Sunday night onwards I shall never sit with Miss Penclosa again. Never! Let the experiments go, let the re-search come to an end; anything is better than feeling this monstrous temptation which drags me so low. I have said nothing to Miss Penclosa, but I shall simply stay

away. She can tell the reason without any words of mine.

April 27th.—Have staid away as I said. It is a pity to ruin such an interesting investigation, but it would be a greater pity still to ruin my life, and I know that I cannot trust myself with that woman.

11 P. M.—God help me! What is the matter with me? Am I going mad? Let me try and be calm and reason with myself. First of all I shall not jump crazily about married

[illegible]

My brain is quite clear again now, and I can think over what has occurred. It is absurd to suppose that it is merely weakness and force of habit. I tried to explain it in that way the other night, but it will no longer suffice. It is something much deeper and more terrible than that. Why, when I was at the Mardons' whist table I was dragged away as if the nose of a rope had been cut round me. I can no longer disguise it from myself. The woman has her grip

upon me. I am in her clutch. But I must keep my head and reason it out, and see what is best to be done.

But wait a blind fool I have been! In my enthusiasm over my research I have walked straight into the pit, although it lay gaping before me. Did she not herself warn me? Did she not tell me, as I can read in my own journal, that where she has acquired power over a subject she can make him do her will? And she has acquired that power over me, for the moment at the least and call of this creature with its black wings, when she would it, she can do as she wills. Worst of all, I must feel as she wills, I must love her and fear her, yet while I am under the spell she undoubtedly make me love her.

There is some consolation in the thought, then, that those odious impulses for which I have blamed myself do not really come from me at all. They are all transferred from her, little as I could have guessed it at the time. I feel cleaner and lighter for the thought.

April 26th. Yes, now in broad daylight, writing coolly and with time for reflection, I am compelled to confirm everything which I find in my journal of last night. I am in a horrible position; but, above all, I must not lose my head. I must pit my intellect against her powers. After all, I am no silly puppet to dance at the end of a string. I have energy, brains, courage. For all her devil's tricks I may bent her yet. May I *know*, or what is to become of me?

Let me try to reason it out. This woman, by her own explanation, can dominate my nervous organism. She can protect herself into my body and take command of it. She has a parasite soul—yes, she is a parasite, a monstrous parasite. She creeps into my frame as the hermit-crab does into the whelk's shell. I am powerless. What can I do? I am dealing with forces of which I know nothing. And I cannot tell no one of my trouble. They would set me down as a madman. I am not mad, I am not mad. I am not mad. The university would say that I have had a need of the dark-ridden professor. And Angiola? No, no. I must face it alone.

I said over my notes of what the woman said when she spoke about her powers. There is one point which fills me with dismay. She implies that when the influence is slight the subject knows what he is doing, but cannot control himself, whereas when it is strongly exerted he is absolutely unconscious. Now I have always known what I did, though less so last night than on the previous occasion. That seems to mean that she has never yet exerted her full powers upon me. Was ever a man so paced before?

Yes, perhaps there was, and very near me, too. Charles Sadler must know something of this. His vague words of warning take a meaning now. Oh, if I had only listened to him then before I helped by these repeated sittings to forge the links of the chain which binds me! But I will see him to-day. I will apologize to him for having treated his warning lightly. I will ask him for advice.

ing so lightly. I will see if he can advise me.  
4 p. m.—No, he cannot. I have talked with him, and he showed such surprise at the first words in which I tried to express my unspeakable secret that I went no further. As far as I can gather—by hints and inferences rather than by direct statements—he has no experience with anything of the sort, or books such as I have myself authored. His statement that the document of Miss Penelope is in itself a sign that he was never really in her toils. Oh, if he only knew his escape! He goes to thank his phlegmatic Saxon temperament for it. I am *black* and Celtic, and this hag's clutch is deep in my nerves. Shall I ever get it out? Shall I ever be the same man that I was just one short fortnight ago?

Let me consider what I had better do. I cannot leave the university in the middle of the term. If I were free, my course would be obvious. I should start at once and travel in Persia. But would she allow me to start? And could her influence not reach me in Persia, and bring me back to within touch of her clutch? I can only find out the limits of this hellish power by my own bitter experience. I will fight and fight and fight—and what can I do more?

I know very well that about eight o'clock to-night that craving for her society—that irresistible restlessness—will come upon me. How shall I overcome it? What shall I do? I must make it impossible for me to leave the room. I shall lock the door and throw the key out of the window. But then what am I to do in the morning? Never mind about the morning. I must at all costs break this chain which holds me.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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## PART III.

