

PROFESSOR AYLMER'S EXPERIMENT



A. J. Anderson

Professor Aylmer's Experiment

By A. J. ANDERSON

Science, the Church and Spiritualism come into conflict in this novel, which deals with the Professor's obsession that he can create life. The book is written in scientific earnestness, but running through it is a good love story and the human interest is strong. There is a mysterious, devilish man exercising a malignant influence, and an eerie atmosphere is created by weird happenings in a spiritualistic circle.

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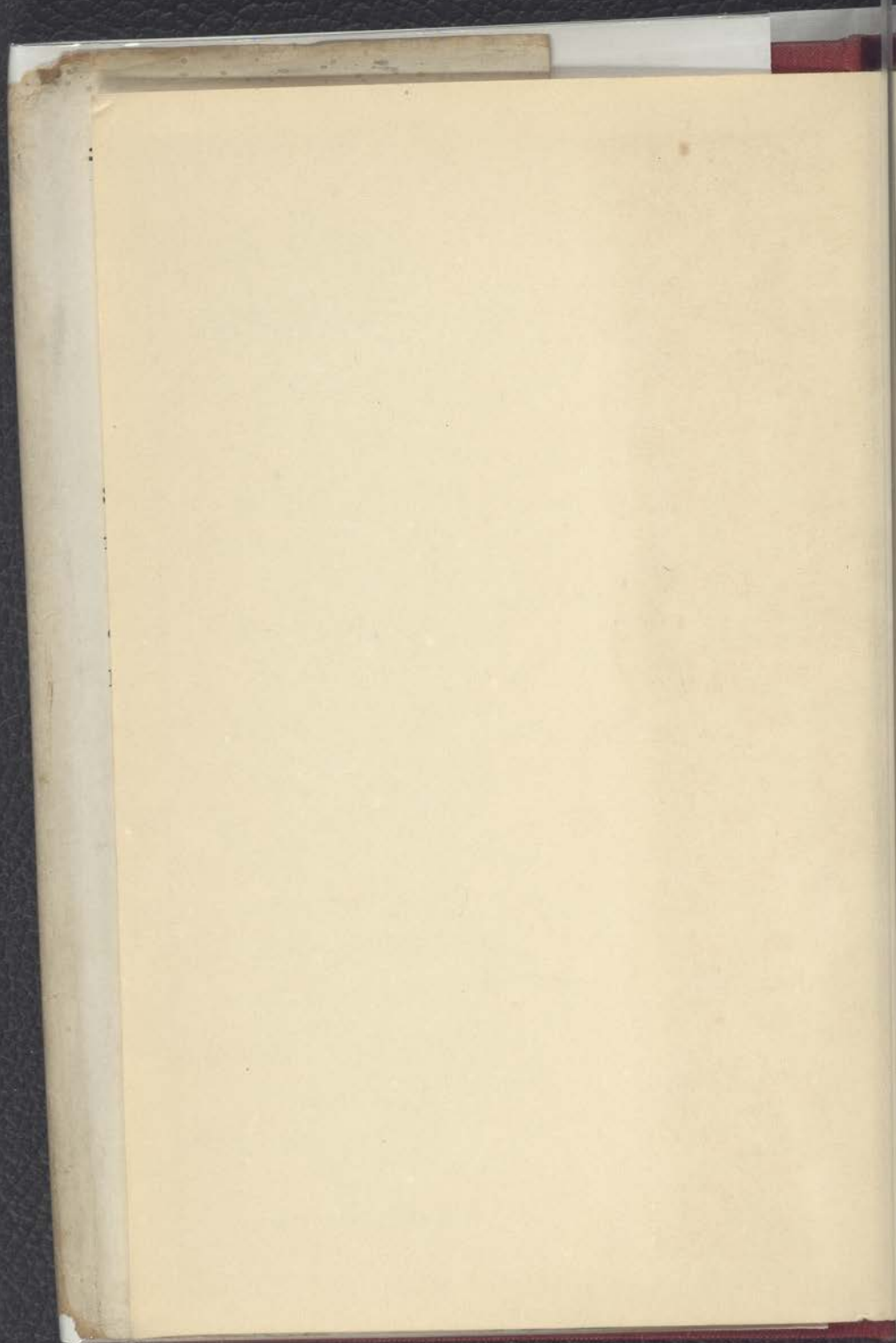
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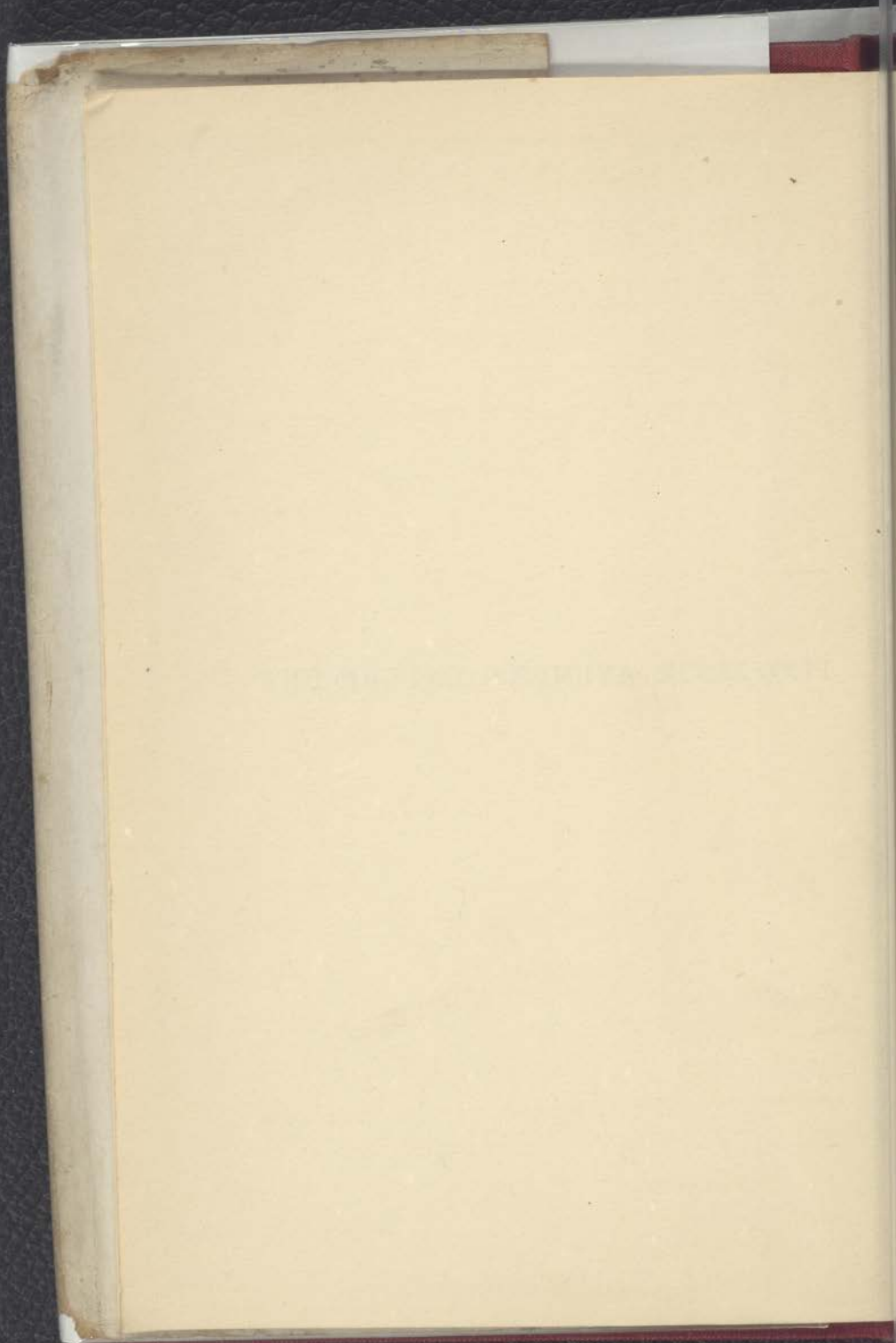
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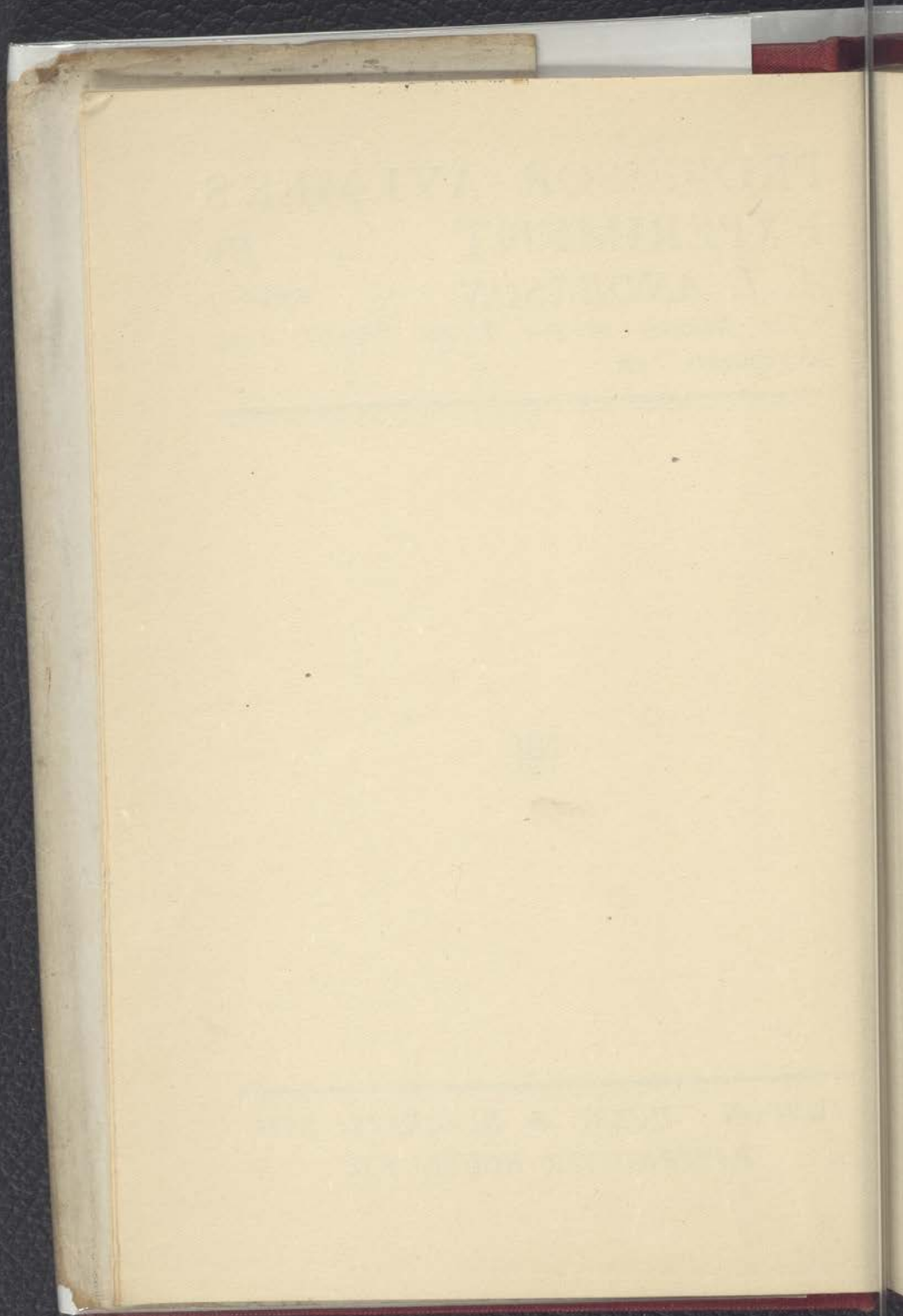


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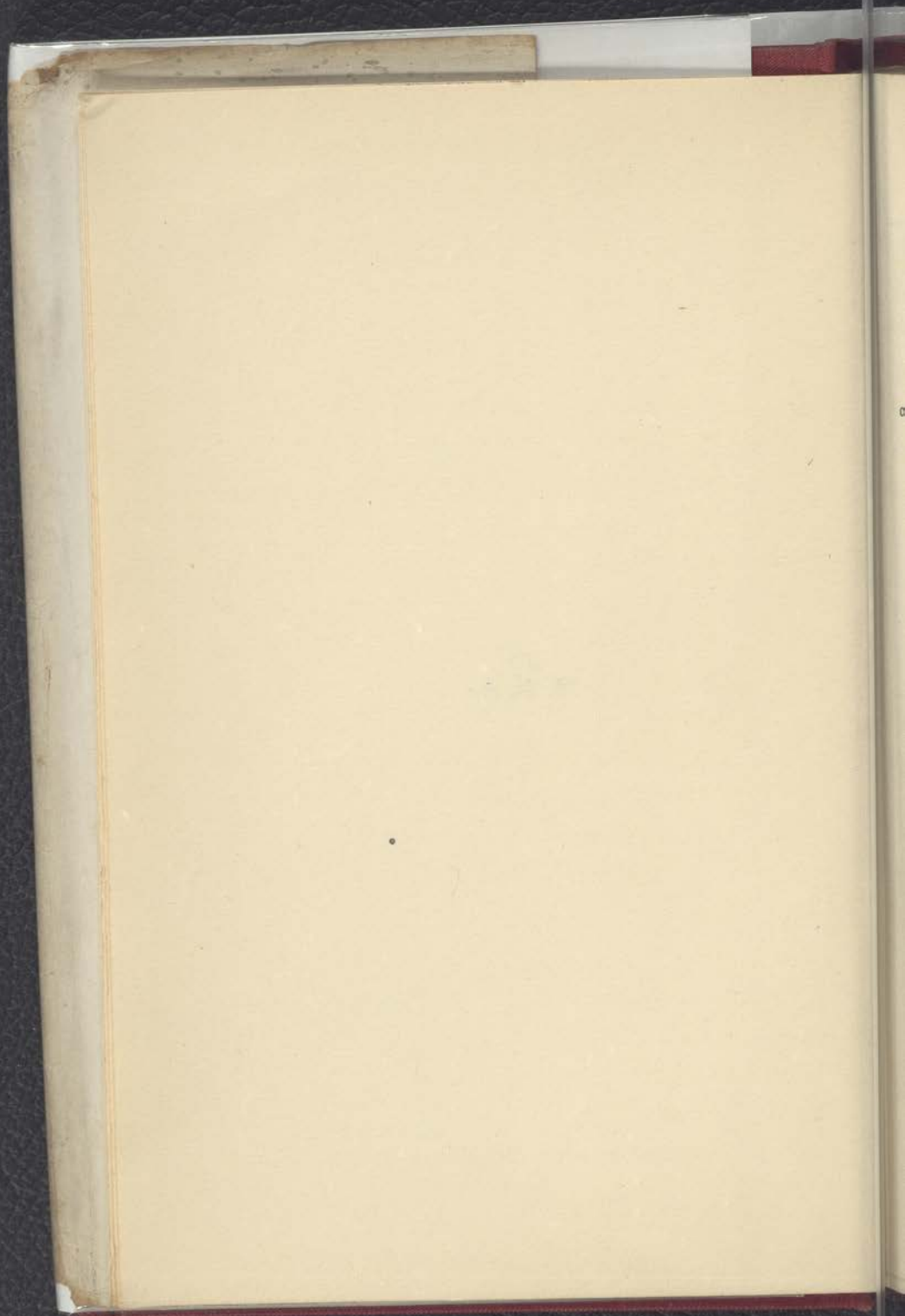
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TO
M. R. A.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE UNKNOWN FACTOR - - -	9
II. POETA FIT, NON NASCITUR - - -	10
III. THE PROFESSOR'S QUEST - - -	17
IV. LIFE AND A LADY - - -	25
V. ZOE AYLMER - - -	32
VI. EXPERT ADVICE - - -	45
VII. UP THE TREGAN VALLEY - - -	50
VIII. BROWN WILLY - - -	60
IX. THE SCIENCE OF LOVE - - -	67
X. BY-PRODUCTS OF SCIENCE - - -	77
XI. LOVE AND LIFE - - -	88
XII. WHEN THE WIND IS FROM THE WEST -	100
XIII. THE CELL - - -	111
XIV. NIGHT - - -	122
XV. A DINNER PARTY - - -	133
XVI. MURDER - - -	144
XVII. EN ROUTE - - -	153
XVIII. THE NEW TENANT - - -	156
XIX. FORMATION OF A CIRCLE - - -	166

CHAPTER	PAGE
XX. THE CIRCLE - - -	173
XXI. IMPERATOR - - -	187
XXII. BRUCE-SMITH'S THEORY - - -	199
XXIII. A MATERIALISATION - - -	208
XXIV. A NEW CONTROL - - -	218
XXV. BRUCE-SMITH TAKES ACTION - - -	225
XXVI. A FRESH OPINION - - -	232
XXVII. ON THE NATURE OF A CONTROL - - -	240
XXVIII. A CONSULTATION - - -	247
XXIX. IN TREGUNDEN WOODS - - -	254
XXX. AN EXTRACT FROM THE PEERAGE - - -	263
XXXI. ZOE'S SUGGESTION - - -	271
XXXII. IN THE LOGGIA - - -	280
POSTSCRIPT - - -	286

Professor Aylmer's Experiment

CHAPTER I

THE UNKNOWN FACTOR

THE prettiest Oxford girl of her year read through her record of the day's laboratory experiments. Then she bit her lip, took up her fountain pen, and made a note at the foot of the page :

" As a rule the law of cause and effect is simple, and results easily foreseen. But, when some unknown factor takes a hand, twisting a normal experiment so that it produces abnormal results, then the laboratory becomes exciting."

