

## DOCTOR ZAY.

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## VIII.—(Continued.)

"What are you thinking?" she asked abruptly. There was a dash of something which he could almost have dared to call friendly freedom in the tone of the question.

"I was thinking that you harmonize with your environment."

"That would be the acquisition, as it is the aspiration, of one's lifetime. The compliment is too large for the occasion."

For answer, he glanced about the room and back at herself. She smiled, not without a touch of scorn, or it might have been bitterness.

"But then," he continued dreamily, "you are of course an exception, not a representative, among women who adopt your vocation."

"You only exhibit your ignorance by such a remark," said the young lady quietly. "Among the thousand of us now practicing medicine in this country, there are many more successful than I, and abroad there is some superb work done. I should like to give you the figures some time. They are very interesting. But I won't bore you now. It would be like putting sermons in a novel."

"What is the proportion of ladies in the profession?" asked Yorke, with a slight shrug.

"What is the proportion of gentlemen in the profession?"

"Except that I really know nothing about it, I should suppose it is larger."

"It probably is, a little. Until recently, it needed force rather than fineness to bring a woman to the surface of a great progressive movement. We are coming to a point where both are to be absolutely necessary to success in the art of healing. A union of these qualities will be demanded of women, because they are women, such as has never been expected of men, or perhaps been possible to them. We have a complex task before us."

"It seems a dreary one to me," said Yorke, rather sadly. "And yet you find it?"

"Bright!" she said quickly; "bright, bright!" Her earnest face flashed.

"You really seem happy," he urged.

"I am happy!" she cried, in her resonant, joyous tone.

"I wonder if I could say as much, if I had done as much?" queried the sick man.

Her whole expression changed instantly. Both felt, what neither said, that they had approached difficult and delicate ground.

"I do not take as dark a view of your case as you do," she said.

"In other words, I am not lost to your respect, because I have not become an eminent jurist at the age of— I am only twenty-eight, after all," he added.

"I am a year older than that," she smiled.

"I ought to have done more. What is the trouble, Mr. Yorke? Don't you get any clients?" She took unconsciously the professional tone she had so long assumed to him, as if she had asked, "Doesn't your dinner agree with you?"

"I had one divorce case last winter; I lost it."

"You resent my asking questions. You ought not to."

"I feel it. I do not resent it."

"That is kind in you, and discriminating. You silence me."

"No, go on. Say what you think of me. Tell me—I can stand it. What a consummate donkey a man of my sort must seem to a woman of yours! And yet I'm not a donkey; I am really a very good sort of fellow."

"You are rudimentary," said the doctor, with an inscrutable look.

"Hum—um—um."

"Honesty, Mr. Yorke, my diagnosis of you is different from— It is my own, at any rate, be it worth little or much."

"You have had some chance to form one, I'll admit," said Yorke. "Let me make a guess at it: Inherited inertia. Succumbed to his environment. Corrosion of Beacon Street upon what might, in a machine-shop, for instance, or a factory, have been called his brain. Native indolence, developed by acquired habit. Hopeless correlation of predestined forces. Atrophied ambition. Paralyzed aspiration. No struggle for existence. Destitute of scientific basis. Reductio ad absurdum.—Laborare est orare.—Facilis descensus. No correspondent in the *Materia Medica*. Hahnemann knew not of him. (He was mobbed for a great cause.) The Organon foresaw him not. There is no divine remedy for him. Give him *sac. lac.* powders, and send him back to Beacon Street. By the way, Doctor, did you ever give me a sugar powder?"

"Once."

"When was that? I'll know, or I'll never forgive you."

"The day you disobeyed me about going out-doors, and caused me an unnecessary call."

"On your honor, is that the only time?"

"By my diploma!—the only time."

"You did not say whether I had hit the diagnosis, Doctor Zay."

She did not answer him at once, and when she spoke she felt, rather than saw, that it was with her guarded look.

"I do not make it a case of paralysis, exactly. I should rather call it one of hyperaesthesia."

"Hyperaesthesia—that was what was the matter with me when I couldn't let Mrs. Butterwell shut a door, or drop a thimble; when the horses kept me awake, stamping in the barn. You mean that you do me the honor to infer that I have ideals, despite my failure to give an inquiring world evidence of the fact, and that (if I do not strain your goodness) the idealizing fibre is not without superfluous sensitiveness?"