APRIL 9TH.—Victory! I have done splendidly! At seven o'clock last night I took a hasty dinner, and I locked myself up in my bedroom and dropped the key into the garden. I closed a cheery novel and lay in bed for three hours trying to read it, but really 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 a black nightmare had been lifted off me. Perhaps the creature realized what I had done, and understood 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 undergarment below, and I asked him to throw it up. No doubt he thought I had just dropped it. I will have doors and windows screened up, and six stout men to hold me down in my bed, before I will surrender myself to be harridan in this way.

I had a note from Mrs. Marlen this afternoon, asking me to go round and see her. I intended to do so in any case, but had not expected to find bad news waiting for me. It seems that the Armstrongs, from whom Agatha has expectations, are due home from Adelaide in the *Arcton*, and that they have written to Mrs. Marlen and her to meet them in town. They will probably be away for a month or six weeks, and as the *Arcton* is gone on Wednesday, they must go at once to-morrow if they are ready in time. My consolation is that when we meet again there will be no more meddling between Agatha and me.

"I want you to do one thing, Agatha," said I, when we were alone together. "If you should happen to meet Miss Penelope, either in town or here, you must promise never again to allow her to mesmerize you."

Agatha opened her eyes. "Why, it was only the other day that you were saying how interesting it all was, and how determined you were to finish your experiments."

"I know. But I have changed my mind since then."

"And you won't have it any more?"

"No."  
"I am so glad, Austin. You can't think how pale and worn you have been lately. It was really one principal objection to going to London now, that we did not wish to leave you when you were so pulled down. And your manner has been so strange occasionally—especially that night when you left poor Professor Pratt Hildane to play dumb. I am convinced that these experiments are very bad for your nerves."

"I think so too, dear."  
"And for Miss Penelope's nerves as well. You have heard that she is ill?"

"No."  
"Mrs. Wilson told us so last night. She described it as a nervous fever. Professor Wilson is coming back this week, and of course he will tell me. I do believe that I am serious in my anxiety that Miss Penelope should be well again then, for he has quite a programme of experiments which he is anxious to carry out."

I was glad to have Agatha's promise, for it was enough that this woman should have one of us in her clutch. On the other hand, I was distressed to hear about Miss Penelope's illness. It rather disturbed the victory which I appeared to win last night.

I remember that she said that loss of health interfered with her power. That may be why I was able to subdue my own so easily. Well, well, I must take the same precautions to-night, and see what comes of it. I am childishly frightened when I think of her.

April 10th.—All went very well last night. I was amused at the thought of her coming back again this morning and to ask him to throw up my key. I shall get a name among the servants if this sort of thing goes on. But the great point is that I stand in my room without the slightest inclination to leave it. I do believe that I am shaking myself clear of this incredible bond—or is it only that the woman's power is in abeyance until she recovers her health? I do not know.

The Marlen left this morning, and the brightness seems to have gone out of the spring sunshine. And yet it is very beautiful also, as it gleams on the green chestnuts opposite my window, and gives a touch of gaiety to the

heavy lichen-mottled walls of the old colleges. How sweet and gentle and soothing 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 natural force which this woman can use, and society is ignorant of. The mere fact that it eludes 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 but try to wriggle away from him. Ah! when I look in the glass and see my own dark eyes and clear-cut Spanish face, I long for a viril 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 two things which make me fear so. One is that I meet Mrs. Wilson in the street, and that she tells me of this calamity.

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

I am feeling wonderfully fit and well. I don't think I ever lectured with greater spirit. Oh, if I could only get this shadow of my life, how happy I should be! Young, fairly wealthy, in the front rank of the nation, and I have had 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!

Midnight.—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 hot hand. I am quivering all over like a scared horse. Oh, if I could only I have had! And yet I have some cause to be satisfied also.

At the risk of becoming the laughing-stock of my own servant, I again slipped my key under the door, imprisoning myself for the night.