As the ' unknown factor ' which had upset Zoe Aylmer's biological investigation has never been traced, we can let that matter rest ; but, if we apply the same principle to the tragedy of the Valley of the Camel :—

For example, if Bruce-Smith had only cast his flies and caught his trout, written his poems and received his cheques and left the unknown alone, he would not have met with the abnormal.

If Professor Aylmer had contented himself with ordinary scientific research into the origin of life, it is most probable that his existence would have remained unruffled.

But, when the professor commenced to have his formulæ edited from beyond the veil, thus laying open the natural world to the control of an unknown factor, then life became exciting !

CHAPTER II

POETA FIT, NON NASCITUR

It was eleven o'clock—that is to say, the sun was two hours short of the meridian—when Bruce-Smith reached the small valley above Tregan Farm. Below him, towards the west, the ground sloped down to the River Camel; above him, towards the east, there stood Landen Tor and its sister hill, Lanhevit Beacon; far away in the distance there rose the bold outlines of Rough Tor and Brown Willy, the two highest points on the Cornish Moors.

The little valley, with its carpet of short moorland turf edged with gorse and heather, was very lovely; the small trout-stream, rushing downwards between granite boulders to meet the Camel, made a most desirable music; and the place seemed to be the exact spot he was looking for. So Bruce-Smith, choosing a bed of white clover as his couch, stuck his fishing-rod in the turf, sat down, and took out his writing-pad: his bull-terrier lay down beside him, placing its cropped and scarred head between his body and his elbow.

Bruce-Smith opened his writing-pad, and commenced to read the poetry he had written the night before.

His theme had been founded on the old Classical-Renaissance idea of the Music of the Spheres, and he had already described his midnight vigil, during which he had listened 'with ears a-strain' for the the sounds of the circling planets mingled together in one great harmony; but, as he had written, he had heard nothing, and felt nothing, and received no impression that suggested the vibrant tones of the moving bodies. As he read, the

natural conclusion of his last night's work came to him, and he wrote :

Now, worn with fruitless vigil,
I hie where sunbeams glisten,
And, close beside a moorland stream,
I listen—

Of course, since he was the modern, healthy type of poet, the idea of his midnight vigil was only imagination ; but to-day's scenario was there before him right enough—the trout-stream rushing down between granite boulders, and the sunshine and the heather, and the clover and the hum of bumble-bees.

He lit his pipe : this sort of poetry, written solely for £ s. d., required the inspiration of a pipe and strong tobacco. And he wrote :

I hear the droning of the bees
As they gather from the clover ;
I hear the rhythm of the stream
Singing its way-song over ;

I hear the sighing of the breeze
That passes o'er the heather,
And the bursting of the gorse-pods,
And the sounds of summer weather.

These two verses had come easily—as easy as shelling peas—and he knew that they were good.

Now for the finale : something slick, with an uplift !

All blend to make a harmony
That comes to hearing ears
More filled with mingled melody
Than dreamt of by the Seers,
More full of love and mystery
Than the Music of the Spheres.

He skimmed through the last verse, and sniffed ; then he read the whole poem carefully. His eyes left the manuscript and he looked across the Valley of the Camel, across the rolling country beyond, until he caught the gleam of the sea below a canopy of lowering clouds.

Were the sounds of the bees and the stream, of the rippling heather and bursting gorse-pods, really full of love and mystery? Of course they made a harmony that was soothing to the senses; but would they lead one to think of Divine Love or the mystery of Nature? No! Certainly not! His concluding sentiment was mere clap-trap! He closed his eyes, and made a mental comparison between his poem and Cicero's description of the music of the planets.

Like himself, Cicero had failed to hear the music of the spheres; but, unlike himself, Cicero had attributed his failure to the very volume of the sound: 'Just as the sight and the senses are overcome by the direct beams of the sun; so are the senses and the hearing stunned by the violent rotation of the heavenly bodies.' Cicero's was the true poetry, not his!

And yet this clap-trap was exactly what he wanted—or, rather, what his public wanted. They wanted the whisper of a natural religion without any tiresome moral law behind it; they wanted the hint of a scholarship that humbled itself before the overwhelming superiority of modern thought; in short, they wanted the concluding platitude. It was the last verse that gave a selling value to the poem; it was the last verse that would prompt any of his editors to snap up the copy with avidity; it was the last verse, added to other last verses, that would inspire his admirers to buy his volume of poems as soon as the book was published. He signed his *nom de plume* at the end, tore off the sheet, placed that and the sheet he had written on the previous evening in an envelope, and put the envelope in his pocket.

Six foot high, easy mannered, kind hearted, Bruce-Smith was a charming fellow. Sprung from an old Catholic family, he had been educated at Downside; then Trinity Hall, with a First in Law; then the Inner Temple, his moderate income eked out by journalism; lastly, just as he had been called to the Bar, the war had broken out, and, after six months in the Inns of Court O.T.C.,

he had received a commission in the Second Battalion of the Wessex Light Infantry, and the trenches had completed his knowledge of real life.

But, although he was a barrister by profession, a soldier by training and a journalist through necessity, Bruce-Smith was a poet by vocation; and, since he had discovered that there was now a strong demand for poems of a certain class, he had made up his mind to drop all else and to sink or swim by means of poetry.

Of course the writing of commercial poems, which must only contain such platitude and sentiment as the general public could appreciate, was drudgery; but everybody who earns his living has to face drudgery, and poetic hack-work was no worse than painting pot-boilers or writing sensational articles. At any rate this commercial poetry, begun in the trenches and carried on vigorously since demobilisation, was bringing him in a nice snug little income, whilst it left him free to devote his spare time to real poetry. He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, put it in his pocket, and lit a cigarette: then he took out a thin note-book and read through his last real poem.

This was a translation of Petrarch's sonnet on the death of Madonna Laura, and it was to form the concluding poem in a book of translations from the Renaissance love-songs. The other translations were already finished, and the book was to be published by Lobb and Lushington of New York and London.

Poor old Petrarch! He had loved as none other of those early Italian amorists had loved, and Bruce-Smith believed that his translation had caught and rendered the spirit of the most beautiful sonnet that had been written in the 'language of *si*.' The book was certain to attract notice, and he was ready to follow it up with a small volume of original poems published under his own name.

For some time there had been the growling of distant thunder; now there was a brilliant flash of lightning, a crash, and the clouds blotted out the sun. Bruce-Smith

sprang to his feet, and, leaving his rod where it was, made for the rocks of Landen Tor. His bull-terrier followed him and they crouched together under an overhanging slab of granite.

"Now at last," thought Bruce-Smith, as he pulled the terrier's closely cropped ears, "there's a chance of some fish!" For so far the trout had been waiting for the thunder-storm, and, as he had come up-stream, he had not succeeded in rising a single fish.

Heaven! How it rained! Flash followed flash until the thunder seemed merged into one endless crashing roll, and the rain came down as though the bottom had dropped out of the sky. But the storm passed as quickly as it had come up, leaving the sky washed clean and the moor running with a thousand tiny rills. Already the river was coming down coloured with bog-water, and every trout would be filling its little belly with what the flood was bringing.

Bruce-Smith recovered his rod, and examined the surface of the water carefully. Duns, Blue-uprights and such small flies were at present out of the question, so he looked out for something more solid. Presently he saw a small brown beetle (locally known as the fern-web) that had been washed off the bracken and carried into the stream; there was a break in the surface of the water, the yellow side of a turning trout appeared and vanished and the fern-web was gone; another fern-web came down stream and disappeared. So Bruce-Smith removed the blue-uprights which were on his cast, and replaced them with a couple of fern-webs.

The moorland trout do not run large, Bruce-Smith caught nothing heavier than six ounces, and the next three hours are of no special interest; but, during the three hours, he managed to fill his basket with some four dozen plump little trout.

At the end of three hours, as though moved by one impulse, the fish left off feeding; there was a muttering of distant thunder, and, with a glance at the horizon,

Bruce-Smith took his rod to pieces and set off down the valley at a good round pace.

Down the valley he hurried, the wind in his face and his dog close to his heels ; every moment the wind seemed to increase in strength and the clouds to race up quicker. He had ordered the car from the Camelford Hotel to meet him at Tregan Bridge about seven-fifty, and he had an idea that there was a cottage near the bridge where he could shelter until the car came ; but, when he reached the high-road, he found that the cottage was only a phantom of his imagination, that the car was not due for nearly three hours, and that the first scattered drops of rain were already coming down as big as buck-shot. He tried to find shelter underneath the bridge, only to realise that the water was up to the stone-work on either side ; he looked at the stunted oaks near the road and concluded that the drip from their branches would be even worse than the rain.

For a moment he thought of walking back to Camelford, but the prospect of a long tramp through the rain with seven or eight pounds of fish slung over his shoulder was not attractive ; and he had almost made up his mind to hurry back along the valley to the shelter of Landen Tor, when he noticed a wisp of smoke blowing through a group of elm-trees a few hundred yards down stream. He put up his coat collar, climbed the stone wall at the side of the road, and began to run across the meadow in the direction of the elms ; he climbed a second wall and found himself in a park, with a large granite Elizabethan house facing him. As he had crossed the meadow, the rain had begun to pour in earnest ; as he crossed the park, the lightning split the sky, the thunder crashed, and the rain came down like a sluice.

Through tall wrought-iron gates, across a grass courtyard, and Bruce-Smith found himself pulling at a door-bell. An old butler opened the door, and, explaining that his master would be engaged for the next half-hour, asked him to come in.

Bruce-Smith hesitated. He was soaked through and through, and would wet everything. Wasn't there a stable where he could shelter?

But the butler was firm. They were used to wet in these parts. The gentleman must come in and change. If he did not accept shelter and hospitality, the master would be hurt.

"There's my dog!" said Bruce-Smith, conscious that the water was running in a small rivulet from each of the bull-terrier's legs.

The master was uncommonly fond of dumb animals, and the dog would be made comfortable.

Still Bruce-Smith hesitated. "Couldn't you take a message to your master?" he asked.

"No, sir!" answered the man. "The master is engaged until five-thirty, and must not be interrupted. Whilst he is engaged, I am his *ipso facto*."

He followed the butler across a large hall paved with some dark polished stone, the terrier dripping behind him, up a wide oak staircase with shallow steps, and into a plainly furnished dressing-room.

The bull-terrier lay down on a mat before the window and began to clean himself. The butler went to a chest of drawers and produced some underclothing and a pair of very shabby trousers; he went to an old powdering-cupboard and reached down a coat that was not only shabby but also stained with chemicals; then he turned to Bruce-Smith.

CHAPTER III

THE PROFESSOR'S QUEST

"I REGRET, sir," said the man, as he laid the stained coat on a chair, "that I can offer you nothing which is more presentable in the form of coat and trousers. The master's underclothing, which is ordered by Miss Zoe, is above question; but otherwise he retains his Cambridge tailor, and the replenishing of his wardrobe awaits his next journey to the University." He stepped forward to take Bruce-Smith's soaking Norfolk-jacket.

"You see, sir," he continued, "when my master was Darwinian Professor of Synthetic Embryogeny at the University, it was easy to arrange that the tailor should await his convenience; but, since he has retired into private life, his wardrobe has undergone a *desensus Averno*." And he took the dripping knickerbockers.

"Especially during the past few months," he continued, "has his wardrobe suffered; for Miss Zoe having remained at Oxford during the Long Vacation, the master has been deprived of her guidance and assistance. However, thank God! we are expecting Miss Zoe's return this evening. Allow me to hand you the bath-towel, sir; you will find that rapid friction is most advantageous after your recent immersion!"

Bruce-Smith began to rub himself vigorously. He seemed to have come into a queer household, and was feeling half hypnotised by the servant's flow of language.

As he dried himself, he looked at the man's thin face marked with thick eyebrows and restless brown eyes. "Who were you with, before you came to the professor?" he asked.

"I was with Professor Sayce, the Professor of Ciceronian Rhetoric, sir!" he answered, handing Bruce-Smith a lamb's-wool vest.

The poet smiled to himself; he had accounted for the polished periods and facile rhetoric. "What's your present master's name?"

"Professor Aylmer, sir! Late Darwinian Professor of Synthetic Embryogeny."

"Aylmer? Aylmer?" muttered Bruce-Smith, trying to place the name which somehow or other seemed familiar to him.

"He published a Monograph on the Suggested Composition of the Primal Germ-Plasm," suggested the man; "a work that has been classed as epoch-making!"

Bruce-Smith could not say that he had come across the monograph, in fact he could not say that he had ever heard of it, and yet he seemed to know the name of Professor Aylmer.

The butler cleared his throat. Possibly the gentleman might have heard of his master in connection with the meetings of the British Association?

"That's it!" cried Bruce-Smith. For he now remembered how the professor had astonished the world with a statement that the chemist might hope to create life in his laboratory. "Your master read a paper that caused a lot of discussion!"

"Exactly, sir! That is one of the reasons why he retired into private life: the notoriety of the daily press is displeasing to a gentleman engaged in serious scientific research. These trousers are far too short, sir! Allow me to turn them up; it makes the length less noticeable. Now the coat, sir!"

Feeling more like a scarecrow than a man, Bruce-Smith followed the butler down the stairs and into the hall. The butler, carrying the wet clothes over his arm, opened a door and showed him into a drawing-room that made him gasp; for the furniture and pictures and statues were all of the Italian Renaissance, and they had that

indescribable air of being at home with each other which cannot be obtained in any chance collection.

"This house," explained the butler, "belonged to the Earls of Lyons—the ancient Lyonesse, sir! The present owner has let it to my master for his life-time, and afterwards, I understand, the fittings and furniture will be disposed of in America. Now, if you will excuse me, sir, I will take your clothes down to be dried. Tea will be ready in about five minutes."

But Bruce-Smith stopped him. He had better take the dog with him, and he might give the creel of trout to the cook; the professor would like a dish of fresh trout at dinner.

Left to himself, Bruce-Smith went slowly round the room. That tempora panel in a Florentine frame was surely a Botticelli! He stopped, and, squaring his shoulders, drew in a deep breath of enjoyment. What a wonderful conception of Venus!

Clad in a white gown powdered with forget-me-nots and seated on a lawn that was gay with flowers, the goddess was examining her reflection in a polished shield that two amoretti were holding up before her. There was a mingling of spirituality and piquancy in her face, a marvellous look of repose and introspective happiness; and every line of her body, every fold of her drapery, showed the touch of the great Florentine. The longer he looked, the more certain did he become that the painting was by Botticelli himself; and he was inclined to believe that this was a fellow panel to the one in the National Gallery, and that these two once had formed the panels of a bedstead designed for the Medici. He passed on to a bas-relief in marble and was wondering whether this could be by Desiderio da Settignano, when he was startled by the strident sound of an American alarm-clock. The door opened, and the butler informed him that tea was ready.

"What name shall I announce, sir?" enquired the man.

"Bruce-Smith!" he answered.

And, opening the door of a room behind the dining-room, the butler announced him.

This room, originally a morning-room, had been converted into a laboratory. The Elizabethan windows let in a flood of light, the oak floor had been replaced by marble, and the various tables, shelves and other fittings were calculated to turn the heart of the ordinary analyst green with envy. A fire burnt at the far end of the room; before it there were two easy chairs and a tea-table; and, as Bruce-Smith entered, a frail man of about fifty rose to welcome him.

At first sight the professor's slight body and stooping shoulders made him appear insignificant; but, afterwards, Bruce-Smith was only conscious of a pair of piercing eyes looking out of a face that was as white and smooth as parchment.

"I am sorry, Mr. Bruce-Smith," said the professor, "that I was not informed of your arrival sooner; but, as I am in the habit of devoting the hours between lunch and tea to research, my servants have strict injunctions that I am not to be disturbed." He moved one of the easy chairs half an inch forward, and, as Bruce-Smith sat down, he peered at him anxiously. "Tut! Tut! Tut!" he said. "My servant told me that he had provided you with a change; but I had no idea how disreputable my wardrobe had become! We've soaked you with rain, and dressed you in rags, and kept you waiting in a cold drawing-room. I apologise!"

"You can hardly be held responsible for the rain, sir," answered Bruce-Smith, smiling.

The professor's face brightened.

"And, if you only knew how grateful I am for a change and a cup of tea——"

"Ah!" murmured the professor hopefully.

"As a matter of fact, when I caught sight of the smoke from your chimneys, I was debating whether I had better shelter under Landen Tor until my car came for me at

seven-fifty, or whether I should tramp back to Camelford with a heavy basket of fish."

"Ah!" said the professor, rubbing his hands together, with genuine pleasure. "Now," said he, "will you have a cup of tea, or do you prefer some form of alcohol after your wetting?"

Like most modern men, Bruce-Smith chose tea, and they settled down to home-made bread and butter, several kinds of hot-cakes, and, last but not least, a large pile of the daintiest sandwiches that had ever tempted hungry sportsman. They chatted about the moors for a time, the professor pointing out how the passage between Landen Tor and Lanhevit Beacon might be connected with Arthurian legends; then the conversation turned on fishing.