"Superfluous, and therefore injurious, sensitiveness. You experience a certain scorn of the best into which you know yourself capable of resulting. You cherished this scorn, at one time, as a silent proof of superiority of nature, patent only to yourself, and the more precious, like family jewels worn out of sight. You were met at the outset of life by the conviction that you were without extraordinary gifts, and it struck you as original to snub the ordinary ones, as if it were their fault. I am not sure that it was even original; it certainly was not admirable. But you have outgrown that. I recognize now a genuine modesty at root of your inertia. Your self-estimate is calculably less than that of almost any other Boston man I ever met. I prognosticate that the next phase of experience will be a healthier and happier one. I think you capable of service." The young lady uttered these sentences slowly, with palliative pauses between them; she had an absorbed and studious look.

"I always thought I might have made a good head-waiter," said the young man grimly.

"Take me as you please," persisted the doctor. "I have paid you a compliment; my first—and last. Cut yourself with it, if you want to. It would be malpractice, but I am not the surgeon."

Yorke made no reply. He sat and watched her, thinking that he would not have borne from any other woman in the world what came like a fine intoxication from her; he drank her noble severity like gleaming wine.

"You are not a great man," she urged gently, as if she had to say, "You have a spinal injury," "but you have uncommon qualities,—perhaps I should say quality; you have hardly taken the trouble, as yet, to indicate what your qualities are. You could be successful if you chose. The difficulty has been that you have not respected what we are in the habit of calling success."

"Frankly, no; it has never seemed worth while."

"The Christians have a phrase," said Doctor Zay, "which expresses the deficiency in most of our standards. They talk of consecration. It means something, I find."

"Are you a Christian?" asked Yorke.

"I do not know—yet," she answered, gravely.

"Now, I have always thought I was," he said, smiling sadly.

"Are you?" She looked at him wistfully.

"At least I was confirmed once, to please my mother. It may belong to that pervasive weakness of nature, which you classify so indulgently as sensitiveness, that I never have grown away as far from all that as many fellows I know. There, now, is an ideal! Where in history or philosophy can it be mated? Faith is beauty. I should like to hold on to my faith, if I can,—if I had no other reason, just as I should wish to keep my paintings or bronzes. But I know it is harder for a camel to go through the knee of an idol, as the little boy said, than for a student of science to enter the kingdom of heaven. Are you one of the two atheists, in the historic three doctors?"

"God forbid!" she cried. "I am a seeker, still. That is all I mean to say. And I know I must seem!" She paused, stricken by an unprecedented and beautiful blushing embarrassment.

"What must you seem?"

"It was nothing,—a foolish speech. It is time for you to go home, Mr. Yorke, and go to bed."

"What must it make you seem? I will go when I know. Tell me,—you shall! Indulge me, please." He limped over towards her; his words fell over each other; his figure towered above her.

She gave one glance at his agitated face, and collected herself by a movement swift and secretive as the opening of a water-lily.

"I only meant to say that a woman usually—naturally, perhaps—is the guide in matters of belief. Spiritual regnancy belongs to her historically, and prophetically too, I do not dispute. It occurred to me, at that moment, how it must strike a man, if she were below him on that basis; if she had no power to heighten or deepen his ideal,—that was all. Good-night, Mr. Yorke. If you don't sleep, take that powder marked 'Cham. 5 m.' Now go!"

"You heighten and deepen every other ideal I have," said the young man, solemnly. "You cannot fail me there. It will not be possible to you."

His agitation had urged itself upon her now, against her will; he was half shocked, half transported, to see that a slow pallor advanced

like a spirit towards him, over her resolute face. He watched it with a kind of awe, and made a gesture with one of his thin hands, as if to check an invisible presence which he was not strong enough to meet. It was the movement of a sick man whose physical strength was spent by emotion. The physician perceived this instantly.

"There is the office-bell," she said, in her business tone. "I will answer it as I help you out."

He made no reply, and they left the parlor in uneasy silence. He had tried to come on one crutch that night; now, weakened with excitement, he made bad work of the experiment.

"Put your hand on my shoulder," ordered Doctor Zay.

"You are not tall enough," he objected.