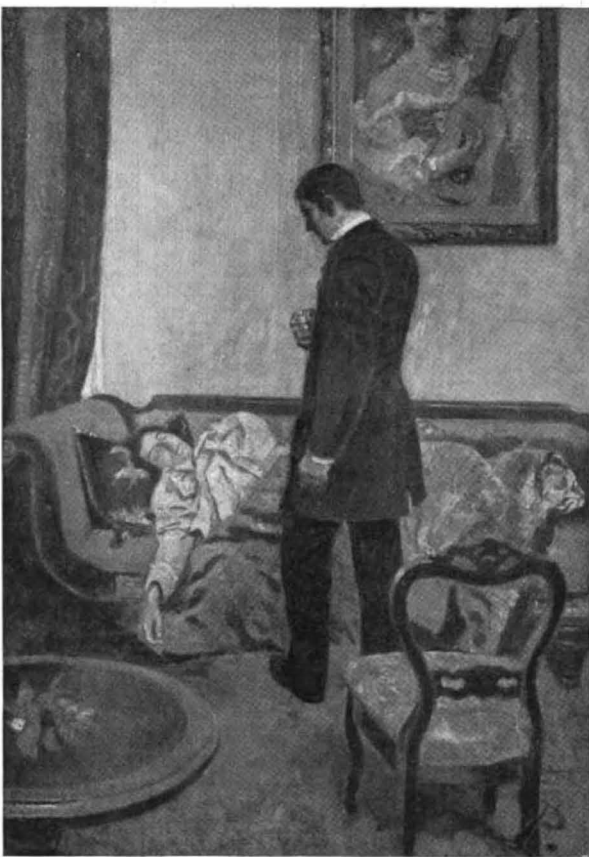
Then, finding it too early to go to bed, I lay down with my clothes on and began to read one of Dumas's novels. Suddenly I was gripped—gripped and dragged from the couch. It is only thus that I can describe the overpowering nature of the force which pounced upon me. I clawed at the coverlet, I clung to the wood-work. I believe that I screamed out in my frenzy. It was all useless—hopeless. I must go. There was no way out of it. It was only at the outset that I resisted. The force soon became too overmastering for that. I thank goodness that there were no watchers there to interfere with me. I could not have answered for myself if there had been. And besides the determination to get out, there came to me also the keenest and coolest judgment in choosing my means.

I lit a candle and traversed, kneeling in front of the door, to pull the key through with the feather end 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 draw the key through. 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 dissociated from the rest of my life, as the incidents of even the most vivid dream might be. A peculiar double consciousness possessed me. There was the predominant alien, that evil which was bent upon drawing me to the side of its owner, and there was the feeble protesting personality, which I recognized as being myself, toggling feebly at the overmastering impulse as a lad treads might at its chain. I can remember recognizing these two conflicting forces, but I recall nothing of my walk, nor of how I was admitted to the house.

Very vivid, however, is my recollection of how I met Miss Penelope. She was reclining on the sofa in the little boudoir in which our experiments had usually been carried out. Her head was rested 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 smiled at me, and pointed to a stool beside her. I was with her left hand that she pointed, and I, running eagerly forward, sat down—I-I-I—laid myself as I think of it—and pressed it passionately to my lips. Then seating myself upon the stool, and still retaining her hand, I gave 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 looked at me with imperious eyes and her provocative smile. Once I remember that she passed her hand over my hair, as one caresses a dog; and it gave me pleasure—the caress. I thrilled 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 there is not a Providence. Was it a coincidence that at that very instant help should come? No, no, no, there is a Providence, and His hand has drawn me back. There is something in the universe stronger than the devil's own will, with her tricks. Ah, 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 Penelope is better, though still weak. I find myself wishing in 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 feel 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 same precautions as before.

April 11th.—No, thank God, all went well last night. I really could not face the gardener 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 near the end of my troubles, for Wilson will be home again 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 Psychical Society, in which he



As I looked up at her I was conscious of a change in her. Her face, which had been pale and so very 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 forehead had puckered. She was frightened and unbecomingly. And as I watched the change my own spirit flattered and struggled, trying 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 I could not live longer without seeing you. You won't leave me, Austin. This is only a passing weakness. If you will only give me five minutes, I shall be myself again. Give me the small decanter from the table in the window."

But I had regained my soul. With her waning strength the influence had 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 own self, with a hatred as brutal as the love against which it was a reaction. It was the savage, murderous passion of the revolted self. I could have taken the crutch from her side and bent on her face in wist. It was that her hands up as if to avoid a blow, and covered away from me into the corner of the settee.

"The brandy!" she gasped. "The brandy!" I took the decanter, and poured it over the waste of a palm in the window. Then I watched the photograph from her hand not to turn 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 cried, "and Charles Sadler too. And how many others before that?"

"Charles Sadler?" she gasped. "He has spoken to you? No, 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 shameless creature! You knew how I stood. And yet 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 Marlow from the bottom of my soul, and that I hate you, hate you. The very sight of you and the sound of your voice fill me with horror and disgust. The thought of you is repulsive. That is how I feel towards you, and if it pleases you by 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 of you. You may put what words you will into my mouth, but you cannot help remembering."