"Fishing," remarked the professor, as he munched a piece of heavy-cake, "is the form of recreation best suited to the student; for, in trout fishing, there is not only exercise combined with a complete change of environment, but also a gentle stimulation of both the perceptive and reasoning faculties." He glanced anxiously at Bruce-Smith. "Do you consider that I am too old to commence this sport?"

Bruce-Smith looked at the professor. His body was thin and frail, but there was a life and fire in his eyes that promised intense vitality. "No!" he answered. "Certainly not!"

The professor beamed on him. "With the river running almost at my door," he said, "the exertion should not prove too strenuous." Again he looked anxiously at Bruce-Smith. "How does a sportsman regard the ethics of worm fishing?" he asked.

"Of course," answered the poet, "on the chalk-streams, where the fish lie just below the surface so that they can take the fly as it floats down, dry-fly fishing is the only kind of sport; but, in the quick moorland streams like Tregan River, I should say that clear-water worming would be quite all right."

The professor gave a sigh of relief. "May I enquire," he asked, "what is clear-water worming?"

Bruce-Smith explained the difference between ordinary worm-fishing and clear-water worming: in the former the fisherman went out when the water was thick and the fish had no chance; in the latter he fished with fine tackle in clear water, throwing his worm as though it were a fly and matching his wits against the sagacity of the fish.

The professor hesitated; he put his finger-tips together and smiled diffidently; he drew a breath and plunged. "I had not contemplated," he said, "the employment of live worms; for, outside laboratory experiments, I confess that live worms are repulsive to me."

"I'm afraid," answered Bruce-Smith, with a shake of his head, "you'll find that artificial worms are equally repulsive to the trout—at least in river fishing."

Again the professor hesitated. "I had contemplated," said he, "the making of synthetic worm-forms. My worms would have the exact chemical composition of the earthworm, without the repulsive animation—the worminess, so to speak, without the wriggle."

"And," suggested Bruce-Smith, "you could depend on the rush of the water to produce the wriggle! It sounds all right."

"Believe me," cried the professor, "should a synthetic worm become detached from the hook, the trout would obtain a higher form of nutriment than it would obtain from the actual earthworm; for it would assimilate all the chemical constituents of the earthworm without the useless addition of half-digested earth."

This care and forethought concerning the trout's digestive organs was too much for the poet, and, picking up pad and pencil from the writing table that was beside him, he began to draw rapidly. "If you were to rig up a tackle like this," he said, handing the sketch of a Pennell-tackle to the professor, "you'd hook your trout the moment he took the bait without giving him time to worry off your worm."

The professor took the pad and examined the diagram. "Yes!" he said. "I understand the idea. It is most ingenious!"

"And if you'll let me come over for a day—I shall be at Camelford for the next ten days—I'll rig up a tackle, and we'll try your synthetic worms together."

"That," cried the professor, "would be most kind of you! It—it would be most sportsmanlike!" And he refilled his guest's tea-cup in expression of his gratitude.

"You speak of synthetic worms," said Bruce-Smith, as he helped himself to another piece of tough-cake, "and I understand what you mean; but your butler used a term just now that puzzled me. What is the meaning of synthetic embryogeny, professor?"

"It is," answered Professor Aylmer, smiling, "the science of the formation and development of an embryo, chemically built up out of its correct elements."

Bruce-Smith laughed and shook his head.

"Then, shall we say, 'the science of the formation of life by means of chemistry'?"

The poet was conscious that he had heard something like this before. "Is it possible?" he asked.

"I believe so!"

"But, how?"

The professor's face became eloquent; for he had been practically alone for the last few months, and even the soul of a scientist craves expression.

"As you may know," he began, "all living matter contains four primary elements; carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. With these there is always associated phosphorus, and also a certain proportion of water—never less than seventy per cent. in the first manifestation of life. Is that clear?"

"Absolutely!" answered Bruce-Smith.

"With this combination there are also found certain inorganic salts—chloride of sodium, salts of calcium, magnesium, potassium and iron. And, if all these elements be combined into a colloid—that is to say, a

composition which, unlike a solution of crystals, will not pass through a porous membrane—we have what may be termed the slime of life: the basic material of living matter. Am I quite lucid?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then, when once the chemist has succeeded in building up this colloid compound, it will without doubt be found to exhibit the phenomena which we are in the habit of associating with the term 'life.'"

If Bruce-Smith could trust his memory, the professor had made much the same assertion before the British Association, but he had not been able to promise that the colloid would ever be compounded. "Is there any chance of the chemist being able to combine the ingredients?" he asked.

"I have done so," answered the professor, calmly.

"What?" cried Bruce-Smith.

In reply, Professor Aylmer got up, and went over to the laboratory shelves.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AND A LADY

THE professor reached down a glass vessel containing about a quart of something that looked like a thick, clear soup, and, carrying it back to the fire, handed it to Bruce-Smith. "This," said he, "is potential life; and, if you examine it, you will see that it has the first essential quality of living matter, that of combining evenly together into a colloid."

Bruce-Smith took the vessel very warily, and held it up to the light. As he tilted it, he could see that the colloid was distinctly slimy, and that it was of the same constituency from top to bottom. He handed back the vessel.

"Now," said the professor, "I will show you that my colloid has a second quality of life; that of assimilating nutriment!" And, reaching down a microscope slide, he detached a particle of the colloid and laid it on the centre of the glass. Then he placed the slide under a microscope and took down a glass measure containing a deep red broth. "This," he said, "is a suitable nutriment, stained red so that the eye may follow its action; and, if you will look through the microscope, you will see my colloid having its first meal."

Bruce-Smith settled himself at the microscope, and saw a tiny drop of the red nutriment deposited on the colloid. Then, as he watched, he could see that the red nutriment was gradually disappearing; as he watched he could see that the colloid was gradually growing in bulk and assuming a pinkish colour. At the end of a few

minutes, the colloid had grown at least thirty per cent. larger and an even pink in colour, whilst the nutriment had entirely disappeared.

"You see," said the professor, "that my child, 'Materia Aylmeri,' takes his food kindly. So far he has only one fault: he refuses to organise himself—he refuses to become a living entity!"

"But you gave me to understand," protested Bruce-Smith, "that, once your colloid was made, it was bound to exhibit the phenomena of life!"

The professor laughed gleefully. "So he does!" he chuckled. "He was only created yesterday, and already he is taking his nourishment. Besides, instead of the water rising to the top and the heavier ingredients settling at the bottom of the vessel, he persists in remaining an evenly distributed combination."

His voice became confidential, with a strange mixture of triumph over what had already been achieved, of hope as to what might be achieved in the future, combined with a touch of diffidence. "Materia Aylmeri," he said, "is composed of the same chemical constituents as Allen Aylmer, his parent; but, unfortunately, Materia Aylmeri needs some external and stimulating influence to organise him—he wants some natural master of the ceremonies that will arrange him, making like particles set to partners so to speak. I have tried sunshine, and I have tried passing a weak magnetic current through the colloid; but, so far, without avail."

As the professor had been speaking, Bruce-Smith had been racking his brains. "I seem to have heard something somewhere that might fit in," he remarked, vaguely.

"H'm! Yes!" murmured the professor. "I don't believe that electricity is the right solution of the problem; electricity suggests the magnetic field and geometrical patterns—electricity might answer if I wished to combine the inorganic salts into the form of crystals; but——"

"I've got it!" cried Bruce-Smith. "Have you tried music? It's an Eastern idea!"

"Gracious!" muttered the professor. Then his voice broke forth into a tuneless pæan: "Melody is but the ordered vibration of the atmosphere! Sprinkle fine sand on a thin metal disc, and the grains of sand will arrange themselves according to the vibration of the note that is sounded! Music may make my particles set to partners, and start the dance of life with a vengeance!" He seized the poet's hand and wrung it vigorously. "Thank you, sir!" he cried. "And, again, thank you!"

Suddenly the professor started. He muttered: "Gracious!" And, without a word of apology, he shuffled out of the room.

Bruce-Smith lit a cigarette and watched the smoke as it ascended. For a moment his conscience worried him, and he wondered if he had done wrong in suggesting the employment of music as an initial impulse to the creation of life; then he dismissed the idea as an absurd scruple that was contrary to common sense: for, if the laboratory creation of life was opposed to the divine purpose and plan of nature, no chemist on earth could hope to create life. At the most, the professor would only succeed in building up an imitation of a living creature that lacked the true life-impulse.

The door opened, and the butler came in to clear away the tea. "I ordered my car to meet me at Tregan Bridge about seven-fifty," said Bruce-Smith. "Have you anyone who could wait at the bridge and tell the driver to come on here?"

"There is a boy who comes to clean the boots and knives, sir," answered the man. "He does not usually leave until past seven."

Bruce-Smith felt in his pocket for a shilling, and, handing it to the butler, asked him to give it to the boy with the necessary instructions. Then the butler left the room, and Professor Aylmer returned, fussing and full of excuses.

His daughter was coming home that evening, and he

had neglected to send the carriage to meet her. Even now the carriage would be late for the train, and the girl would think that she had been forgotten. It worried him to think that his daughter would think that she had been forgotten. Mr. Wallace-Smith could see why he had given orders that he was not to be interrupted. If anything broke his ordinary routine, he always began to fiss and fudget—he meant to fudget and fiss—and that made him unbearable to himself and others. When once he became fudgety—he meant fidgety—the more he tried to compose himself, the worse he became.

Without a word, Bruce-Smith handed him his cigarette case, and the professor, after helping himself and lighting the cigarette, sank into an easy chair and commenced to pull himself together. At first he smoked like an engine under forced draught; but, gradually, the steam was shut off and he began to inhale.

"My daughter Zoe," said he, presently, "is my first-born and only child. Soon," he added, playfully, "if your suggested musical vibrations take effect, she may have a little playfellow in the person of my *Materia Aylmeri*."

"What form," asked Bruce-Smith, "do you expect your synthetic offspring to take?" For the creation of the *Materia Aylmeri* interested him immensely, whereas the problematical daughter of the frail old scientist did not interest him in the least.

"As you know," replied the professor, "all of us, from toadstool to man, are built up of cells. Of course I do not expect to build up an aggregate of cells in the form of a minute slug or jelly-fish, as the appearance of the colloid might suggest; I cannot even hope that my creation will take the likeness of any known composite body; in fact, the height of my ambition does not go beyond the formation of one single cell!" He leant forward impressively. "If I can succeed in building up a single living cell, I shall have started the evolution of life, and solved the most vital of all problems."

Bruce-Smith felt dashed. He had expected the attempted creation of, at least, a jelly-fish.

The professor became cautious. "Of course," he continued, guardedly, "one has no right to expect a sudden leap from the inorganic to the organic, from a mass of lifeless colloid to a single living cell! One must be patient! One must expect the change to be gradual, almost imperceptible! What are a million years in nature?"

Bruce-Smith shrugged his shoulders. "You mean," he suggested, "that you have discovered a colloid, which, in a few million years, may produce the looked-for cell?"

"No!" replied the professor firmly, as though arguing with himself. "Now that I have combined the elements of living matter into a mass of colloid slime, possessing properties of assimilation and therefore of growth, life must result!" He hesitated. "Only, to confess the truth, I had expected that the colloid would have commenced to transform itself into cells, before it began to assimilate nutriment!"

"Therefore," said Bruce-Smith, "you do not quite know what to expect."

"I have not the haziest glimmer of an idea!" replied the professor, with a chuckle.

"Suppose the influence of music forms a cell? What then?"

"Then," answered the professor, buoyantly, "the cell would assimilate nutriment from the surrounding colloid; it would grow; with the increase of bulk, it would divide into two distinct but adhering cells; these daughter-cells would, in their turn, assimilate nutriment and subdivide; and a living organism would result. We would have transformed the inorganic into the organic, the inanimate into the animate!"

The poet searched his memory, trying to recall what he had learnt of Aristotle and Aquinas. "You speak of a change from the inorganic to the organic, from the inanimate to the animate: where do you get the

animating principle—in other words, where do you get the soul ? ”

The professor looked puzzled. “The soul,” he answered, “if indeed there be a soul, is only found in the highest form of evolution—it is only found in man.”

“I’m afraid you misunderstand me,” said Bruce-Smith. “I do not mean the rational part of the soul ! I mean the vital principle that organises life, that directs and checks growth, determining the form which the living creature shall take.”

Professor Aylmer sniffed. “You seem,” he protested, “to be harking back to vitalism—a dead and buried theory which explains nothing. Heredity determines form ! ”

“But,” objected the poet, “there will be no heredity in your creation ! ”

The professor chuckled, for Bruce-Smith had him there. “We are beginning at the lowest rung of the ladder of life,” he explained, “at the first step in the scale of evolution, at the primary manifestation of life. It is that which makes our quest so intensely interesting.”

“But, suppose you succeed in creating a living cell, and it assimilates nourishment and grows and divides, and the daughter-cells grow and divide ; what is there to prevent your creation from growing into a huge mass of jelly-like cells that will fill the seas and rivers and valleys, and smother all existing life ? ”

“The same natural laws,” answered the professor, calmly, “which limit the growth of all existing things.” Then he saw the divergency of their different view-points, and smiled. “You seem to believe,” he said, “in a supernatural power which orders and organises all things. I believe in nothing that may not eventually be unravelled in the laboratory or detected through the microscope.”

“Yet,” replied Bruce-Smith, “suppose the old philosophy of Aristotle and Aquinas should happen to be right, and modern science wrong in its deductions : what is to prevent your new creation, created outside all the

natural laws of heredity and evolution, from growing into some abnormal monster?" And he looked at the slime of the *Materia Aylmeri* with a sense of intense loathing.

There was the sound of a motor in the distance. "That's my car," said Bruce-Smith; "I know it by the sound of the third cylinder: the compression's all wrong." He stood up and held out his hand. "I can't thank you enough for your hospitality, professor!"

But the professor would have none of it. Mr. Bruce-Smith's clothes would not be dry. He was anxious to continue the conversation, and he had set his heart on introducing his guest to Miss Aylmer. "Tell your driver to go round to the yard, and to come in for some supper presently," he insisted. "I shall not let you go until after dinner!" So, leaving the professor in his laboratory, Bruce-Smith went to give instructions to his chauffeur.

It was nearly dark in the hall, and the car had already pulled up at the front door. Before he knew what was happening, he heard the quick movement of light footsteps, a pair of arms was flung round his neck, and the warmest, softest, freshest lips were pressed against his. They thrilled him; and, without thinking, he instinctively kissed back.

There was an exclamation of horror and amazement from a girl's clear voice, a vigorous shove from strong young hands, and, as if by magic, the hall was filled.

The professor shuffled out from the laboratory carrying his reading-lamp; the butler appeared with the hall-lamp, and a pretty housemaid followed with a bedroom candle. The whole thing was like a scene in a French comedy.

Mercifully for him, the light approached from behind Bruce-Smith, at once illuminating the girl and hiding his embarrassment in the shadow. But, as the light shone on Zoe Aylmer, his embarrassment was transformed into wonder. Now he understood the thrill of the kiss!

CHAPTER V

ZOE AYLMER

I

As the lamp-light shone on Zoe Aylmer, Bruce-Smith blinked his eyes. Dainty chin, held tilted upward ; lips, red and fresh as crimson rose-leaves ; complexion, soft and flushed with adventure ; eyes, long and nearly purple in the lamp-light ; and hair that was the colour of ripe barley when the breeze ripples over it. Was this the girl he had pictured, the elder sister of Materia Aylmeri and of the same cellular tissues as the professor ?

He became conscious that the professor was introducing them and the girl was looking at him with a gleam of intense amusement.

" I think I've already introduced myself ! " she said.

Bruce-Smith gasped.

" But," said she, " I didn't quite catch your name ! "

" Stuart ! " broke in the professor, eagerly. " Mr. Stuart-Smith was caught in a thunder-storm and came here for shelter. We have had a most interesting conversation on the origin of life ; especially interesting to me, as Mr. Stuart-Smith is by profession a—er—a vitalist ! " he ended hopefully.

The girl's laughter was delightful. " What are you really ? " she asked.

By now Bruce-Smith had managed to pull himself together. " In the first place," he said, " my real name happens to be Bruce-Smith ; in the second place," and he paused, fairly gravelled at having to describe his profession.

"In the second place?" she prompted.

"I am a commercial poet!" he answered.

"Oh!" she cried, her eyes wide open; for the profession of commercial poet sounded even less probable than that of vitalist: unless— But she could not bring herself to believe that this was the young man who wrote the obituary verses for the *Bodmin Times*.

"I am sure," suggested the professor, "that, if Mr. Bruce-Smith's clothes are dry, he would like to resume them. Mine can scarcely be termed either well-fitting or respectable."

Zoe glanced at the three inches of wrist that showed below the professor's coat sleeves. "You poor thing!" she murmured; and, turning to the maid who was still waiting with the candle, asked if the clothes were yet dry.

"Now," she said, "if you'll come with me, I'll show you the spare-room. And," she added, smiling, "if you change quickly, you'll have time to explain yourself before dinner. I'm dying to know what a commercial poet does."

"Has my father called you anything besides Stuart?" she asked, as they went upstairs.

"He called me Wallace-Smith once!"

She gave a delighted little giggle. "Isn't he clever! Bruce—Wallace—Stuart! You see the mental connection?"

Of course he did!

When they had reached the spare-room, Zoe stopped. "As soon as you're ready," she said, "you'll find me in the drawing-room."

II

The moment the door was closed, Bruce-Smith's thoughts flew back to his first meeting with Zoe Aylmer and to her subsequent behaviour. What tact! What

savoir-faire ! What an utter absence of self-consciousness !