"I am strong enough," she insisted.

He obeyed her, and thus came limping to the front door between the lady and the crutch. The patient who had rung the office-bell stood in the doorway. It was a man. It was a gentleman. It was a stranger. At sight of him Doctor Zay colored with impulsive pleasure. She said:—

"Why, Doctor?"

The stranger answered:—

"Good-evening, Doctor."

Yorke found this dialogue monotonous, and removed his hand from the violet muslin shoulder.

"Walk in," said the lady, turning heartily to her guest. "Go right through into the parlor. I will be with you in a moment."

The stranger, bowing slightly to Yorke, stepped in and passed them. By the sharp light of the kerosene entry lamp Yorke perceived a man of years and dignity; in fact, a person of distinguished appearance.

"I will not trouble you to go any farther with me," said Doctor Zay's patient stiffly.

"Nonsense!"

The soft, warm shoulder presented itself with a beautiful—it seemed to Yorke a terrible—unconsciousness leaning towards him like a violet indeed.

"No, no," he said, roughly; "I don't want it. It won't help me. Don't you understand a man better than that?"

As soon as the words were uttered, he would have given, let us say, his sound ankle to recall them. She shrank all over, as if, indeed, he had stepped on a flower, and gathering herself with grave majesty, swept away from him.

## IX.

Yorke limped back to his room, and sank into the first chair that presented itself. It happened to be the high rocker, and he put his head back, and thrust his hands into his pockets, and got his ankle across another chair, and for a few moments occupied himself in a savage longing for a smoke. His physician had forbidden him his cigars pending the presence of certain spinal symptoms, which she was pleased to consider of importance to her therapeutic whims. A good square disobedience would have relieved him. He would have liked nothing better than for the odor of the tobacco to steal around through her parlor windows, while she sat there in that trailed gown making herself lovely to that fellow. Was it possible she knew he was coming when she put the thing on?...

Yorke found himself engulfed in a chasm of feeling, across which, like a bridge whereon he had missed his footing, ran one slender thought:—

"I ought to have gone home three weeks ago."

It was quarter past nine when she sent him to his room. He sat in the big rocker, in the dark, without moving, till ten. No sound had come from the doctor's side of the house. Acting upon a sudden impulse, of which he was half ashamed, half defensive, and which he owned himself wholly disinclined to resist, he groped for his crutches and got out upon the piazza, where he could see the light from her windows making a great radiance upon the acacia-tree, and showing the outlines of the short, wet grass. A honeysuckle clambered over the nearest window. When the curtain drifted in the warm wind, the long-necked flowers seemed to look in. The subdued sound of voices came to his ear. He went back, and got upon the lounge. As he lay there, the lumbermen returned, singing,

"Thus with the man, thus with the tree,  
Sharp at the root the axe must be."

Mrs. Butterwell came in to say good-night. She held a candle, which made fickle revelations of her black silk dress and sallow cheeks. She expressed surprise at finding her lodger in the dark, and lighted his Japanese lantern assiduously. She thought Mr. Yorke had been calling on the doctor.

"She sent me to bed," said Yorke. "She has another fellow there."

"They will come at all hours," replied Mrs. Butterwell, serenely. "More blame to 'em!"

"Who will come at all hours?" gasped Yorke.

"Why, patients, of course. Who else?"

"This isn't a patient. This is a gentleman."

"I want to know!" said Mrs. Butterwell, putting down the light.

"And so do I," said Yorke, grimly.

"A tall, dark complected gentleman? Wears a crush felt hat and gray gloves,—a beautiful fit?"

"I didn't notice his gloves," savagely. "A handsome man, wasn't he?" pursued Mrs. Butterwell, cruelly. "Splendid figure and great blue eyes!"

"How should I know about his eyes?" groaned Yorke.

"Oh, it must be he," returned Mrs. Butterwell, placidly. "I wonder I didn't see him in the stage. I always mean to look in the stage. May be he drove,—he sometimes does."

Yorke made no answer. Every word of Mrs. Butterwell's caused an acute pain in his left temple, like the nail in the brain of Sisera; he put up his hand to his head.

"His name is Penhallow," hammered Mrs. Butterwell,—"Doctor Penhallow, of Bangor. He is a famous surgeon,—very famous. He sets the world by her."