I supposed, for the woman's head had fallen back, and she had fainted. She could not bear to *know* what I had said to her. What a glow of satisfaction it gives me to think that what I said, in the future she can never misunderstand my true feelings towards her! But what will occur in the future? What will she do next? I do not think of it. Oh, if only I could hope that she will leave me alone! But when I think of what I said to her—Never mind; I have been stronger than she for once.

April 12th.—I hardly slept last night, and found myself in the morning so unrefreshed and feverish that 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 midday, 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, convoked meetings, exposed a medium, conducted a series of experiments on thought transference, entertained Professor Hic-het of Paris, spent hours gazing into a crystal, and obtained some evidences as to the passage of matter through matter. All this he poured into my ears in single gusts.

"But you?" he cried at last. "Are you not looking well, and Miss Pendelo is quite prostrated to-day. How about the experiments?"

"I have abandoned them."

"But, tut! Why?"

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

Out came his big brown nose.

"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 medium has gained a command over the subject and has used it for evil purposes?"

"Dogs!" 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 attested. You don't mean to say—" his exultation made him hang his head.

"No, I don't," said I. "Good evening. You will excuse me, but I am not very well to-night." And so at last I got rid of him still brandishing his pencil and his note-book. My troubles may be hard to bear, but at least it is better to bug 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 case and a phenomenon. I will be before I speak to him again upon the matter.

April 13th.—Yesterday was a blessed day of quiet, and I enjoyed an uneventful night. Wilson's presence as a great consolation. What can the woman do now? Surely when she has heard me say what I have said she will conceive the same disgust for me which I have for her. She could not—no, she could not—desire to have a lover who had insulted her so. No, I believe I am free from her love—but how about her love? Might she not use those 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 really believe that I have conquered 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 the 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 my servant Murray in the passage. I was languidly conscious that a second step was audible behind, and had hardly 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 particularly observed before what sort of sound the tapping of a crutch was, but my quivering nerves told me that I heard it now in the sharp wooden click 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 and gazed at her. She in her turn looked silently 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 furtive or fierce. To-day they were fierce—boldly and inexorably so.

"Well," said she at last, "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 trifle with, as you should realize by now. It was you who asked me to enter into a series of experiments with you, it was you who won my affections. It was you who professed 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 pitied this deformed woman—such a longing for love broke suddenly through the unceasing 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 truth which I have ever been able to say to you are those which you heard when last we met."

"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 crutching like a spaniel to my feet. You will not find me again in my hour of weakness, when you can insult me with impunity. Here is a case what you are doing, Professor Gilroy. You stand in a terrible position. You have not yet realized the hold which I have upon you."

"I shan't give my shoulders and my turned away." "Well," said she, after a pause. "If you despise my love, I must see that can be done with fear. You shall, but the day will come when you will come screaming to me for justice. I will give you no ground before me, I will come as you are, and you will curse the day that ever you turned me from your best friend into your most bitter enemy. How can you, Professor Gilroy, when you can insult me with impunity, slaking in the me, and a face which was scarcely human, so convulsed was it with passion. 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 pre-sentiments of coming misfortune lie heavily upon me. I try in vain to persuade myself that these are only words of empty anger. I can remember those relentless eyes too clearly to think so. What shall I do?—ah, what shall I do? I am no longer master of my own soul. At any moment this loathsome parasite may creep into me, and then—?

I must tell someone my hideous secret—I must tell it or go mad. If I had some one to sympathize and advise! 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. God grant that he may be able to advise me!

6.41 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 may torture me, she may drive me mad, she may kill me—I will never, never give in. What can she do which would be worse than the loss of Agatha, and the knowledge that I am a perjured liar and have forfeited the name of gentleman?

Pratt-Haldane was most amiable, and listened with all politeness to my story. But when I looked at his heavy-set features, his slow eyes, and the ponderous 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 diabolical possession. Perhaps I should have been less 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 overworking much, had I had sudden pains in the head, evil dreams, singing in the ears, flashes before the eyes—all questions which pointed to his belief that brain congestion was at the bottom of my trouble. Finally he dismissed 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.

No. I can look for no help from any human being. If I consult any more, they may put their heads together, and I may find myself in an asylum. I can but grip my courage with both hands and pray that an honest man may not be abandoned.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

# THE PARASITE.\*

BY A. CONAN DOYLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE REFUGEE," "MICHAEL CLARKE," "ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES," ETC., ETC.