Any ordinary girl, who had been unfortunate enough to mistake a stranger for her father and throw her arms round his neck, would have been covered with confusion ; she would not only have been embarrassed herself, but she would also have managed to make the wretched man feel equally uncomfortable. But this girl had the sense to treat the contretemps like the accident it was, and an amusing accident at that ! " I think I've already introduced myself," he chuckled ; " but I didn't quite catch your name ! "

Could ready wit and a divine sense of humour have gone further ? She had not ignored the incident, for that would have been to inflict an unmerited snub ; she had not given him away, and made him feel a fool ; she had done exactly the right thing in exactly the right way, and he adored her for it.

What a dainty girl she was, as pretty as a pixie, and he was certain that her figure was as dainty as her face. He found himself longing to see her in the drawing-room without her travelling-coat, and he hurried up with his dressing.

She was as pretty as a pixie ; she was blessed with the gift of freshness and graciousness and tact ; but, underneath all this, there was something else that eluded him, an elusive something that delighted him, and he tried to worry out what it was.

He was certain that she was good, as good as gold and as wholesome as bread ; let that pass, for other girls were absolutely good and absolutely wholesome ! She had the most perfect ease and self-possession after their awkward meeting ; again, let that pass, for other girls had breeding ! And so his thoughts ran on as he hurried through his dressing ; but he could find no answer to his problem, and he went downstairs still trying to discover the secret of Zoe Aylmer's charm.

III

Bruce-Smith had not been long in changing ; but, smart as he had been, he found Zoe Aylmer, dressed in a filmy white gown, standing before the drawing-room fire with a large smoke-grey Persian cat in her arms.

"By Jove!" he said. "You have been quick!"

She moved a little to one side so that he could have a share of the fire. "If you'd been at Lady Margaret Hall," she answered, "you'd have cultivated an automatic quickness in dressing."

He came close to the fire, and therefore close to her. "It's much the same in the army," he suggested.

"Is it?" she queried. "With us, it's so many minutes saved in dressing, so many minutes more in bed!"

"I'm afraid, with us," he owned, "the proposition was: where's my something batman with my something shaving-water?"

She smiled, and, holding out the Persian towards him, acted the hostess. "May I introduce Abdul Aylmer, the dearly beloved cat of Professor and Zoe Aylmer?"

"What a beauty!" he murmured, touching it. The cat, as if in answer, gave a long drawn-out mew.

Zoe nodded her head. "That means he's accepted you," she said; "he's very exclusive, and he never mews unless he's absolutely certain about a person. Look out!" she cried; for a lean, scarred head was peeping in at the door, and the cat had swelled to twice his usual size.

A word from his master, and the dog vanished.

"Is he yours?" asked Zoe.

"My own! And the tragedy of his life is, that, in spite of his villainous appearance, he's a secret weakness for cats."

"Has he?" she sniffed. "Most bull-terriers have!"

"When I say weakness," he explained, "I mean that he has a respectful affection for cats, when they'll let him."

"Are you quite certain?"

"Yes!" he answered.

"Then call him in, and we'll introduce him to Abdul!"

He hesitated. "You'll get scratched!" he objected.

"If you'll be responsible for your dog," she answered laughing, "I'll be responsible for Abdul. I know him from A to Z!"

So he whistled softly, and the dog came in.

"Gently, old chap!" muttered Bruce-Smith; and the bull-terrier came forward quietly, eyeing the cat and smiling expansively.

Then Zoe began: "He's a most well-behaved dog, Abdul. In spite of his villainous appearance he's a respectful affection for cats, if they'll only let him, and he'll treat you with every mark of consideration." And so on. All the time she was speaking, she was stroking the Persian and bringing him closer and closer to the dog; and, each time she brought him a stage nearer, the cat would make rude noises in the back of his throat and his fur would stand up; then the noises would die down and the fur subside. At last, when she had brought him down to the level of the terrier and the resulting demonstration had died down, the cat put out his paw cautiously, touched the dog's cheek, and drew back his paw like lightning. As nothing alarming happened, he repeated the experiment, and, opening his mouth, mewed.

"He's all right now!" said Zoe, and popped him down.

Abdul swelled out to twice his normal size, his back arched and his language Elizabethan; but the dog stood stock still, smiling and wagging his tail. Abdul shrank to normal; but the dog still smiled and wagged. Finally, taking his courage in both paws, Abdul stepped forward and rubbed one side against the bull-terrier's leg: nothing happened. He turned round and rubbed the other side. Then, at last, the dog took the initiative, and, with a sniff at Abdul, began to lick him.

The Persian suffered the licking for some sixty seconds,

gave vent to a long-drawn mew, and hurried out of the room on some business of his own.

"What Abdul lacks in intuition," remarked Zoe, "he atones for by the ultimate correctness of his perception." And, sitting down before the fire, she invited the bull-terrier to come and make friends.

"What's his name?" she asked.

"Smith!" he answered. "You see," he explained, "we had to take the name of Smith under the will of Thomas Bruce-Smith of Glencoe; and, as no one ever calls us by the double-barrel, I thought it was a shame to waste the name."

"So," said she, laughing, "if I call you 'Mr. Bruce,' I mean you; if I call you 'Mr. Bruce-Smith,' I mean you and your dog."

"Exactly!" he answered.

"But," she suggested, putting her arm round the terrier's neck, "if, as you say, the property goes with the name, oughtn't Smith to inherit the property?"

He sighed moodily. "I've long thought so," he answered; "it's what one might call a moral obligation. At present my father's alive; but, when he dies, I shall be dependent on Smith for my pocket-money."

"It will place you in a very false position!"

"Horribly!" he sighed.

Zoe smiled. This man had already appealed to her, and the way in which he could talk nonsense seriously proved that he was a kindred spirit. "Isn't he a very big bull-terrier?" she asked.

"He's what the fancy calls, 'a good big 'un': head perfect, neck perfect, body perfect, legs perfect. His only fault is the patch on his side."

"Oh! What a darling!" she cried, as the dog looked up in her face. "But his poor, scarred head——!" And she began to stroke it.

"Those scars," replied Bruce-Smith, "are marks of distinction. He never fights for the love of the thing; but, when he sees anyone in trouble, he's bound to take

a hand : for instance that scar over his eye was the result of rescuing a pug from two Airedales ; that big mark on his shoulder came from an attempt to save a Savoyard from his tame dancing bear. He's a regular Don Quixote!"

" You poor darling ! " she murmured. And Smith licked the point of her chin with the tip of his pink tongue.

Again, as Bruce-Smith watched her, he fell to musing on the source of Zoe's charm. It wasn't her beauty, it wasn't her gracefulness, it wasn't her voice—though this was charming enough to wheedle the birds off the trees—it was something far more subtle and compelling.

She looked up. " Now, Mr. Bruce," said she, " you promised to tell me about your profession. What is a commercial poet ? "

" Well," he began, " what I call a commercial poet—— " But at that moment the alarm-clock in the hall went off, and Bruce-Smith paused.

" Oh, that's nothing ! " laughed Zoe. " It's only our plan for breaking my father's train of thought at meal-time ; if we didn't do something like that we'd never get him into dinner. You must tell me about your commercial poetry afterwards."

The door opened ; the professor came in ; and, almost immediately, dinner was announced.

IV

Like the drawing-room, the dining-room was furnished with early Italian furniture ; the chairs were Venetian, the pictures Florentine, and against the inside wall there stood a quaint musical-instrument shaped like an organ on which St. Cecelia might have played. Bruce-Smith glanced at the pictures : those two portraits were certainly by Bronzino ; the Holy Family might be a Filippino Lippi ; and there were several paintings which suggested the mysterious artist whom Mr. Berenson has named " Ami di Sandro."

"Do you know anything about organs?" asked Zoe, as Bruce-Smith seated himself.

"No!" he answered. "Practically nothing!"

"That's rather a famous organ opposite you," said she. "It was designed by a fifteenth-century Florentine organist for Il Magnifico."

"I know!" said Bruce-Smith, trying to recall the circle of Lorenzo de Medici. "Antonio—Antonio——" Then he stuck.

"Antonio Squarcialupi," she prompted.

"That's it!" he cried; "and the pipes that ought to be made of wood are made of cardboard, aren't they?"

"They call them cardboard," answered Zoe; "only it's so strong and tough that it's already lasted over four centuries. We'll try it after dinner, if you like."

"There is a certain mellow quality about its notes," remarked the professor, "—a certain softness of vibration in the tones of the cardboard—that might be of service to us in our experiment. I could well imagine the particles of the colloid arranging and rearranging themselves to a chord on the Italian organ."

"What experiment?" asked Zoe.

"An experiment," answered the Professor, with a twinkle in his eye, "that I commenced last December, and completed yesterday: the combination of the constituents of living matter into the form of a colloid."

"What?" cried Zoe, her face full of reproach. "And you never told me!"

The professor's feet shuffled; his manner became deprecatory. "Your marked aversion to Darwin, your antagonism to the orthodox theory of life, scarcely encouraged me," he answered.

"But," she protested, "suppose I do believe that Darwin's theory is a conjectural hypothesis founded on insufficient data, suppose I do believe that modern research, from Fabre on the scarab to Professor Digby on the vermiform appendix, goes to prove Darwin in the

wrong, would that prevent me from helping you to put your belief and my disbelief to a practical test ? ”

The professor shifted his ground. “ So far,” he urged, “ I have only done the spade-work ; it remains for you and myself to discover whether life will result from the combination which I have formed.”

In a second the girl was smiling, ready to meet her father more than half way. “ How far have you got ? ” she asked.

And Professor Aylmer, as he ate his soup and helped himself to fish, began to unfold the steps and progress he was making in his evolution of life out of matter.

Once she stopped him, to point out that he was eating trout, his favourite fish.

“ Er—um—so they are ! ” he answered. “ But, as I was saying, the apparent stability of this colloid—— ” and he was off again. “ There only remains,” he concluded, “ to organise these component constituents of the cell ; and, as Mr. Wallace has suggested, this may be effected by means of the orderly vibrations of musical harmony.”

Zoe had been sitting with her chin tilted forward and her eyes half-closed ; now she shook her head and smiled. “ Haven't you ignored one possible factor ? ” she asked.

“ What's that ? ” enquired the professor, sharp as a terrier.

“ The entelechy ! ”

“ The entelechy ? ” he cried. “ Tut ! Tut ! Tut ! ” he fussed. “ The entelechy is Driesch's phantom ! I've no patience with these absurd modern speculations ! ”

“ Hasn't it gone beyond mere speculation ? ” she asked gently. “ Isn't the hypothesis of an energetic organic life, without some co-operating principle that directs and co-ordinates its energy, now held to be a self-contradiction ? ”

The professor snorted.

There was still the same gentleness in Zoe's manner, the same sweetness in her voice ; but, all the same, she

was speaking with absolute conviction. "Believe me, dad," she said, "even such conservatives as Professor Inston now allude to, 'That guiding principle of life, which we are compelled to assume!'"

Bruce-Smith had been listening to the argument with absorbed interest: this girl, who could talk amusing nonsense with her whole heart, seemed to place herself on an intellectual equality with the professor, and the professor to acknowledge the equality. "I don't know anything about the subject," he remarked; "but, since I'm responsible for suggesting the experiment with musical vibrations, you might tell me what you're driving at. What does entelechy mean?"

She thought a moment. "You see," she said, "as we biologists are all moving forward along parallel lines, there are bound to be some divergencies in our views. Shall I tell you exactly what Driesch means by entelechy, or shall I give you my own definition?"

Bruce-Smith bit his lip: not only was this slim, dainty personage a biologist who could hold her own with the professor, but she had also calmly bracketed her name with the leaders of her own school. "Please, your own definition!" he answered.

Her sweet red lips parted, and her eyes grew dreamy. "I see, in every creature, a mass of cells, full of energy, absorbing nutriment, and multiplying by subdivision. I see heredity in these cells, an heredity that makes them take the same character and characteristics as the parent-cell. But, as the organism grows, I see these cells (each one with the same endowment of heredity) fashioning themselves into the form of a body—each cell acting differently, and yet all acting together with one set purpose—each cell ready to take new and appropriate action in an emergency, and yet all acting in co-operation. There is obviously some guiding and directing agency operating in this living body—some agency that does not act in inorganic matter—and this, for want of a better term, I call the entelechy."

The professor snorted—quietly, politely, but with all his heart.

"It seems to me," said Bruce-Smith, "that what you call the 'entelechy' is what Catholics call the 'soul'!"

She looked at him, brows knitted and nose wrinkled in thought. "I always understood," said she, "that the soul was the spiritual part of man which survives after death."

"That is the highest type of soul," he answered. "In its simplest type, the soul is similar to your entelechy—it organises and directs the growth of the cells, so bestowing form—all living beings have it, even plants. In its more complex type, the soul adds the sense of feeling to the power of bestowing form, as in animals. In its highest type, the soul adds the faculty of reason to the faculty of the senses and the power of bestowing form, as in man."

But the professor could stand this no longer. "We started with science," he snapped; "we drifted into philosophy; and now we are drifting into metaphysics!"

The girl laughed joyously. "Did we worry you, dad?" she said. "You shan't be worried by philosophical speculation!"

The professor smiled, for he was obviously devoted to his daughter. "I don't care to go beyond plain science," he retorted.

"Only," she suggested shrewdly, "science speculates too, doesn't it, dear?"

The professor's smile broadened. He laughed outright. And, as he promptly turned the conversation into a very interesting discussion on the production of synthetic tragacanth, there was peace.

After dinner they had their coffee and cigarettes in the drawing-room, and, at ten, Bruce-Smith said he must go.

"When shall we see you again?" asked Zoe.

In answer he turned to the professor. "How soon will you have the synthetic worms ready, sir?"

"In about a week," answered the professor thoughtfully.

But Zoe shook her head: a week was far too long. "How would you like to come over to-morrow if it's fine," she asked, "and take me up Brown Willy? I'm dying for a breath of the moor."

"And," chimed in the professor, "bring over your luggage! You must stop with us until we see how Materia Aylmeri is going to develop. I shall be grateful for your assistance with the music."

Bruce-Smith hesitated. To give a casual hint about the employment of music had been one thing, to lend active assistance in the production of life was another. "If I may," he said, "I'd like to come over for a few days awfully. But, about the experiment,"—and again he hesitated—"I'm not quite certain if I shall be able to help you—whether I ought to help—whether a Catholic ought to help in a thing like this." He looked at the professor anxiously. "You quite understand, sir? It's just a personal scruple about my personal right to take part."

"That," said Zoe softly, her eyes gleaming, "is what I like in Catholics: you don't beat about the bush!"

He looked at her. "Will it do if I'm over by eleven?" he asked.

"We'll take our lunch with us," she answered, and held out her hand.

There was a tiny lingering in the hand-shake, and a kindly look in her eyes, that sent him away very happy. After hers, although the grip was hearty enough, the professor's hand felt like the hand of a mummy.

"Then, eleven to-morrow!" he said, looking back.

"And remember to bring Mr. Smith!" she answered.

"Who is Mr. Smith?" asked Professor Aylmer.

v

When he reached the hotel, Bruce-Smith went over to the visitor's book and ran his finger down the last column of arrivals. He had noticed the name of Fr. Sydney Arbuthnot, S.J., before he went out that morning, and, as there was no date of departure against the entry, he concluded that the Jesuit was still in the hotel. So he went into the smoking-room and wrote him a letter, asking for an interview on the following morning. Then he had one drink, and went off to bed.

As he got into bed, he placed some papers and a writing-pad on a table beside his bed. First he took the verses he had written in the Tregan Valley, and read them through carefully. He read them through a second time with a feeling of profound dissatisfaction, folded them up and returned them to their envelope. Then he took his writing-pad, and wrote.

Like Petrarch's Laura, she of whom he wrote had locks of fine-spun aureole and a smile that turned all the world into heaven. The thoughts came of themselves, and he wrote as he had never written before. Presently the poem reached its natural conclusion, and as it had flowed, so it stopped. Zoe's subtle charm for him had revealed itself. He loved her.

CHAPTER VI

EXPERT ADVICE

As a rule, Catholic laymen are intensely conservative in their religious opinions ; for the Catholic layman, conscious that he has a vast body of highly-trained specialists to deal with current religious problems, works when he works, plays when he plays, prays when he prays, and does not worry his head about the authenticity of the Epistle of Zenobius or the psychological revelations of Jeru the Son of Og. Just as the Anglican layman seeks the advice of a specialist on a question of law or health, so does the Catholic layman seek the advice of a specialist on a question of moral or religious duty.

When Bruce-Smith came down to breakfast, he found a cleric already seated at a small table laid for two. There was no mistaking the quiet, easy air of breeding that marks the Jesuit, and, going forward, Bruce-Smith introduced himself.

"If you don't mind sharing my table," said the Jesuit, "we can talk as we have breakfast. I must leave for Bristol in about an hour." It was typical of the man that he did not mention what he had been doing or how he came to be staying at Camelford, but went straight to the point.

"I gathered from your letter," he said, "that you wish to consult me about the advisability of taking part in some scientific experiment. May I ask for details?"

So, beginning with Professor Aylmer's discovery of the *Materia Aylmeri*, Bruce-Smith gave the outline of the proposed experiment, his own suggestion about the

employment of musical vibrations, and Zoe's remarks on the absence of an entelechy.

