

DOCTOR CRUMP ACTS.

XLI.

Early the next morning the Angel went down through the village, and climbing the fence, waded through the waist-high reeds that fringe the Sidder. He was going to Bandram Bay to take a nearer view of the sea, which one could just see on a clear day from the higher parts of Siddermorton Park. And suddenly he came upon Crump sitting on a log and smoking. (Crump always smoked exactly two ounces per week--and he always smoked it in the open air.)

"Hullo!" said Crump, in his healthiest tone. "How's the wing?"

"Very well," said the Angel. "The pain's gone."

"I suppose you know you are trespassing?"

"Trespassing!" said the Angel.

"I suppose you don't know what that means," said Crump.

"I don't," said the Angel.

"I must congratulate you. I don't know how long you will last, but you

are keeping it up remarkably well. I thought at first you were a mattoid, but you're so amazingly consistent. Your attitude of entire ignorance of the elementary facts of Life is really a very amusing pose. You make slips of course, but very few. But surely we two understand one another."

He smiled at the Angel. "You would beat Sherlock Holmes. I wonder who you really are."

The Angel smiled back, with eyebrows raised and hands extended. "It's impossible for you to know who I am. Your eyes are blind, your ears deaf, your soul dark, to all that is wonderful about me. It's no good my telling that I fell into your world."

The Doctor waved his pipe. "Not that, please. I don't want to pry if you have your reasons for keeping quiet. Only I would like you to think of Hilyer's mental health. He really believes this story."

The Angel shrugged his dwindling wings.

"You did not know him before this affair. He's changed tremendously. He used to be neat and comfortable. For the last fortnight he's been hazy, with a far-away look in his eyes. He preached last Sunday without his cuff links, and something wrong with his tie, and he took for his text, 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard.' He really believes all this nonsense about the Angel-land. The man is verging on monomania!"

"You will see things from your own standpoint," said the Angel.

"Everyone must. At any rate, I think it jolly regrettable to see this poor old fellow hypnotized, as you certainly have hypnotized him. I don't know where you come from nor who you are, but I warn you I'm not going to see the old boy made a fool of much longer."

"But he's not being made a fool of. He's simply beginning to dream of a world outside his knowledge----"

"It won't do," said Crump. "I'm not one of the dupe class. You are either of two things--a lunatic at large (which I don't believe), or a knave. Nothing else is possible. I think I know a little of this world, whatever I do of yours. Very well. If you don't leave Hilyer alone I shall communicate with the police, and either clap you into a prison, if you go back on your story, or into a madhouse if you don't. It's stretching a point, but I swear I'd certify you insane to-morrow to get you out of the village. It's not only the Vicar. As you know. I hope that's plain. Now what have you to say?"

With an affectation of great calm, the Doctor took out his penknife and began to dig the blade into his pipe bowl. His pipe had gone out during this last speech.

For a moment neither spoke. The Angel looked about him with a face that

grew pale. The Doctor extracted a plug of tobacco from his pipe and flung it away, shut his penknife and put it in his waistcoat pocket. He had not meant to speak quite so emphatically, but speech always warmed him.

"Prison," said the Angel. "Madhouse! Let me see." Then he remembered the Vicar's explanation. "Not that!" he said. He approached Crump with eyes dilated and hands outstretched.

"I knew you would know what those things meant--at any rate. Sit down," said Crump, indicating the tree trunk beside him by a movement of the head.

The Angel, shivering, sat down on the tree trunk and stared at the Doctor.

Crump was getting out his pouch. "You are a strange man," said the Angel. "Your beliefs are like--a steel trap."

"They are," said Crump--flattered.

"But I tell you--I assure you the thing is so--I know nothing, or at least remember nothing of anything I knew of this world before I found myself in the darkness of night on the moorland above Sidderford."

"Where did you learn the language then?"

"I don't know. Only I tell you--But I haven't an atom of the sort of proof that would convince you."

"And you really," said Crump, suddenly coming round upon him and looking into his eyes; "You really believe you were eternally in a kind of glorious heaven before then?"

"I do," said the Angel.

"Pshaw!" said Crump, and lit his pipe. He sat smoking, elbow on knee, for some time, and the Angel sat and watched him. Then his face grew less troubled.

"It is just possible," he said to himself rather than to the Angel, and began another piece of silence.

"You see;" he said, when that was finished. "There is such a thing as double personality.... A man sometimes forgets who he is and thinks he is someone else. Leaves home, friends, and everything, and leads a double life. There was a case in Nature only a month or so ago. The man was sometimes English and right-handed, and sometimes Welsh and left-handed. When he was English he knew no Welsh, when he was Welsh he knew no English.... H'm."

He turned suddenly on the Angel and said "Home!" He fancied he might

revive in the Angel some latent memory of his lost youth. He went on "Dadda, Pappa, Daddy, Mammy, Pappy, Father, Dad, Governor, Old Boy, Mother, dear Mother, Ma, Mumsy.... No good? What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing," said the Angel. "You surprised me a little,--that is all. A week ago I should have been puzzled by that vocabulary."

For a minute Crump rebuked the Angel silently out of the corner of his eye.

"You have such an ingenuous face. You almost force me to believe you. You are certainly not an ordinary lunatic. Your mind--except for your isolation from the past--seems balanced enough. I wish Nordau or Lombroso or some of these Saltpetriere men could have a look at you. Down here one gets no practice worth speaking about in mental cases. There's one idiot--and he's just a damned idiot of an idiot--; all the rest are thoroughly sane people."

"Possibly that accounts for their behaviour," said the Angel thoughtfully.

"But to consider your general position here," said Crump, ignoring his comment, "I really regard you as a bad influence here. These fancies are contagious. It is not simply the Vicar. There is a man named Shine has caught the fad, and he has been in the drink for a week, off and on, and offering to fight anyone who says you are not an Angel. Then a man

over at Sidderford is, I hear, affected with a kind of religious mania on the same tack. These things spread. There ought to be a quarantine in mischievous ideas. And I have heard another story...."

"But what can I do?" said the Angel. "Suppose I am (quite unintentionally) doing mischief...."

"You can leave the village," said Crump.

"Then I shall only go into another village."

"That's not my affair," said Crump. "Go where you like. Only go. Leave these three people, the Vicar, Shine, the little servant girl, whose heads are all spinning with galaxies of Angels...."

"But," said the Angel. "Face your world! I tell you I can't. And leave Delia! I don't understand.... I do not know how to set about getting Work and Food and Shelter. And I am growing afraid of human beings...."

"Fancies, fancies," said Crump, watching him, "mania."

"It's no good my persisting in worrying you," he said suddenly, "but certainly the situation is impossible as it stands." He stood up with a jerk.

"Good-morning, Mr--Angel," he said, "the long and the short of it is--I

say it as the medical adviser of this parish--you are an unhealthy influence. We can't have you. You must go."

He turned, and went striding through the grass towards the roadway, leaving the Angel sitting disconsolately on the tree trunk. "An unhealthy influence," said the Angel slowly, staring blankly in front of him, and trying to realise what it meant.