## PART IV.

APRIL 15.—It is the sweetest spring within the memory of man so green, so mild, so beautiful! Ah, what a contrast between nature without, and my own soul so torn with doubt and terror! It has been an awful day, but I know that I am on the verge of an abyss. I know it, and yet I go on with the routine of my life. The one bright spot is that Agatha is happy and well, and out of all danger. If this creature is laid on one of us, what might she not do?

April 20th.—The woman is ingenious in her torments. She knows how fond I am of my work, and how highly my lectures are thought of. So it is from that point that she now attacks me. It will end, I can see, in my losing my professorship, but I will fight it to the finish. She shall not drive me out of it without a struggle.

I am not conscious of any change during my lecture this morning save that for a minute or two I had a dizziness and swimminess, which rapidly passed away. On the contrary, I congratulated myself upon having made my subject (the functions of the red corpuscles) both interesting and clear. I was surprised, therefore, when a student came into my laboratory immediately after the lecture and complained of being puzzled by the discrepancy between my statements and those in the text-books. He showed me his note-book, in which I was reported as having in one portion of the lecture championed the most outrageous and unscientific heresies. Of course I denied it, and declared that he had misunderstood me; but on comparing his notes with those of his companions, it became clear that he was right, and that I really had made some most repulsive statements. Of course I shall explain it away as being the result of a moment of aberration, but I feel only too sure that it will be the first of a series. It is but a month now to the end of the session, and I pray that I may be able to hold out till then.

April 24th.—Ten days have elapsed since I have had the heart to make any entry in my journal. Why should I record my own humiliation and degradation? I had vowed never to open it again. And yet the force of habit is strong, and here I find myself taking up once more the record of my own dreadful experiences—in much the same spirit in which a suicide has been known to take notes of the effects of the poison which killed him.

Well, the crash which I had foreseen has come—and that no further back than yesterday. The university authorities have taken my lectureship from me. It has been done in the most delicate way, purporting to be a temporary measure to relieve me from the effects of overwork, and to give me the opportunity of recovering my health. None the less it has been done, and I am no longer Professor Gilroy. The laboratory is still in my charge, but I have little doubt that that also will soon go.

The fact is that my lectures had become the laughing-stock of the university. My class was crowded with students who came to see and hear what the eccentric professor would do or say next. I cannot go into the detail of my humiliations. Oh, that devilish woman! There is no depth of buffoonery and imbecility to which she has not forced me. I would begin my lecture clearly and well—but always with the sense of a coming eclipse. Then, as I felt the influence of her science lessons against it, arriving with clinched hands and beads of sweat upon my forehead, I would hear my incoherent words and watching my contortions, would court with laughter at the antics of their professor. And then, when she had once fairly mastered me, out would come the most outrageous things, silly jokes, sentiments as though I were proposing a toast, snatches of ballads, personal abuse even against some member of my class. And then, when I was almost at my wits' end, she would proceed decorously to the end! No wonder that my conduct has been the talk of the colleges! No wonder that the university senate has been compelled to take official notice of a scandalous case.

And the most dreadful part of it all is my own loneliness. Here I sit in a commonplace English box-window, looking out upon a commonplace English street, with its garish advertisements, its laughing policeman, and behind me there hangs a shadow which is out of all keeping with the age and place. In the home of knowledge I am weighed down and tortured by a power of which science knows nothing.

\* Begun in HARRIS'S WEEKLY No. 167.

No magistrate would listen to me. No paper would discuss my case. No doctor would believe my symptoms. My own most intimate friends would only look upon it as a sign of brain derangement. I am out of all touch with my kind. Oh, that devilish woman! Let her have a care! She may push me too far. When the law cannot help a man, he may make a law for himself.

She met me in the high street yesterday evening and spoke to me. It was as well for her perhaps that it was not between the hedges of a lonely country road. She asked me with her cold smile whether I had been chastened yet. I did not deign to answer her. "We must try another turn of the screw," said she. Here a care, my lady—have a care! I had her at my mercy once. Perhaps another chance may come.

April 28th.—The suspension of my lectureship has had the effect also of taking away her means of annoying me, and so I have enjoyed two blessed days of peace. After all, there is no reason to despair. Sympathy pours in to me from all sides, and every one agrees that it is my devotion to science

reckon with, so that the defence was considerably stronger than the attack. Indeed, the latter does not appear to have been very formidable. Two of the lower windows have marks as if a chisel or some such instrument had been pushed under them to force them open. The police should have a good claw, for the wood-work had been done with green paint only the day before. I have no doubt that it is evident that some of it has found its way on to the criminal's hands or clothes.