Fr. Arbuthnot listened quietly, and without interruption; then he poured himself out a cup of coffee. "I wish you to understand," he said, "that I'm not one of the scientific Jesuits. If you want an opinion on either the physical or psychological aspect of the case I can put you in touch with my friend, Fr. Morat of Stonyhurst, who will reduce your question to six points of decimals."

"Heaven forbid!" murmured Bruce-Smith.

The Jesuit smiled. "Roughly speaking," he said, "I am entirely in agreement with Miss Aylmer's contention: the professor can scarcely hope to create a synthetic entelechy!"

"Isn't Miss Aylmer's idea of the entelechy," asked Bruce-Smith, "much the same as our idea of the vegetative soul?"

"It is more than that," replied Fr. Arbuthnot; "it is the idea itself! Aristotle says: 'The soul is the first entelechy (or actuality) of a natural body capable of life.' What this new movement in biology means is, that modern scientific opinion is swinging back to the Catholic conception of organic life. But," he added, "you require my opinion as to whether you ought to take part in the experiment, not my views on its ultimate success." And, cracking his egg, he began to remove the shell.

"Now," he continued, "let us state your case: Professor Aylmer has a theory that, if he combines certain chemicals amidst suitable environments, life will ensue. It is not as though he were planning to create man out of his chemical slime; he merely wishes to see whether a low form of life, a microscopic organism, will result from the chemical combination.

"Our question is: Does religion forbid, or discourage, such an experiment; and, consequently, are you as a Catholic unable to take part?"

"You have it in a nut-shell!" replied Bruce-Smith.

"A thousand million years is, in God's sight, as a moment. Is not that so?"

"Yes," answered Bruce-Smith.

"Therefore, when God said: 'Let the waters bring forth . . . life;' there is nothing to show whether the creeping thing, the whale and the bird, each sprang into individual existence in a second of our time; or whether they evolved in the course of a thousand million years. Is this correct?"

"I suppose so," answered Bruce-Smith.

"Again, since we have no right to deny the possibility of the second alternative, there is nothing to show whether the lowest forms of life sprang into existence simultaneously; or whether, as suitable chemical combinations occurred in different places, the lowest forms of life kept on originating during the whole of the thousand million years. Moreover, there is nothing to show that the action of God's creative word has ceased now. Do you see where this leads us?"

"Yes!" murmured Bruce-Smith.

"There is nothing to prevent a Catholic from believing in evolution; there is nothing to prevent him from believing that the creative words are still in force; there is nothing to prevent him from believing that, if Professor Aylmer should make a suitable watery slime, the waters may bring forth life."

"But—" began Bruce-Smith, and paused.

The Jesuit laughed. "You and I may not believe in evolution," he said, "—in fact, we may believe it to be contrary to sound psychology—but we have no right to condemn what the Church has not condemned, nor to close a question which the Church has left open."

"Yes," owned Bruce-Smith, but he owned it very grudgingly.

"It follows naturally, that, if we are permitted to believe in evolution, we are also permitted to assemble fitting chemical elements and see whether life will result."

"But, Father Arbuthnot," cried the poet, "supposing the professor should succeed?"

Again the priest laughed. "If he should chance to succeed, we would have to acknowledge that evolution is part of God's plan of creation, and that He created life when He made the law of evolution."

They went on with their breakfast in silence.

Presently Bruce-Smith spoke. "Then you think that it's perfectly right for me to give the professor all the help I can?" he asked.

"Certainly!" answered the Jesuit. "If revelation be true and the Church's teaching true, science must confirm the truth. To stand apart from scientific investigation, implies a lurking doubt of the truth of the Catholic religion."

"Yes!" said the poet. "There's logic in that!"

They had finished breakfast, and were smoking.

"Father," said Bruce-Smith, "I want to ask you a question that may affect me personally. What do you think of mixed marriages?"

The Jesuit smiled. "By the form of your question," he said, "I assume that you speak of a Catholic man marrying a Protestant girl?"

"Yes," answered Bruce-Smith.

"You know the conditions?"

"That the man must try to set an example to his wife, and that the children must be brought up Catholics."

Fr. Arbuthnot paused a moment. "May I ask how you would feel, if you were a woman, when you saw your children being brought up in another religion?"

"H'm!" muttered the poet. He had not thought of that.

Again the Jesuit smiled, this time very kindly. "All the same," he said, "if the lady, like so many Protestant girls in our day, has no particular liking for her own religion and a kindly feeling towards yours, I see no reason why the marriage should not turn out happily."

He stood up, and threw his cigarette end into the

fireplace. "It seems to me," he said, "that a Catholic man ought to explain the conditions before he asks the girl to marry him. It would be quite easy to turn the conversation into the subject of mixed marriages, and speak of the conditions. To win a girl's heart first, and then to spring the conditions on her afterwards, is not honourable conduct. Now I must go and pack my bag. If I can be of any use to you at any time, a letter addressed to me at Farm Street will always find me."

They shook hands warmly ; and, as Fr. Arbuthnot was going out of the door, he turned. "If you should have any physical or psychological problems springing out of this experiment," he said, "I should advise you to write to Fr. Morat—M-o-r-a-t—at Stonyhurst : he's the soundest authority I know on the subject. Of course you may mention my name."

Bruce-Smith looked at his watch, poured out another cup of coffee, and lit his pipe. "Now," thought he, as he rang the bell, "for Miss Aylmer and Brown Willy !"

CHAPTER VII

UP THE TREGAN VALLEY

I

TREGUNDEN, the old seat of the Earls of Lyons and the present home of Professor Aylmer, lies about six miles from Camelford and eight from Bodmin ; and, if the antiquarian should search through the whole of Devonshire and Cornwall, he would find no more perfect example of Elizabethan architecture.

Built in the form of a square, with a central grass quadrangle crossed by a wide slate path, the western side of the building contains the dining-room, the drawing-room, the professor's laboratory and the principal bedrooms ; the northern side is devoted to a banqueting-hall with a magnificent reception-room overhead ; the kitchens and offices occupy the southern side ; and a low porter's lodge, helped out by a wrought-iron grille and the entrance gates, makes up the fourth or eastern side. The northern wing, with the banqueting-hall and reception-room, is now practically shut up ; but, since Professor Aylmer happens to be well endowed with this world's goods, both house and garden are kept in a condition that leaves nothing to be desired.

Zoe Aylmer stepped out on to the terrace that ran along the western front of the house, and drew a long, deep breath of contentment. The broad gravel terrace, its balustrade relieved by statues of nymphs and satyrs, was in itself a thing of joy ; the even sweep of the lawns,

broken on one side by a dome-topped belvedere that was half temple, half summer-house, carried the eye down to the Tregunden Woods ; and, through a gap or vista in the woods, she could see the Camel flowing between its rocky banks. It was quite the most lovely view in Cornwall, and, after the stale, dead atmosphere of Oxford, the soft breeze fresh from the Atlantic was like a breath of heaven.

She went along the terrace, swinging a basket in one hand and a pair of gardening scissors in the other, down a shallow flight of slate steps, and into the rose-garden. The rose-garden was situated on the northern side of the house, immediately under the windows of the banqueting-hall. This sounds quite wrong ; but the winter winds served to season the wood of the standard rose-trees, and the Marechal Niel, the Gloire Lyonnaise and the Celine Forrestier blossomed as freely as the foxgloves. In the time of Drake, this had been a bowling-green ; Renaissance ideals had adorned it with marble fountains ; and the evolution of time had turned it into a rose-garden ; but the old bowling-turf still remained, kept fresh and green by the spray from the fountains and ever strewn, to the despair of the gardeners and the delight of Zoe, with falling rose-leaves.

She crossed the rose-garden and leant over the balustrade at the far side. Here the ground fell down some sheer hundred feet into the Tregan Valley ; climbing roses had been planted on the side of the precipice, and the river brawled below amongst a thicket of Scarlet Ramblers.

Then she turned, fed the gold-fish in the fountains from a tin of ants' eggs, and began to snip off roses into her basket. Whatever her thoughts might have been, her face was certainly happy, and, as she filled her basket, she sang softly to herself.

II

Presently Zoe heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel, and looked up.

"Halloa!" she cried. "I wasn't expecting you for another half hour!" And, dropping her gardening scissors into the rose-basket, she held out her hand.

Bruce-Smith took it. "I couldn't keep away!" he answered.

"Where's Smith?" she asked.

"I left him guarding my luggage," he answered, holding her hand. "He'd pressed Abdul into his service and they were escorting Gibbs upstairs. Abdul went first, Gibbs followed with my suit-case, and Smith brought up the rear." He still held her hand, and she let him.

"Well," said she, "I'll get my hat, leave Gibbs to do the flowers, and we'll start. It'll get us up the valley before the heat comes on."

He stepped back and examined her. She was wearing a light homespun dress, with workmanlike boots and gaiters showing below the short skirt. "I like your get-up," he said.

She examined him. "Those leather ankle-straps of yours are better for walking than gaiters."

"Why don't you get some?"

She laughed and shrugged her shoulders. "Because I'm afraid of adders," she said.

"They wouldn't strike higher than an anklet."

"I know. But I'm scared to death of them all the same. Now let's make a start." And she led the way into the house.

Zoe got her hat; Bruce-Smith called the bull-terrier; they filled their pockets with sandwiches and peach-apples; and, as Bruce-Smith refused to have his whisky-flask filled, they armed themselves with a drinking-cup apiece.

For some time Bruce-Smith had been conscious of the

soft chords of an organ ; now, as they went out of the front door, Zoe led him so that he could look into the dining-room window. The professor was seated at Squarcialupi's organ ; Gibbs was blowing ; and before the open window, so that it could catch the sunshine, stood the vessel of Materia Aylmeri. As they watched, Gibbs took the professor's place, holding down the chord he had been playing and continuing to blow by aid of a foot pedal, whilst the professor came over to examine the colloid through a Coddington lens. He looked up, saw them, smiled, and went on with his examination as though they were non-existent.

"Isn't he a darling?" said Zoe, as they moved on. "He reminds me of Soliano's fiddler who used to play dances for the gnats."

They passed out through the lodge gates and cut across the park towards Tregan Bridge.

"I suppose," said Bruce-Smith, "that there's absolutely no chance of your father evolving anything—something abnormal?"

Zoe laughed. "When he first began to fumble with the creation of life," she owned, "I used to be scared to death."

"Well," he answered, "I'm scared now ; and that's the truth !"

"Why? What's there in it that can scare you? The poor old darling hopes—only hopes—that, with incredible patience and incredible skill, he may some day evolve a sort of one-cell polliwog that can just be seen through the microscope."

But Bruce-Smith was still suspicious. "You know," he said, "that there are traditions of Eastern sages playing about like your father, and getting abnormal monsters."

"*'Omne vivum e vivo,'*" she quoted. "How can you get life, except from life? All individual life starts with a cell drawn from a parent ; all organic life arises through the multiplication of that cell ; all experiments tend to

prove that such a thing as the spontaneous generation of life in unliving matter is an impossibility. Besides," she added, "his experiment supplies no organising principle to arrange the formation of even a single cell—as I said, he has omitted the entelechy."

"But, suppose some demon, some afrit, some earth-spirit, should seize on this synthetic material and fashion it into some sort of a body? It's quite in accordance with Eastern tradition."

Zoe laughed with delight, for his voice was really anxious. "What a blessed imagination!" she cried. "Only you've got to prove your afrit first!"

They reached the bridge and turned up the Tregan Valley. A trout rose in the pool above the bridge.

"Dad told me about your promise to take him out worming," said Zoe. "Do you think his worms will really be all right?"

"Rather!" answered Bruce-Smith. "He's going to do the thing properly; he's going to start with making synthetic worm-skins, and then he's going to stuff them with synthetic worminess. They ought to be as good, or better than the live worms. Are you coming out with us?"

She shook her head. She wasn't. He must devote his whole attention to the professor. "Perhaps I'll begin next spring," she said, "if you'll teach me."

"Then you expect me to be here in the spring?" he asked.

She looked him in the eyes, and laughed. "Yes," she answered.

"Take care!" he said. "I shall write it down as an invitation."

"Soliano says," she answered, "that, when the fiddler played, the gnats cried: 'If you keep on playing, we shall have to dance!'"

"But they were dancing!"

"And you are here!"

"That doesn't mean that I shall be here in the spring."

"As surely as the gnats will dance to-morrow!"

"But why?" he asked, mystified. "How do you know?"

"Soliano says: 'Fiddler or no fiddler, all created things must obey the laws of nature!' Invitation or no invitation, you'll be here in the spring."

And, question her as he would, he could get no more out of her.

Then the moor caught them, and held them. Bruce-Smith found a solitary sprig of white heather and pinned it in Zoe's gown. And Zoe found some sun-dew moss, which they fed with flies. And Smith discovered an adder, which Bruce-Smith killed whilst Zoe shuddered. And they got 'properly stagged' in Landen Marsh; and they found a small swamp that was literally moving with a multitude of tiny yellow frogs. At last they came to the upper waters of the De Lank River, just below Brown Willy, and sat down to cool themselves.

"What do you think of the moor?" asked Zoe.

Bruce-Smith replied that it was heavenly.

"That exactly describes it," said she; "to run and not feel weary; to laugh and not feel sad. Heaven must be one glorious action, without any reaction. Just fancy being able to think without ever getting fogged, to move without ever getting tired, and to say one's prayers without ever getting wandering thoughts. By the way, I've fallen in love with your idea of the soul."

He looked at the girl. She seemed to have come into his life like some fresh element that had doubled his happiness and brought him perfect contentment.

"First," said she, "my soul is like the soul of a flower, guiding me through the cycle of life. So far it has guided my growth into the form of Zoe Aylmer; next it will guide me into marriage and the reproduction of my species; then, when I have finished my life's work, it will let me fade away and die. That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes!" he murmured, watching her.

He saw a touch of wickedness creep into her face.

"On the other hand," she continued, "my soul is unlike a flower's, in so much as it is conscious of feelings, of appetites, of desires. The soul of a flower moves the organism to absorb nutriment unconsciously; but the soul of Zoe Aylmer, perceiving through the appetite of hunger that the body of that poor girl requires nourishment, moves her to satisfy the craving. Is that right?" she asked.

"Absolutely!" he answered, laughing.

"And, lastly, unlike the soul of Smith who lies so patiently beside her, the soul of Zoe Aylmer is conscious, through the faculty of memory, that certain packages which are bestowed about her person contain nutriment; and it can also reason that she will obtain the greatest benefit from the nutriment when, adding the pleasure of the eyes to the pleasure of the palate, she is seated comfortably on the summit of yonder Tor. *Allons!*"

III

"Now," said Zoe, as she munched an apple, "I want to hear about the work of a commercial poet."

They were seated comfortably on the top of Brown Willy. A rock sheltered them from the sun; ephemera danced all round them in the sunshine; a huge open country, with the bold outline of Rough Tor in the foreground, rolled onwards and onwards before them until it was lost in the shimmer of the Atlantic. With the wild De Lank Valley at their feet, with Rough Tor threatening and challenging beyond, with moor and heather and rocks all round them, they were as isolated as Adam and Eve in Paradise.

"A commercial poet," answered Bruce-Smith, lighting a cigarette, "is a poet who makes his living by pandering to the sentimental egoism of the English public."

"That sounds clever," sniffed Zoe; "but I don't

pretend to understand you." She did not like his tone, and she did not like his mock humility.

"From the commercial poet's standpoint," he explained, "the general public may be divided into those who buy poetry and those who don't. The people who buy poetry live in garden cities; they work in stuffy offices, and they live out their suburban lives by the aid of handbooks: they regulate their domestic concerns through 'Guide to Poultry, Price one Shilling,' 'How to Bring up Children, Price One Shilling,' and so on; they tend their souls with 'Teachings of Theosophy, Price One Shilling,' 'The Truth of Christian Science, Price One Shilling'; they cultivate their minds through 'The Secrets of Æsthetics, Price One Shilling,' and 'The Art of Poetry, Price One Shilling.' Their shilling guides are the by-products of secondary schoolmasters, and they themselves are encyclopædian in their self-satisfied ignorance."

"Aren't you rather hard on them?" she asked, suspiciously.

"No!" he answered. "If you can conceive such profound subjects as Buddhism, Theism, Philosophy and Art, boiled down into shilling handbooks by second-rate pedagogues and discussed at local debating societies, you will realise the nature of their pabulum, and they are filled to the teeth with this windy trash."

"Then, how do you write poetry for such a public?"

He took out his poem on the music of nature, and, remarking on Cicero's ideal of the Music of the Spheres, handed it to her.

"You see," he observed, "I have ended up with a pæan on the cultivated perception of the inhabitant of a modern garden city. His hearing ears can detect a nobler strain in the nature-music of Hampstead Heath or Golder's Green than was ever dreamt of by Cicero or Politian or Il Magnifico!"

"Are you very poor?" she asked.

"No!" he answered. "Thanks to my commercial poetry, I can worry on quite comfortably."

"Would you be able to live without the money from the poetry?"

"With economy," he answered.

She took the poem in her supple fingers, and, without asking a word of permission, tore off the two verses of real poetry. Then she tore the introduction and the up-lift into a hundred shreds, and buried them deeply in the turf. "I'm not going to have my friend prostitute himself!" she said.

He watched her, in his heart delighted at what she had done. "How am I going to earn a livelihood?" he asked, smiling.

"Write real poetry, or starve!" she answered.

Hethrewawaytheendofhiscigarette,andlitafreshone.