"It can't be—it isn't the fellow she telegraphed to about my case, at the beginning?" cried Yorke.

"Oh, I dare say. Doctor didn't mention it to me. Doctor never talks about her cases. She admires Doctor Penhallow above all. He was her preceptor. He's old enough to be—well, it would be a young sort of father; but he's well along; he couldn't be so famous if he wasn't; nor she wouldn't feel that kind of feeling for him,—that looking up. He's the only man I ever saw doctor look up to. She ain't like the rest of us; we wear our upper lids short with it. I declare! It seems to me in course of generations women wouldn't have had any eyelids; they'd be what you call nowadays selected away, by worshipin' men-folks, if Providence hadn't thrown in such lots of little men,—mites and dots of souls, too short for the biggest fool alive to call the tallest. Then, half the time, she gets on her knees to him to make out the difference. Oh, I've seen 'em! Down on their knee, and stay there to make him think he's as big as he wants to be, and pacify him. Then, another thing," added Mrs. Butterwell, gently, "is babies. You've got to look down to your babies, and that keeps the balance something like even. Providence knew what he was up to when he made women, though I must say it looks sometimes as if he'd made an awful botch of it."

"Is he married?" asked Yorke.

"Who? Oh, Doctor Penhallow? (I was thinking about Providence.) No. He's an old bachelor," said Mrs. Butterwell in a mysterious manner, "and only one sister, and she just married and gone to Surinam to live. It seems to make it such a useful place; I never felt as if anybody lived there before. He used to have to have her home in Bangor till a gracious mercy removed her, for she was squint-eyed and had spells. He was a friend of her father's, too."

"Whose father's?" cried Yorke, desperately. "Why, doctor's father's,—Doctor Zay's father's. Old Doctor Lloyd and Doctor Penhallow were friends, the dearest kind; he was his preceptor, too, and Doctor."

"We are getting our pronouns, not to say our physicians, dreadfully mixed," interrupted the young man wearily. "And I suppose the lady has a right to her admirers, whether they meet our views or not. There really is nothing extraordinary about it, except the fact that it should never have occurred to me that she could have them, in this wilderness."

"Well, there! I should like to know why not?" Mrs. Butterwell fired at once. "You don't suppose a woman ain't a woman because she's a doctor, do you? There was a fellow here last summer,—a family of summer folks at the Sherman Hotel, three brothers: one was a minister, and one was an editor of something,—I forget what, but he wasn't a widower, that I'm sure of,—and one had a patent on mouse-traps. I can't say much for the minister, for he preached on women's sphere in the Baptist church,—may the Lord forgive him, if he ever heard the sermon, which I don't believe he did,—and the mouse-trap was engaged, besides having his front teeth out, and coming down here to wait till he shrank for a new set. But that poor little editor, Mr. Yorke, I wish you could have made his acquaintance. The table-girl at the Sherman House told my girl he'd lost his appetite to that pass he wouldn't eat a thing but shoo-fly potatoes. Think," added Mrs. Butterwell, with a gravity which deepened to solemnity, "of supporting an honorable and unrequited affection on shoo-fly potatoes!"

"I did not know," observed Yorke, acutely conscious of the indiscretion of his remark, "that physicians—men physicians—were apt to be appreciative of the lady members of the profession in any way, least of all in that. Many of these facts in social progress, you see, are novel to me. I am very dull about them."

"Well, I declare!" objected Mrs. Butterwell. "I must say I think you are. For my part, I can't conceive of anything more natural. When you consider the convenience of taking each other's overflow practice, and consulting together when folks die, and the sitting down of an evening to talk over operations; and then one boy would do for both sets of horses. And when you think of having a woman like Doctor to turn to, sharin' the biggest cares and joys a man has got, not leanin' like a water-soaked log against him when he feels slim as a pussy-willow himself, poor fellow, but claspin' hands as steady as a statue to help him on,—and that hair of her's, and her eyes, for all her learning! But there, Mr. Yorke! I've talked you dead as East Sherman. I'll fix your blinds for you and put in the pegs, and get your milk, and go. Don't you lie awake listening for him. He won't go till half past eleven. He never does. He ain't able to get over very often, for his business is tremendous, and he's sent for all over the State,