4.30 P.M.—Ah, that accursed woman! That three-accursed woman! Never mind! She shall not beat me! No, she shall not! But oh, the she-devil! She has taken my professorship. Now she would take my honor. Is there nothing I can do against her now, my lady? Ah, but I am pushed as I am. I cannot bring myself to think of that!

It was about an hour ago that I went into my bedroom, and was brushing my hair before the glass, when suddenly my eyes lit upon something which left me so sick and cold that I sat down upon the edge of the bed and began to cry. It is many a long year since I shed tears, but all my nerve was gone, and I could but sob and sob in impotent grief and anger. There was my house-jacket, the coat I usually wear after dinner, hanging on its peg by the wardrobe, with the right sleeve thickly crusted from wrist to elbow with daubs of green paint.

So this was what she meant by another turn of the screw! She had made a public imbecile of me. Now she would brand me as a criminal. This time she has failed. But how about the text? I cannot think of it—and of Agatha and my poor old mother! I wish that I were dead!

Yes, this is the other turn of the screw. And this is also what she meant, no doubt, when she said that I had not realized yet the power she has over me. I look back at my account of my conversation with her, and I see how she declared that with a slight exertion of her will her subject would be conscious, and with a stronger one unconscious. Last night I was unconscious. I could have sworn that I slept soundly in my bed without so much as a dream. And yet those stains tell me that I dreamed, made my way out, attempted to open the bank windows, and returned. Was I observed? It is possible that some one saw me do it and followed me home. Alas! what a hell my life has become! I have no peace, no rest. But my patience is nearing its end.

10 P.M.—I have cleaned my coat with turpentine. I do not think that any one could have seen me. It was with my screw-driver that I made the marks. I found it all crusted with paint, and I have cleaned it. My head aches as if it would burst, and I have taken five grains of antipyrin. If it were not for Agatha, I should have taken fifty and had an end of it.

May 1st.—Three quiet days. This hell-fire is like a cat with a mouse. She lets me loose only to pounce upon me again. I am never so frightened as when everything is still. My physical state is deplorable—perpetual headache and ptosis of the left eyelid.

I have heard from the Mardens that they will be back the day after to-morrow. I do not know whether I shall be sorry. They were safe in London. Once here, they may be drawn into the miserable network in which am myself struggling. And I must tell them of it. I cannot marry Agatha so long as I know that I am not responsible for my own actions. Yes, I must tell them, even if it brings everything to an end before long.

To-night is the university ball, and I must go. God knows I never felt less in the humor to appear in public. If I am seen there, and have speech with some of the elders of the university, it will go a long way towards showing them that I would be unwise to take my chair away from me.

11.30 P.M.—I have been to the ball. Charles Sadler and I went together, but I have come away before him. I shall never see him again. He has been a great help to me these nights. He is a cheery, practical fellow, and a chat with him will steady my nerves. On the whole, the evening was a great success. I talked to every one who has influence, and I think that I may have been able to keep them in my power quite yet. The creature was at the ball—unable to dance, of course, but sitting with Mrs. Wilson. Again and again her eyes roved toward me, and I have seen the last things I saw before I left the room. Once as I sat aside ways to let I watched her, and saw that her gaze was following some one else. It was Sadler, who was dancing at the time with the second Miss Thorne. I have no doubt that, in my position, it is well for him that he is not in her grip as I am,



and the audacious nature of my researches which have shaken my nervous system. I have had the kindest message from the council, advising me to travel abroad, and expressing the confident hope that I may be able to resume all my duties by the beginning of the summer term. Nothing could be more flattering than their allusions to my career and to my services to the university. It is only in misfortune that one can test one's own popularity. This creature may weary of tormenting me, and then all may yet be well. May God grant it!

April 26th.—Our sleepy little town has had a small sensation. The only knowledge of crime which we ever have is when a rowdy undergraduate breaks a few lamps or comes to blows with a policeman. Last night, however, there was an attempt made to break into the branch of the Bank of England, and we are all in a flutter in consequence.

Parkeeson the manager is an intimate friend of mine, and I found him very much excited when I walked round there after breakfast. Had the thieves broken into the counting-house they would still have had the safes to

He does not know the escape he has had. I think I hear his step in the street now, and I will go down and let him in. If he comes, I will tell him."

*May 24.*—Why did I break off in this way last night? I never went down stairs after all—at least, I have no recollection of doing so. But, on the other hand, I cannot remember to have seen my hands so greatly swollen this morning, and yet I have no remembrance of injuring it yesterday. Otherwise, I am feeling all the better for last night's festivity. But I cannot understand how it is that I did not meet Charles Sadler when I so fully intended to do so. Is it possible—my God, it is only too probable! It is as if she had been some devil's dance again? I will go down and shut and lock him.