"Have you ever written anything except this commercial filth?" she asked presently.

He told her of his volume of translations from the Italian love-songs.

"I suppose you haven't any of the translations with you?" she asked.

He took out the lament on the death of Laura. "This," he said, "is the last translation in the volume; I hope to send it off to the publishers to-morrow."

She took the verses, her face alive with excitement, and read:

PETRARCH, IN MORTE DI MADONNA LAURA. XXIV.

Those eyes whereof I sang my sweet-tuned melody,
 Those arms, those hands, those feet, that face which caught
 And isolated me from all I sought
 And set me strange and lone among my fellow men,
 Those crisply curling locks of fine-spun aureole,
 And that entrancing smile which from those eyes
 Turned all that compassed me to paradise,
 Are now but lifeless dust—their radiance dull.
 Yet still I live! whereof I make my sighing,
 Lonely, alone without love's quickening fire,
 My storm-tossed craft upon cold ocean lying.
 Lo! Here I cease the song of my desire;
 For fountains of my music are a-dying,
 And naught but griefs my lingering chords inspire,

She looked at him, her face flushed and her eyes shining, and held out her hand. "I'm proud of my friend!" she said, softly.

"It's Petrarch's, not mine!" he answered.

Her eyes laughed at him, and he knew that she understood the poetry which underlay the translation.

"It ends the volume?" she asked.

"Yes!" he answered.

"Of course!" she murmured. "If love is dead, then poetry is dead too. You could write no more."

CHAPTER VIII

BROWN WILLY

WITH one last look at the sonnet, Zoe folded up the paper. "Have you only done translations?" she asked. "Haven't you written any real poetry of your own?"

"Yes!" he answered; and he told her that, if his Italian translations should turn out a success, he hoped to follow them up with a small volume of his own poems.

"But if," said she, "your garden-city readers are the only people who buy poetry, and if your real poems are above their heads, where will you get your public?"

"There's a pukka literary public outside the suburbs," he answered; "it's not an easy public to catch, but if it likes my translations—and it will probably read them for the sake of the originals—it may go on to my other stuff. That's my objective!"

"Oh!" she murmured; for this sounded like the real thing, and quite unlike the ordinary ambition of the minor poet. "Have you got anything with you that you could show me?"

He fenced, trying his best to put her off; but she was relentless. She'd be so tactful if he'd only show her one of his poems. She'd make no remarks, ask no questions, just read it and return it to him. "If I'm really your friend," she urged, "I don't see how you can refuse!" And the sunshine, which had crept round the corner of the granite boulder, made her hair look like spun gold.

Bruce-Smith hesitated. It was very hard to refuse this girl when she put forward the plea of friendship;

it was very hard to withhold his last night's poem, which he knew was the best he had ever written. He ran through the subject in his mind, and saw that it might be the poem of any man to any girl whom he loved. "You'll promise to ask no questions?" he said.

"Yes!" she answered.

And, with some misgiving, he brought out the manuscript he had written over-night, and handed it to her.

He watched her anxiously as she unfolded the paper; he watched her feverishly as she began to read the verses. Presently he saw the hot blood flushing into her cheeks, and her lips parting. She finished the poem, and looked up.

"Petrarch's lament," she said softly, "is a sweet, dead thing—as sweet as lavender—but yours——"

"Yes?" he said, breathing quickly.

"It just blazes with life!" she cried.

Then, the string of her tongue having been loosed, a torrent of questions poured forth. How did he get such thoughts? How had he got such a wonderful idea of love? Was the girl a living person?"

He tried to stop her. He tried to remind her of her promise that she would make no remarks and ask no questions. But she simply laughed at him.

"Do you expect to write verses like that," she cried, "and not to be questioned? Of course she's a living woman! Who is she?"

He tried to temporise, pointing out that, as long as art was art, a poet's lady must be the creation of his imagination.

"Nonsense!" she cried. "You might just as well tell me that the love in your poem is a fancy of your imagination! You've met her—and you love her—and—and—is she as sweet as you've made her?"

Bruce-Smith mopped his forehead. If he lied, and let her believe that this girl of his poem was some real other woman, he might be throwing up a terrible barrier between himself and Zoe; besides, when it came to the point, he couldn't lie to her.

"If she's real, I shouldn't give her away," he grunted.

But he had reckoned without Zoe. Had he seen her lately? Did he know her well? Was she as dear as he had made her? And so on, and so on, until the cumulation of her questioning became an agonising torture.

"It's you!" he muttered thickly.

She gave a little exclamation that was not all astonishment. If he had only looked at her, he would have seen that her eyes were shining softly; but his eyes were fixed on his boots.

"There!" he said. "That's finished it!"

"What's finished what?" she asked, giving him a chance. "Isn't it a compliment to weave such beautiful fancies round me?"

"I can't lie to you!" he groaned. "They're not fancies! They're the cold, gospel truth!"

Her voice came very gently. "If you've said so much, isn't it fair to me—fair to yourself—to say more?"

Then out it came: he'd worshipped her from the moment they'd met; he'd never loved any girl before; he loved her with all his being, and life without her would be unbearable! As a proposal, it was lame, commonplace, hackneyed; but it rang true. Then he looked down miserably, feeling that this brutal declaration to a girl whom he had not known eighteen hours was nothing less than an insult.

He heard her as though she were miles away. "Look up!" she said softly.

He looked up, and sprang to his feet. But, when he had stood up, the world seemed to be going round him. He groped for her hand; and she, with her heart in her eyes, held it out to him.

"If I hadn't felt what you feel," she said softly, "would I have made you speak?"

"Zoe!" he cried, and, falling on his knees, put his arm round her. They looked into each other's eyes; their lips met; and Zoe buried her face in his neck.

"I'm—I'm feeling so shy," she whispered. "I—I never thought it would be like this."

He picked her up, for he was six foot and as strong as a horse and she was slim, and, with her face still hidden in his neck, he took her on his knee.

He petted her and soothed her, and presently he felt her face moving from its hiding-place. "Do you want to kiss me?" she whispered.

He hugged her tight; and Zoe, her face all a-flame and her eyes fast shut, lifted up her lips towards his.

"They feel just like rose-leaves," he murmured.

Her lips curved and her eyes opened. "I was beginning to think," she whispered, "that you weren't really a poet."

"Poet?" he cried, and he began to praise her beauty and sweetness and loveliness in a way that left no earthly doubt of his poetry.

"When did you begin to love me?" he asked.

"At once, of course!" she answered. "When we were in the hall."

He drew a long breath. "How wonderful!" he murmured.

"Why wonderful? When did you begin to love me?" Her shyness seemed to have gone, and they seemed to be fitting into each other's lives, so to speak, like a sword fits into its scabbard.

"I suppose at once," he answered. "Whilst I was changing, I began wondering what made you quite different from other women; then, when I came to write that poem, I found out that it was because I loved you. It's very wonderful!"

"It isn't!" said she, saucily. "It's a scientific fact! It springs from purely natural causes!"

"How?" he asked, smiling.

"Soliano says," she answered:

"As the river flows to the sea
And the tide draws to the shore,
So must I come to my beloved!"

This was the third time she had quoted Soliano, and Bruce-Smith was beginning to wonder. "Who is Soliano?" he asked.

Zoe bit her lip. "I suppose I've got to confess, only you must keep it a secret. When I want to quote an authority, and I can't think of one, I put it down to 'Soliano.' There ain't no such person!"

Bruce-Smith grinned. "You've taken me in every time," he owned; "I've been picturing him as some old Italian." He thought a moment. "Why did you say that love at first sight was a purely scientific phenomenon?"

"It is!" she answered, flushing. "That's the only real sort of love!"

"Why? How?"

Her flush had become a blush. "I could have told you an hour ago," she answered, "without thinking twice about it; but I can't tell you now—at least, not yet." Her eyes opened wide and she gave a delighted little laugh. "Why, I don't even know your Christian name!" she protested.

"Jack," he told her.

"I'm glad! It's a nice name!" Her face became horror-struck. "Just think," she said, "it might have been Alf or Bert!—Jack, is it true you've never been in love before?"

"Yes! and what's more—though I wouldn't tell anyone else—you're the first girl I've kissed, except cousins."

She looked at him, amazed. "How lovely!" she cried. "I never expected that! I thought men always did!"

"Not this one!" he answered.

Again the questions. But why? How had he escaped?

He didn't know. The game had never seemed worth the candle. He supposed he hadn't particularly wanted to.

"And do you want to now?" she challenged.

His answer left her flushed and breathless.

"Of course it's different with a girl," she said; "but I'm like that tobacconist's assistant."

"Another quotation from 'Soliano'?" he suggested.

"No, she's real Kipling. Don't you remember the clerk who was the reincarnation of a viking, and he fell in love with a tobacconist's assistant with fluffy hair and a slack mouth, and she told him that she'd never been kissed before?"

His arms gripped her. "I'm glad we're both like that," he sighed.

"Yes!" said she, with a pretty air of certainty. "We're made for each other; and, because we're so absolutely made for each other, no one else attracts us." She wriggled free from his clasp, and threw her arms round his neck. "I'm the happiest girl in the world!" she whispered.

Presently she gave a sigh. "I suppose we ought to be going back," she said.

"Not yet!" he grumbled.

"Yes," she said. "And, perhaps, if you're very, very good, I'll take you back by Landen Tor, and we can rest a bit there."

"Ah!" he answered. "As 'Soliano' says: 'But that's another story!'" And, with one last kiss, he made ready to start as eagerly as a boy who has been promised sweets.

"Now," said Zoe, taking a tiny mirror from her pocket, "go away for five minutes! I've got to repair damages."

He went; and as he went, he chanted to himself the words of old 'Soliano's' song:

"As the river flows to the sea
And the tide draws to the shore,
So have I come to my beloved!"

They seemed to him soul-filling words, and, since he had a good voice and had set the words to a sort of Gregorian recitative, they sounded quite fine.

Smith had remained behind, lying lazily in the shade of the rock ; and Zoe, putting her arms round him, laid her cheek against his scarred head. " We're both his goods and chattels now," she murmured. " And, Smith my child, isn't he a darling ? "

With a yawn, the bull-terrier turned his head and licked her soft cheek.

CHAPTER IX

THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

WHILST crossing the moor to Brown Willy, Zoe had found her own way as a moor-maiden should; but now, on their return journey, Bruce-Smith helped her across bogs and over rocks just as though she were a piece of Chelsea china that might be smashed at any moment. Even on the level turf his hand sought hers like steel seeks magnet, and, in every way, they showed themselves as nice and foolish a pair of lovers as could be found in a day's pilgrimage. And they talked.

"Then you knew I loved you," he said.

"Of course!" she answered.

"When did you guess it?"

"From the very beginning."

"How? I'll swear I never showed it!"

"When I found out that I'd fallen in love with you, I knew that you must love me back."

"Why had I to love you back? Explain!"

But that brought her to the scientific reason for love at first sight, and, as she was not yet ready to talk to him about it, she switched off violently.

"Look at all the little yellow goblins!" she cried.

"The marsh is full of them!"

"Goblins?" he protested. "This morning you told me they were marsh frogs." Reality was proving so interesting that Bruce-Smith had no particular use for fancy.

"It's only when they see us coming that they look like frogs; the moment we're gone, they'll change back

into hobgoblins all dressed in cloth of gold. There!" she cried. "I'll vow that one of them winked at me."

"Gosh!" he answered, falling into her humour. "I nearly stepped on one. What would happen if I stepped on a goblin?"

"He'd be awfully angry, and he'd change you into an adder. The moor's full of people that they've changed into adders. Do be careful, Jack!"

They crossed the marsh of enchantment and came to the upper waters of the Tregan River.

"So all created things must obey the laws of nature," he quoted; "and I'm to be here to teach you fishing next spring."

"Rather!" she answered. "I shall love to learn."

"Won't you mind leaving your work at Oxford?" he asked.

"Of course not!" she answered. "Marriage is a girl's natural career."

"Then, if you knew that marriage was your natural career and that you'd have to give up your work and settle down to a humdrum married life, why did you dig so deep into biology?"

"In order that I might learn from biology that marriage is a woman's natural vocation," she answered incautiously.

"That sounds all right," he said; "but I wish you'd explain what you mean!"

Again she was faced with the scientific reason of love and marriage, and again she looked round desperately.

"Did you ever see such a perfect fairy-ring?" she cried.

"No," he answered, eyeing her sideways; "nor do I see how biology can teach that marriage is a woman's natural vocation."

But Zoe was not the person to be caught by a direct attack. "You wouldn't!" she sniffed. "You wouldn't see how the whole chain of reasoning is built up on the development of the common toad-stool!" And, with a

maze of words, she carried him right through fungology, and right away from the unwelcome subject of marriage, until she had landed him safely in a discussion on local superstitions.

"Seriously, Jack," she said, "you must be very careful how you talk about fairies in these parts; all the people round here believe in them. Only last spring, the farmer's daughter at Tregan was pixie-led. She went into the meadow near the farm to bring home the cows, and a thin golden mist came on and the pixies got hold of her and she was hours and hours before she could get out of the field."

Thus, for the second time, the conversation was turned away from the dangerous topic, only to veer back as they were going up Landen Tor.

They were talking about telling the professor of their engagement, and Bruce-Smith had been lamenting the smallness of his income.

Zoe had laughed at him, pointing out that he would come into the Bruce-Smith property some day, and that in the meantime money was no object. "You see," she said, "not only has dad a considerable fortune of his own, but he makes piles and piles out of his royalties."

"What royalties?" asked Bruce-Smith. He had no idea that scientific authorship was a lucrative job.

"Royalties from inventions," explained Zoe. "He's frightfully clever at inventing new chemical combinations, synthetic substitutes, and so on; and he's got an agent who manages his business affairs for him and prevents him from being robbed. He'll be delighted to allow us what we want: he's the soul of generosity and he's nothing else to do with his money."

"All the same," said Bruce-Smith, "it'll be rather a shock for him. I met him for the first time yesterday, and I'm asking for his daughter to-day."

Zoe frowned. "If he'd been more up to date," she said, "he'd have seen it all right; but he's terribly conservative. Yes, Jack; I'm afraid it'll upset him!"

"How would one of the modern school have taken it?" he asked.

"He'd have seen that love at first sight was both natural and reasonable." Then she bit her lip in annoyance with herself. "We can't stop more than a minute on the tor," she said; "we ought to be getting home."

They had come to the last steep ascent, and, when he had helped Zoe up the rocks, Bruce-Smith turned to her. "Sweetheart," he asked, "I don't want to force your hand; but why do you keep on changing the conversation whenever it turns on love?"

She looked at him ruefully. "Jack," she said, "I shouldn't have minded explaining to you about love at first sight yesterday; I don't think I should mind talking about it to anyone else to-day; but it's an awfully difficult subject for a girl to explain to her lover."

"If you'd only given me a hint!"

"I think I gave you a pretty strong hint, when we were on Brown Willy!"

He was full of penitence.

"But," said she, "I'm not going to be silly about it! At present our conversation runs like this: you ask me, 'What is love?' and I answer, 'Do you see those frogs?' I'm not going to be a prude; so, if you sit down on the grass, I'll sit on a boulder and tell you. There!"

He urged her to leave the subject alone, for he would not have hurt her modesty for worlds; but her pretty chin stuck out and she was as firm as a rock.

"If I shouldn't mind speaking to anyone else about it," said she, arguing more to herself than to him, "why should I mind speaking about it to you? It's absurd! Besides, I want you to know why I urged you on to propose, and why we were made for each other, and why we ought to be the happiest couple on earth."

For a minute Zoe racked her brain to find an opening that would both carry her argument and save her blushes. Then the word 'toad-stools' flashed into her mind, and she drew a long breath,

"Do you know," she asked, "that it is practically impossible to differentiate between the cell-tissue of a man and the cell-tissue of a toadstool?"

"No!" he answered, astonished.

"Well, it is! And that makes my argument quite easy."

She fixed her eyes on the distance, and her voice took on the clear-cut tone of the lecture-room. "Every living body," she began, "is made out of living matter in the form of cells. These living cells have an inherent energy which they show in two ways, vitality and growth. If a rose-branch is cut off from the parent stem and placed in water, it will continue to live and grow and put forth fresh blossoms for many days. If you break off a lizard's tail, the tail-cells will continue to live for hours, whilst the body-cells will multiply until they have formed a new tail.

"Now," she continued, "the most extraordinary thing about the living cell is the way in which it multiplies itself; for it divides into two halves, and each of these two halves absorbs nutriment and grows into the exact image of the original cell: thus, in place of the original cell, there are now two daughter-cells that are practically identical in character, heredity and energy with the original cell. In the same way, the daughter-cells divide and reproduce the original, until the whole organism is built up of cells which have the same character and heredity that distinguished the original cell."

As the girl approached the familiar subject, her shyness began to melt away; as she warmed up to her arguments, all her embarrassment vanished like snow in summer.

It was the modern theory that she elaborated, describing how the first cell of a toad-stool, a cell loaded with character and heredity, divided and multiplied until the whole fungus was built up of cells having the same inheritance. Then, as she explained, the toad-stool would part with a cell that was loaded with its character

and heredity and a new fungus would commence, and a new toad-stool would be built up out of multiplying cells which had the same character and heredity as the parent-cell. "And so," said she, "living matter continues to live from generation to generation, and the living matter which formed the first woman continues to live in me."

"But," objected Bruce-Smith, "where does the soul come in?"

"Oh!" she answered, "you're forgetting to distinguish between living matter and individual life. The body is formed of living matter, of energetic cells that increase and multiply so as to build up the body and repair waste; but it is an unseen power that guides the multiplication of these cells and organises them into the form of a body; it is the entelechy or soul that guides the body through its cycle of growth, of maturity and reproduction, of failure and death; then, as the Bible says: 'The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' From your point of view, Jack, modern science is very orthodox!"

"I see," he said, "it's just the living matter, the body-stuff, that you've been talking about."

"Yes! The living matter with its character and heredity: don't forget the heredity, Jack! That brings us to the second factor;" and she went on to describe how, if living matter was inherited only from the mother, the different families would tend to develop abnormal family characteristics of height or shortness or strength or delicacy; and how nature has decreed that new life should spring from the fusion of both father and mother. "For," said she, "the inherited strength from one parent counteracts the inherited weakness from the other, and the inherited character from one parent blends with the inherited character from the other, and this tends to keep the race both healthy and normal."

At last Bruce-Smith was beginning to see light. "That," he remarked, with considerable pride, "is where the law of natural selection comes in!"

Her laugh was both spontaneous and unembarrassed. "What we're coming to," she answered, "is scarcely what Darwin meant by natural selection. You may call it selective sexual attraction, or you may even call it love. Dame Nature sees the physical character of a girl and the physical character of a man, and she picks out a couple who have opposite characteristics, and she makes them attract each other so that they may fall in love and marry and have nice normal children. They don't know why they've fallen in love, poor dears; but Nature knows right enough!"

Bruce-Smith's face clouded. Somehow or other this material aspect of love offended him. "Don't you think——" he began.

But Zoe interrupted him airily. "A man who's only a little out of the normal in one direction falls in love with a girl who's only a little out of the normal in the other direction; but a man who's quite abnormal in one direction falls in love with a girl who's quite abnormal in the other direction. Haven't you noticed this attraction between complimentary opposites, Jack?"

When he came to think of it, he had noticed the phenomenon; and he began to instance cases where a tall friend of his had fallen madly in love with a tiny fairy of a woman, where a fair man had been crazy over a dark girl and where a stolid man had been simply mazed about a girl with nerves like fiddle-strings.

"And," said she, "this is only the outward and visible side of the phenomenon, working to keep the race visibly normal; it's the invisible side of the phenomenon that's the most important."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

She looked at him whimsically. "I'll wager my crown that you don't catch things easily, Jack—I mean infectious things like scarlet-fever."

"No!" he answered. "I believe I've had measles, but that's about all."

"There you are!" she cried. "I catch every single

thing that's going ; but, if I marry a man who is immune—that's you—our children ought to be reasonably immune."

"Gracious!" he muttered. So there was something in Zoe's theory after all!

"We know very little about the human body," she explained; "there are some things that we're just beginning to find out—the relation between the ductless glands and health, for instance—and there are heaps of things that are beyond us. If you and I, Jack, knew all the secrets of the human body, we'd probably find that there were a thousand points in which we counteract and balance each other, and that, consequently, there were a thousand reasons why we should marry."

Again Bruce-Smith felt that this reduction of marriage to a physical proposition was robbing love of its beauty. "Don't you think," he suggested, "that there may be some attraction between mind and mind, between soul and soul?"

But the keen biologist jumped on him. "I've no patience," she cried, "with people who talk about the spiritual nature of love, of twin-souls and spiritual affinities and all that rubbish. Real love is a law of nature that is given for the preservation of a normal race!" She calmed down, and one pretty finger was held up in admonition. "Nature," she explained, "examined Zoe Aylmer; and Nature found that she was too slim for her energy, too slight for her brain-power, a little too highly strung for her peace of mind, and far too prone to catch infection; and Nature said, 'In order that her children may be freed from their mother's defects, I must make her fall in love with her complimentary opposite.' So, when dear, solid, infection-proof Jack Bruce-Smith came along, Zoe fell head over ears in love with him. The mutual attraction of complimentary opposites is a purely physical phenomenon!"

To find this sweet, dainty girl casting sentiment into

the gutter and replacing it with scientific reasoning founded on material facts, was something of a shock, and Bruce-Smith became conscious of a disappointment.

The same wave-thought must have come to Zoe, for she slipped off the granite boulder and sat down on the grass beside him. "Jack," she said, "what I've been saying may sound material, but it isn't! Can't you realise the responsibility that comes to a girl when she realises that she is the custodian of life, and that it is her duty to pass it on, healthy and vigorous, to countless generations?"

He put his arm round her, and drew her close to him.

"Do you mean to tell me, you wonderful girl," he asked, "that you thought of all this the moment we met?"

"Of course," she temporised, "I'd reduced it all to a formula ages ago, and I suspected that complimentary opposites would feel the attraction very quickly."

"Did you think of it at once?" he insisted.

Her mouth was struggling to retain its firmness, her eyes were twinkling. "Do you want the truth?" she whispered.

"Yes!" he answered.

"Then—No!"

"What did you think of?"

"That—it was after the lights had come—that—I was glad it was you who'd kissed me—and that I'd have hated it if it hadn't been you."

Both arms went round her, and Bruce-Smith heaved a great sigh of relief. "When did you think of all this scientific—er—formula?" he asked.

"When I was dressing for dinner—and I found how you'd attracted me—and when—afterwards—I saw how you looked at me—I knew I was right."

There was silence for some minutes, then Zoe spoke. "Jack," she said softly, "I'm not sure that I'm right about the spiritual affinities."

"I'm quite sure you're wrong, sweetheart!" he answered,

"I—I don't know much about it," she owned.

They sat there in the sunshine, each happy with the other, and each deep in thought.

"If the entelechy controls the living matter," he suggested, groping after an idea, "our souls form our bodies——" and he stuck.

In a flash she had grasped his idea. "Your theory's right!" she cried. "If our bodies are complimentary opposites, then our souls which formed them must be complimentary opposites, too! We were made for each other, Jack—body and soul!"

As the soundness of her reasoning came home to him, he whistled softly to himself. "Dear twin-soul!" he murmured.

"You're wrong!" she laughed. "I'm your complimentary opposite: that's much nicer!" And she nestled up closely to him.

CHAPTER X

BY-PRODUCTS OF SCIENCE

I

WHILST Zoe was on the top of Landen Tor, explaining the biology of love, Professor Aylmer was sitting in his laboratory, his face drawn and worried and his thin hands clasping and unclasping nervously; for the professor had at last realised that, although he might know all that could be known about the chemical composition of the living cell, he knew nothing at all about the material out of which the primal cell had formed itself. He got up, took a cigar from the box on the mantel-piece and struck a match.

As the match flared, he felt as though he had been illuminated; as the cigar smoke curled up, he seemed to see himself in the guise of a Martian philosopher who had reached this planet: he had landed on the earth, he had come across a cottage, he had analysed the composition of the cottage and said to himself, 'If I gather together the right proportion of burnt clay and slaked lime and sand, these materials will certainly assemble themselves in the form of a cottage.' He was like this Martian scientist; for, just as the Martian knew the components of the cottage, so he knew the chemical constituents of a cell; just as the Martian had omitted the exact factor that would impel the materials into the form of a cottage, so had he slurred over the exact factor that would impel his chemical constituents into the form of a cell.

Music, indeed! He had plunged into music as a

possible organising factor, blindfold ! And he pictured himself the Martian scientist producing a violin and fiddling to his rubbish-heap in the hope that it would be moved to arrange itself in the form of a cottage.

Like Tyndall, he believed that matter was endowed with the potentiality of life ; like Tyndall, he believed that the latent energy of matter had been transformed into the actual energy of life ; and, like Tyndall, he had no idea how this had been effected.

Of course, once given the primal living cell, and the whole plan of evolution was simple ; for the cell itself was an energy-transformer, transforming the latent energy of the nutriment which it absorbed into the active energy of life, and the cell would divide and multiply, and, passing through the lowest forms of life, through the slug *amœba*, through the jelly-fish, and on through the ape, would eventually become the initial cell of the human race. But what was the original factor that had first transformed the energy of inanimate matter into the living energy of the primal cell ? That was the puzzle !

Poor professor ! Until now, he had blindly assumed that the primal energy-transformer had been some outside factor—possibly electricity, possibly light or heat or pressure, or (lastly) possibly the vibrations of sound—and he was prepared to work patiently through every possible combination of outside forces that might have existed when the world was young. But, during lunch, the idea had come into his mind that the original energy-transformer might have been a chemical that had been combined with the other chemicals of the primal colloid.

To put it clearly : until now he had regarded the original colloid as a pinch of gunpowder that had been set alight by some outsider's match ; now he was inclined to believe that the gunpowder had contained some unknown chemical that had produced a spontaneous combustion and an explosion into life.

He thought of all his labours in the analysis of living matter ; from mushroom to sun-dew moss, from sea

anemone to human being, he knew the exact constituents of every living cell, and the numerous scars on his own person would prove that he had not spared himself. He thought of the wonderful calculations that had reduced to a practical certainty the nature of a primal slime that was fitted to produce the beginning of life. He thought of the incredible skill that had combined fitting constituents into an even and stable colloid. Indeed, in so much as it had remained stable and absorbed nutriment, his *Materia Aylmeri* had already justified its scientific existence. But— And he sighed sadly.

For, although his *Materia Aylmeri* had remained stable and absorbed nutriment, it had refused to organise itself into the true phenomenon of life; and, as the minutes passed on, he was becoming more and more certain that his colloid lacked some chemical that should give it the initial impulse into life.

Suppose, for instance, that the primal colloid required a trace of radium to give it the initial impulse; then, the radium having transformed the latent energy of matter into the actual energy of life, a cell would be formed; and the living cell, having discharged the radium which had given it life, would become a normal cell ready to start on the course of life and evolution, and all traces of the original energy-transformer would be lost. This seemed so natural, so probable, that the professor was disposed to accept it as a working hypothesis.

But what did this hypothesis involve? It involved the combination of an unknown chemical with the *Materia Aylmeri*, and this unknown chemical might be anything, from an excess of phosphorus to some radioactive salt, or it might be a combination of chemicals. The prospect of a blind groping in the dark, with an endless array of chemical combinations to choose from and an interminable search into the possible proportion of each chemical, left him limp and helpless.

And so he had sat, limp and helpless, with his face drawn and worried, and his thin hands clasping and

unclasping themselves, until the afternoon was well advanced. Then, suddenly, an inspiration came into his mind in the shape of a formula :

What has happened beyond the Veil of Time is still known beyond the Veil of Time. When information is required about the Unknown, information must be sought from the Unknown.

The professor took a sheet of paper, placed it on the table before him, took up a pencil, and, striving to reduce his thoughts to a state of negation, waited patiently for some unseen power to control and actuate his hand.

Professor Aylmer, modern scientist and materialist, had left the paths of ordinary scientific research, and was depending on some intelligence beyond the veil to disclose the unknown factor in the creation of life.

II

The professor waited patiently, pencil in hand, for some ten minutes, but nothing happened ; then, as he heard footsteps approaching the laboratory door, he put down the pencil with a sigh. There was a knock at the door, and Bruce-Smith entered.

" I've come to tell you, sir," said Bruce-Smith, " that Miss Aylmer's just gone up to change and that tea'll be ready in about a quarter of an hour."

The professor brought down his mind to common affairs, and, murmuring his thanks for the information, enquired if they had enjoyed their tramp across the moor.

" It was ripping ! " answered Bruce-Smith. " And," said he, with a plunge, " I want to tell you that I've fallen very deeply in love with your daughter, and we want your consent to our engagement."

" Eh ? " murmured the professor ; for, as both Bruce-Smith and Zoe had foreseen, the news was a shock.

"I want your consent to our engagement, sir," repeated Bruce-Smith, and he went on to speak of his personal character, suggesting that the professor should make enquiries from the Master of Trinity Hall and from the Colonel of his late battalion. "My only regret," he ended, "is that my present income is small, and I can count on no substantial increase until my father dies and I succeed to the property."

Professor Aylmer looked at him keenly. "From what I have seen of you, Mr. Bruce-Smith," he replied, "I judge that you would make an admirable husband and a pleasant son-in-law. There is no question about money: we have ample. I am sure that your personal character will prove all that I could desire, and I can foresee only one objection: that you and Zoe know absolutely nothing about each other."

Bruce-Smith gave a sigh of relief. "That can easily be remedied!" he answered.

"Can it?" asked the professor. "Do two persons, both on their good behaviour, really learn much about each other during their engagement?"

"I should imagineso," answered Bruce-Smith, feeling somewhat dashed.

Although it was September, there was a fire on the hearth; and, sinking into an easy chair, the professor placed his hands together so that only the fingers met, and gazed thoughtfully into the embers. He sat like this for five or six minutes, then spoke.

"What I should really like," he began, staring hard at the fire and speaking softly, "is that you two should be married at once. I should like you to live together for a year, so that you might test the compatibility of your temperaments. At the end of the year you might part, Zoe having the custody of the children; or, if you so desired, you might renew the contract for a further period of three years."

Bruce-Smith felt his cheeks tingling and his temper

getting the better of him ; but, for Zoe's sake, he was determined to hear the professor out.

"At the end of the second period," continued Professor Aylmer, "you might be permitted either to separate or to contract a life-long marriage." He stood up, looking through Bruce-Smith as though he did not exist. "I loathe the laws!" he cried. "They were made by fools for dupes, and have no logical cohesion! If two blackguards marry, they are allowed to annul the marriage and are free to marry again. If two honourable people marry, and find that their dispositions are altogether incompatible, they are not allowed to annul the marriage, and they are bound to live together in life-long misery."

He turned his back to the fire and clasped his hands behind him. "If I had the making of the laws," he cried, "I should allow honest people, on the solemn plea of incompatibility, to dissolve their marriage and so be free to marry again. I should make compulsory celibacy the punishment for infidelity. This would both promote sound eugenics and improve the standard of public morals. As it stands, the law places a premium on vice!" He sank into his chair, and, gazing into the fire, became lost in thought.

"Unfortunately, sir," said Bruce-Smith.

The professor jumped ; for his thoughts had gone back to the discovery of the missing factor by means of automatic writing, and he had forgotten all about the engagement.

"Unfortunately," repeated Bruce-Smith, "the present laws will not allow Zoe and myself to contract a temporary marriage, terminable at the end of twelve months."

The professor was horrified. "Who suggested such an abominable idea?" he cried.

"You did!" answered Bruce-Smith, viciously.

"Did I?" gasped the professor, his eyes like caverns.

"You suggested a trial marriage for one year, a further trial of three years, and only then would you allow us to contract a permanent marriage."

Professor Aylmer licked his lips. "What I meant to propose," he said, "was a probation before marriage."

"Oh!" murmured Bruce-Smith. That was very different.

The professor was regaining his self-confidence. "What I really meant to say was, that, if you wished me to sanction your marriage with my daughter, you must agree to a twelve months' probation."

"Under what conditions?" enquired Bruce-Smith, cautiously.

The professor had quite recovered. "During those twelve months you and she will, as the poor people say, keep company. You will have all the privileges of an engaged couple, and you yourself must undertake to see as much of Zoe as possible; but neither of you will be bound by any promise, and either of you will be perfectly free to terminate the companionship. You have known each other for so short a time, that I can give my consent on no other terms."

"And, at the end of the year?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"If your companionship has stood the continual intercourse, I see no reason why you should not be married immediately."

"What you really mean," suggested Bruce-Smith, "is that we shall be engaged for a full twelve months, and that ours must be an ordinary English engagement which may be broken off by either of us, and not a solemn betrothal."

But the professor shook his head. "There must be no engagement!" he said, firmly. "Either of you must be free to terminate the understanding and marry elsewhere." He cast about for a word. "Ah!" he said, "I have it! You may be companioned for a year—that is, you may keep company together with a view to marriage."

Bruce-Smith smiled, for neither Mr. Chesterton nor Martha Brown the stylist were in it with the professor. "I think we mean the same," he answered.

"Possibly," said the professor; "but I wish to leave

no room for misunderstanding. Now, will you please tell my little girl that I have some work to do before dinner, and should like to have my tea in here. She will understand." The professor's face softened and he held out his hand. "I'm glad, Bruce-Smith!" he said. "I like you! And you can tell that to Zoe."

Left to himself, Professor Aylmer locked the laboratory door; and, with blinds drawn, he strove to render his thoughts featureless so that he might come entirely under the control of the unknown intelligence. But nothing happened, and, when he left to dress for dinner, the sheet of paper was still clean.

III

DINNER proved a merry meal, commencing with a heated discussion on the engagement and ending with a lengthy dissertation from Professor Aylmer on fermentation. The discussion began in a tilt between the professor and Bruce-Smith, the former maintaining that Bruce and Zoe were only companions, whilst the latter argued that this was the same as an English engagement. Then Zoe stepped in.

"We're not engaged," said she. "He hasn't asked me to marry him, and I haven't said I would."

"By Jove!" murmured Bruce-Smith; "that's true!"

"But he's going to marry me all the same," said she, chin in air, "or else there'll be trouble."

The professor chuckled. He knew Miss Aylmer's force of character.

"And," said Zoe, turning to her parent, "if you don't call it an engagement, you'll put me in a pretty queer position."

"How?" he asked, his eyes twinkling.

"I'm bound to be caught, sooner or later," said she,

"with Jack's arm round my waist ; and, if I can't say we're engaged, what then ? "

And so the conversation went on until dessert, when the professor took the floor.