*Mid-day.*—The thing has come to a crisis. My life is not worth living. But, if I am to die, then she shall come all—I will not leave her behind to drive some other man into her arms. No, I have come to the limit of my endurance. She has made me as desperate and dangerous a man as walks the earth. God knows I have never had the heart to do a thing but I have done it. My hands now upon that woman, she should never leave this room alive. I shall see her this very day, and she shall learn what she has to expect from me. I went to Sadler, and found him to my surprise in bed. As I entered he sat up and turned a face towards me which sickened me as I looked at it.

"Why, Sadler, what has happened?" I cried, but my heart turned sick at the sight.

"Gibby," he answered, mumbling with his swollen lips, "I have for some weeks been under the impression that you are a madman. Now I know it, and that that you are a dangerous madman. If it were not that I am unwilling to make a scandal in the college, you would now be in the hands of the police."

"Do you mean?" I cried.

"I mean that as I opened the door last night you rushed out upon me, struck me with both your fists in the face, knocked me down, kicked me furiously in the side, and left me lying motionless in the street. Look at your own hand bearing witness against you."

Yes, there it was, puffed up with spittle-like knuckles as after some terrible blow. What could it do. Though he put me down as a madman, I must tell him all. I set by his bed, and went over all my troubles from the beginning. I poured them out with quivering hands and burning words, until he had reached conviction to the most sceptical.

"She hates you and she hates me," I cried. "She revenged herself last night on both of us at once. She saw me leave the hall, and she watched me see you also. She has hated me ever since. If it were not that I am unwilling that she should take you to reach home, then she had but to use her wicked will. Ah, your bruised face is a small thing beside my bruised soul!"

"He struck by his side." That was evident. "Yes, yes," she watched me out of the room," he muttered. "She is capable of it. But is it possible that she has really required you to this? What do you intend to do?"

"To stop it," I cried. "I am perfectly desperate; I shall give her fair warning to-day, and the next time will be the last."

"Do nothing rash," said he.

"Rash?" I cried. "The only rash thing is that I should postpone it another hour." With that I rushed to my room, and here I am on the eve of what may be the great crisis of my life. I shall start at once. I have gained one thing to-day, for I have made one man, at least, realize the truth of this monstrous experience of mine. And, if the worst should happen, this diary remains as a proof of the good that has driven me.

*Evening.*—When I came to Wilson's I was shown up, and found that he was sitting with Miss Penelope. For half an hour I had to endure his face to the other side, and then I rushed into the exact nature of the spiritistic rap, while the creature and I sat in silence looking across the room at each other. I read a sinister amusement in her eyes, and she must have been hatred and menace in mine. I had almost despaired of having speech with her, when he was called from the room and we were left for a few minutes together.

"Well, Professor Gibby—or is it Mr. Gibby?" said she, with that latter smile of mine. "How is your friend Mr. Charles Sadler after the hall?"

"You flout?" I cried. "You have come to the end of your tricks now. I will have no more of them. Listen to what I say."—I strode across and shook her roughly by the shoulder—"as sure as there is a God in heaven, I swear that if you try another of your devilries upon me I will have your life for it. Come what may, I will have your life. I have come to the end of what a man can endure."

"Accounts are not quite settled between us," said she, with a passion that I had not expected. "I have not heard of you. You had your choice. You chose to spurn the first; now you must test the second. It will take a little more to break your spirit, I see, but broken it shall be. Miss Marden comes back to-morrow, as I understand."

"What has that to do with you?" I cried. "It is a pollution that you should dare even to think of her. If I thought that you would harm her—"

She was frightened. I could see, though she tried to brazen it out. She read the black thought in my mind, and covered away from me.

"She is fortunate in having such a companion," said she. "He actually dares to threaten a lonely woman. I must really congratulate Miss Marden upon her protector."

The words were bitter, but the voice and manner were more acid still.

"There is no use talking," said I. "I only came here to tell you, and to tell you most solemnly, that your next outrage upon me will be your last." With that, as I heard Wilson's step upon the stair, I walked from the room. Ay, she may look venomous and deadly, but for all that she is beginning to see now that she has as much to fear from me as I can have from her. "Nardor!" It has so ugly a sound. But you don't talk of murdering a snake or of murdering a tiger. Let her have a cure now.

*May 25.*—I met Agatha and her mother at the station at eleven o'clock. She is looking so bright, so happy, so beautiful. And she was so overjoyed to see me. What have I done to deserve such love? I went back home with me and we lunched together. All the troubles seem at a moment to have been shrouded back from my life. She tells me that I am looking pale and worried and ill. The dear child puts it down to my loneliness, and the perfunctory attentions of a house-keeper. I pray that she may never know the truth! May the shadow, if shadow there must be, be ever black against my life, and leave her in the sunniest. I have just come back from a man, feeling a new man. With her by my side I think that I could show a bold face to anything which life might send.

*P.M.*—Now let me try to be accurate. Let me try to

say exactly how it occurred. It is fresh in my mind, and I can set it down correctly, though it is not likely that the time will ever come when I shall forget the doings of to-day.

I had returned from the Mardens' after lunch, and was cutting some microscopic sections in my freezing microtome when in an instant I lost consciousness in the sudden hateful fashion which has become only too familiar to me of late.

When my senses came back to me I was sitting in a small chamber, very different from the one in which I had been working. It was cozy and bright, with chintz-covered settees, colored hangings, and a thousand pretty little trifles upon the wall. A small ornamental clock ticked in front of me, and the hands pointed to half past three. It was all quite familiar to me, and yet I stared about for a moment in a half-dazed way until my eyes fell upon a cabinet photograph of myself upon the top of the piano. On the other side stood one of Mrs. Marden. Then, of course, I remembered where I was. It was Agatha's boudoir.

But how came I there, and what did I want? A horrible sinking came to my heart. Had I been sent here on some devilish errand? Had that errand already been done? Surely it must, otherwise why should I be allowed to come back to consciousness? Oh, the agony of that moment! What had I done? I sprang to my feet in my despair, and as I did so a small glass bottle fell from my knees on to the carpet.

It was unbroken, and I picked it up. Outside was written "Sulphuric Acid. Pure." When I drew the round glass stopper a thick fume rose slowly up, and a pungent, choking smell pervaded the room. I recognized it as one which I kept for chemical testing in my chambers. But why had I brought a bottle of vitriol into Agatha's chamber? Was it not this thick reeking liquid with which jealous women had been known to mar the beauty of their rivals? My heart stood still as I held the bottle up to the light. "Thank God, it was full! No mischief had been done as yet. But had Agatha come in a minute sooner, was it not certain that the hellish parasite within me would have dashed the stuff on to her? Ah, it will not bear to be thought of. But it must have been for that. Why else should I have brought it? At the thought of what I might have done my worn nerves broke down, and I sat shivering and twitching, the pitiable wreck of a man.

It was the sound of Agatha's voice and the rustle of her dress which restored me. I looked up and saw her blue eyes, so full of tenderness and pity, gazing down at me.

"We must take you away to the country, Austin," she said. "You want rest and quiet. You look wretchedly ill."

"Oh, it is nothing," said I, trying to smile. "It was only a momentary weakness. I am right again now."

"I am so sorry to keep you waiting. Poor boy, you must have been here for quite half an hour! The vicar was in the drawing-room, and as I knew that you did not care for him I thought it better that Jane should show you up here. I thought the man would never go."

"Thank God he said—thank God he said!" I cried, hysterically.

"Why, what is the matter with you, Austin?" she asked, holding my arm as I staggered up from the chair. "Why are you glad that the vicar stalks? And what is this little bottle in your hand?"

"Nothing," I cried, thrusting it into my pocket. "It was my fate. I have something important to do."

"How stern you look, Austin. I have never seen your face like that. You are angry?"

"Yes, I am angry."

"But not with me?"

"No, no, my darling. You would not understand."

"But you have not told me why you came."

"I came to ask you whether you would always love me—no matter what I did or what shadow might fall on my name. Would you believe in me and trust me however black appearances might be against me?"

"You know that I would, Austin."

"Yes, I know that you would. What I do I shall do for you. I am driven to it. There is no other way out, my darling!" I kissed her and rushed from the room.

The time for indecision was at an end. As long as the creature threatened my own prospects and my honor there might be a question as to what I should do. But now when Agatha—my innocent Agatha—was endangered, my duty lay before me like a turnpike road. I had no weapon, but I never paused for that. What weapon should I need, when I felt every muscle quivering with the strength of a frenzied man? I ran through the streets so set upon what I had to do that I was only dimly conscious of the faces of friends whom I met—dimly conscious also that Professor Wilson met me, running with equal precipitance in the opposite direction. Breathless I reached my room, unlocked my door and rang the bell. A white-checked maid opened the door, and turned white-red yet when she saw the face that looked in at her.

"Show me up at once to Miss Penelope," I demanded.

"Sir," she gasped, "Miss Penelope died this afternoon at half past three."

THE END.