As far as Bruce-Smith could make out, the wild bacilli of fermentation were wont to blow in through brewery windows and upset the spring brewing ; and the professor seemed to have claimed that he had bred a race of extra civilised microbes that would rape the intruders, and that their offspring would ferment beer that was out of the ordinary in quality. But, since Bruce-Smith was deep in a study of Zoe's face during the discourse, his impression is not reliable.

At any rate, the professor retired to his laboratory at ten o'clock, with his brain rested and his nerves completely soothed.

IV

The professor locked the laboratory door, turned down the lamp, and, seating himself in a comfortable chair with some sheets of paper before him and a pencil in his hand, sought to compose his mind into a state that bordered on the unconscious.

Like Crookes, Wallace, Barrett, Lodge and many other scientists, Professor Aylmer had indulged in psychical research ; but he had dropped spiritualism during the past five years on account of the exacting nature of his present quest, and his power of psychic perception seemed to have grown rusty with disuse. Try as he would, the hand which held the pencil either remained still or else indulged in aimless nervous movements.

The hands of the clock went round to eleven, to twelve ; then, about twelve fifteen, he seemed to fall into a kind of dreamless slumber.

How long he slept is uncertain, for he never thought of

looking at the clock ; but he woke up with a pain at the base of his head, to find the fire burnt low and the paper covered with incredibly neat and orderly writing. He put on his spectacles and read what was written : it was a chemical formula containing the same ingredients as his own formula for the *Materia Aylmeri* ; but, against each chemical, there was written a quantity in some language that was unknown to him. Instead of '*Materia Aylmeri*,' the formula was headed, '*Materia Elementorum*,' which he translated as '*The Material of the Elements of Life*.'

He was deadly tired ; his head ached dully and heavily ; but his will was as indomitable as ever. He went into the library, returned with every available book on weights and measures, and commenced to go through them. At last, guided by a manual, he turned up a book on ancient Babylon and found what he wanted. Then he commenced to convert the Babylonian weights into modern grammes.

Ah ! Here was a divergency—a difference in the amount of calcium, a larger proportion of phosphorus, and so on—with the exception of the phosphorus, the divergency was slight, but the phosphorus would most probably act as the energy-transformer and make all the difference. He totalled up the quantities of the various components, and found that the amount would represent some four quarts of the colloid ; and this quantity he resolved to make so that the margin of error would be infinitesimal. He wrote out telegrams, ordering both chemicals and glass vessels that were larger than any he had in his laboratory, and left them on the hall table with directions that they should be despatched first thing in the morning. Then he returned to the laboratory, and, lighting a cigar, sank into an easy chair.

What was this wonderful intelligence which had given him what appeared to be the true components of basic life ? His own formula had contained the approximate analysis of the primal living cell with an exactness that

no other living biologist could have given ; but this new formula appeared to contain the exact analysis of the primal colloid, energy-transformer and all.

With these thoughts in his mind, the professor again took up the pencil and held it so that the point touched the paper. His hand moved without any volition of his, and the pencil point wrote, clearly and neatly : *Tanuath*. Then, without pause, it wrote : *Develop in sunshine with the aid of music* ; and ceased to write.

Again he took the pencil, and, asking who this Tanuath might be, waited for an answer. But there was no answer, and, as his head was aching abominably and the clock pointed to four, Professor Aylmer went off to bed.

CHAPTER XI

LOVE AND LIFE

I

Is there anything like the feel of an early autumn morning? So, when Bruce-Smith, in response to Zoe's summons, got up and tubbed in cold water and shaved himself with difficulty and put on comfortable flannels and met Zoe on the terrace, he found his sweetheart in her proper surroundings. For the lawns were fresh with their watering of autumn dew, and the woods beyond them were veiled in an early morning mist, and the terrace was sweet with the scent of waking roses, and Zoe was sweetest and freshest of them all.

Zoe held up her lips to be kissed, and, taking her lover's hand, led him across the lawn and towards the belvedere.

"Did I call you too early, Jack?" she asked. "Is this worth it?"

In answer, he took his hand away from hers and put his arm round her waist.

"Go on!" she said. "Creenia will enjoy it!"

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Who's Creenia?"

"Her full name," she explained laboriously, "is Creenia Treswigger, and she's my maid. She's getting coffee for us in the summer-house, and she'll just love to see you spooning me!"

He dropped her like a hot coal. "You little demon!" he laughed.

"It's quite all right!" she answered. "You see,

we're keeping company, and people who're walking out ought to behave like that; only of course we ought to walk along with our arms round each other, saying nothing."

With a chuckle, he put his arm back round her waist; as he was feeling, he didn't care a hang about Creenia Treswigger or anybody. "What are we going to do about our engagement?" he asked.

Zoe shrugged her shoulders. "I've been thinking about it," she answered, "and we must treat my father's idea as a joke. I shall tell Mrs. Fordyce—she's our nearest neighbour—that we're only companioned, and she'll tell everyone. Keeping company's like old country dances and folk-songs, a sort of return to the land, and I shouldn't be surprised if everybody conspired to give us a particularly good time. Now I'm longing to show you the belvedere."

Bruce-Smith opened a walnut door and found himself in an octagonal room with a painted ceiling supported by eight Corinthian pillars: there were large windows in six of the walls, the doors occupied the seventh and a marble stairway the eighth. In the centre of the room was a round oak table supporting an antique bust. "That's Plato," said Zoe, nodding at the bust; "and this is the place where the old Earl of Lyons used to hold the meetings of his Platonic Academy."

"You don't mean that they actually had a Platonic Circle here!" exclaimed Bruce-Smith. "I'd no idea that such things ever existed outside Italy!"

"Yes!" answered Zoe. "The old Earl was a very thorough-going Platonist. Now!" said she, leading the way up the staircase, and Bruce-Smith, following her, found himself in a small open landing with three doors leading out of it. Zoe opened the door before them, and they stepped out into a loggia that was finished off after the Italian fashion, and facing the sunrise. "There are three of these," said Zoe, "and they face every way except north. Isn't it delightful?"

Bruce-Smith went forward and leant over the balcony. In the foreground there was the rose-garden with its balustrade covered with jasmine ; immediately beyond there was the sharp cleft of the Tregan Valley ; beyond that, the rough moor rolled away towards the sunrise ; and, beyond that again, the sun was rising over the distant hills and bathing everything in an ethereal glow. Bruce-Smith drew a long breath. " It's the most lovely place I've ever seen ! " he murmured. Then he became conscious of the smell of coffee, and, turning round, found a table in the corner with a plump, fresh looking girl bending over a coffee-pot.

" This," said Zoe, " is my foster-sister, Creenia Treswigger."

Bruce-Smith smiled at the girl.

" And this," said Zoe, looking at the maid, " is Mr. Bruce-Smith, of whom you have doubtless heard."

The girl stood up straight, and Bruce-Smith saw that her face was both pleasant and intelligent. " I hope you'll both be very happy, sir," she said, and, with a flash of her eyes: " you do belong to be happy with Miss Zoe ! "

" I believe I do ! " he answered.

She gave a little nod of both approval and acknowledgment of his common-sense.

" Where did you get your name, Creenia ? " he asked. " I've never heard it before."

" 'Tis an old-fashioned name, sir," she answered, smiling ; " 'twas my mother's before me. But 'tisin't one half so cruel as Treswigger."

Something in the girl's name and the sunlit moor and the sound of the river moved him to ask a question : " Do you believe in pixies, Creenia ? "

She stiffened. " No, sir ! " she answered.

" Creenia ! " said Zoe. " Jack," she added, " you're only an up-the-country Englishman and a foreigner. When we're married and you've lived here twenty years, you may begin to ask us about our secrets. We don't tell our beliefs to philistines."

"Oh!" said he.

"Greenia," asked Zoe, "do you believe in pixies?"

"Perhaps I do, Miss Zoe; perhaps I don't: can't exactly say!"

"Would you go up the Tregan Valley at night, quite alone in the moonlight, and on to Landen Tor?"

The girl shuddered.

"There!" said Zoe. "We believe in pixies and goblins and gnomes and witches and white-witches; but we don't let on to strangers."

"Do you believe in these things, Zoe?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"I know it's awfully absurd," she answered; "but I can't say that I don't!"

There was a deep sigh of relief from the girl at the table.

"Where's Smith?" asked Zoe.

"He was asleep when you called me," answered Bruce-Smith, "so I told him to sleep it out. He's a strange old fellow, and goes his own way; but he's always there when I want him."

Greenia Treswigger handed them their coffee, and slipped away silently; for, as every Cornish girl knows, 'Two's company; three's trumpery!'

"Zoe," said Jack, "there's something I meant to have hinted at long before I asked you to marry me; but everything was so rushed that I couldn't do it. Do you know anything about the conditions which the Church attaches to a mixed marriage—that is, a marriage between a Catholic and Protestant?"

There was a gleam of amusement in the girl's face. "They must be married in an R.C. church; the children must be brought up Catholics; and the Catholic must do all he can to influence his wife."

"Thank heaven!" he muttered. "How did you know?" he asked.

"My great friend at Oxford, Mary Talbot, is a Catholic," she answered.

"And you don't mind?"

"I like it! I often wish I was a Catholic myself."

He put down his coffee-cup and slipped his arm round her. "Poor old Zoe!" he murmured.

"Jack," she asked, "what does it mean when you promise to try and influence me to become a Catholic?"

"Nothing, except that I mustn't get slack and let you influence me."

"Then, it's merely a form?"

"Not it! The Church says: 'If I give you leave to marry this nice Protestant girl, you must promise to stiffen up in your religious duties so that you may influence her in the right way.'"

"It doesn't mean that you've got to argue with me and try and convert me?"

He laughed. "'Convince a man against his will, he's of the same opinion still,'" he quoted. "No, sweetheart! The only way one can help on other people is to be perfectly straight and honest with oneself, to answer any questions they really want answered, and to pray for them like blazes. If you argue, you become a nuisance; if you try to become a 'good influence,' you become a humbug and people see through you."

Zoe put down her cup, and, leaning over the balcony, stared thoughtfully into the distance. "What would justify a girl in becoming a Catholic?" she asked.

"There are three possible reasons," he answered; "she might become a Catholic in order to please someone else, in which case she would be a traitor to herself; she might do it in order to gain some advantage or for a whim or liking, in which case she would insult God; she might do it because she is convinced that it is the true religion, which is the only honest way."

"You don't make it very easy, Jack!" she sighed.

"It isn't!" he grunted.

She looked away over the moor, dreamily. "Suppose a girl was attracted by the beauty of it all; suppose she was attracted by the beauty of St. Francis and the wit of

St. Catherine and the strength of Loyola; suppose she was attracted by the beauty of the churches, the dignity of the services and the antiquity of the whole?"

But he shook his head, and his mouth set firm. "These things might lead her to look into the matter," he said; "but, unless she were convinced that the Church was the one revealed way of salvation, she would have no moral right to seek reception—nor, for the matter of that, would any priest receive her."

Bruce-Smith had put down his cup and was leaning over the balcony; now Zoe looked up sideways at him, a good deal astonished and a little hurt. "You're rather like Smith!" she said.

"Well," he grumbled, "you asked me a straight question, and I had to give you a straight answer. I hated doing it!"

She was still looking at him, and a trace of amusement came into her eyes: this answer was so typical of her lover, as she was learning to know him. "Then, what do you consider to be the most important thing about one's religion?" she asked.

"To be absolutely honest and true to one's convictions," he grumbled.

"You're quite like Smith!" she cried, and edged up the necessary half-inch closer to him.

"We must be getting on," said she presently, with a sigh of regret; "I haven't shown you half I meant to before breakfast." And he followed her down the stairs and out of the belvedere. She took him across the lawn, bearing sharply towards the right, and they struck a broad path that led downward through the woods. At first the trees were thin on either side, with undergrowth and granite boulders between them; then, as they got closer to the river, the undergrowth ceased and the trees grew taller and closer together.

"The ground's one mass of bluebell and wild garlic in the spring," remarked Zoe.

"It's difficult to imagine anything better than it is

now," answered Bruce-Smith; for the Tregan River had curved inwards, and, cutting for itself a deep gorge, was brawling along almost below them.

"Wait a minute!" said Zoe, and she took a small path that led towards the right. "Now," said she, catching hold of his hand, "shut your eyes until I tell you to open them."

When he opened them, they were standing on a rocky platform. Below them, the Tregan River still brawled; but, looking through the tree-trunks and over tree-tops, they could see where it joined the Camel in the hurry towards the sea. The Camel was quite an imposing river, worried by rocks and fretting across ledges, and on the far side the banks rose up for a full hundred and fifty feet, partly covered with stunted oaks and partly precipitous. There was a small empty cottage below them, beside the Camel; but this only served to heighten the loneliness of the scene.

"Do you wonder that I love this place?" asked Zoe, softly.

Bruce-Smith shook his head. There were no words that could express his admiration.

II

A perfect morning, two hours in the September air, and a breakfast of bacon and fried potato (Cornish), kidneys and bacon, cold grouse, marmalade and Cornish cream, and what more can man desire? The very fact that the Tregunden dining-room looked out on the court-yard, and not on the lawns and woods, helped to concentrate attention on essentials and avoid distraction.

Scarcely had Bruce-Smith and Zoe started their breakfast, when the professor arrived; there was a smile on his face, and he carried a strip of rubber-like material in his hand. He kissed his daughter, and laid the strip of material beside Bruce-Smith's plate.

"Here," he said, "is my first attempt at our synthetic worms. This strip, measuring six centimetres by one and a half centimetres and a little over one millimetre in thickness, will form the skin or envelope. You will perceive that it is marked like the common brandling, or dung-worm, and it will be filled with a bundle of strands of a similar material. Whilst the synthetic worm-skin, or envelope, is still slightly sticky, I shall model it on a chalked piece of wood cut in the shape of a worm, leaving the tail-end unfastened. I shall withdraw the chalked stick and fill the skin with the strands, in the same manner that the cigarette-maker fills his cigarette-paper with tobacco, and then I shall close the tail by means of heat."

Bruce-Smith looked at the worm-skin in amazement. If it were possible to imagine anyone skinning a brandling, here was the skin, with the knot, colouring and smell. "It's wonderful!" he murmured.

"If you care to taste it," suggested the professor, "you will find that it has both the flavour and feel of the reality, and I will guarantee that the food-value is practically identical."

But, much as he wished to please his future father-in-law, Bruce-Smith was forced to decline. He couldn't munch brandling in the midst of his kidneys and bacon. "When will they be finished, sir?" he asked.

"I hope to have a small number ready by lunch time, and, as they will dry during the night, we will be able to try our worms to-morrow."

Again Bruce-Smith examined the synthetic skin. Save for the slight stickiness, it had the feel, as well as the look and smell, of a brandling.

"I suggest," said the professor, helping himself to bacon and fried potato, "that a glass tank of trout be displayed in a tackle-maker's window, and that a machine which will drop a worm every few minutes be suspended above the tank. The public will not only see the avidity with which the trout take the worms, but they will also see a notice: 'During the past fortnight, these trout have

been fed entirely on the Aylmer Synthetic Worms.' My worms will also supply, at a small cost, an excellent variation in the diet of the domestic hen. I will tell my agent to carry this through, and give the patent to you and Zoe as a wedding present."

"Do you wonder that he's rich?" said Zoe.

"My only wonder is," answered Bruce-Smith, his eyes fixed on the skin, "that he hasn't made life already. This stuff only needs a touch to make it live!"

"Ah!" murmured the professor; "it's that touch which is the puzzle!" And he went on to explain his new discovery of the inherent weakness in the *Materia Aylmeri*. "You see," he explained, "a living cell is in itself an energy-transformer, which transforms the latent energy of matter into the active energy of life. If my *Materia Aylmeri* contained a single living cell, that cell would divide and multiply, absorbing the whole of the colloid, and transforming it into a mass of living cells. It is the initial impulse, the impulse that will transform the non-living matter into the first living cell, which is required."

"And that," said Zoe, "is the unanswerable riddle of the older biology."

"Which I have answered!" said Professor Aylmer.

"What?" cried Zoe.

"Which I have answered," repeated the professor.

Zoe looked at her father with absolute unbelief. "You may be the dearest, cleverest old thing in the world," said she; "but——" And she shook her head.

"Add a trace of iodine, increase the proportion of phosphorus, diminish the quantity of calcium," replied the professor calmly, "and you convert my *Materia Aylmeri* into *Materia Elementorum*—the material out of which elementary life is formed—the extra chemicals supplying the initial energy-transformer."

"What made you think of that?" asked Zoe, appreciating the chemistry of the alteration, but still incredulous.

"I obtained the needed information last night."

"How?"

"Through automatic writing."

"Oh!" said Zoe.

"That's spiritualism, isn't it?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"Yes," answered the professor.

"But," suggested Bruce-Smith anxiously, "I thought spiritualism was all fraud."

"The omniscience of the man in the street," replied Professor Aylmer, coldly, "seeing through the mechanism of spiritualism, perceives that it is fraud. It remains for fools like Crookes, Wallace, Barrett, Lodge and myself to become convinced of its reality."

Bruce-Smith both felt and looked uncomfortable; for, although he knew little or nothing of spiritualism, he knew that it had been forbidden by his religion.

The professor seemed to have guessed his thoughts. "I believe," he remarked, "that the Roman Catholic Church ascribes spiritualism to diabolic agency; but, much as I respect your religion, I must confess that it has always appeared to me to be opposed to progress."

Before Bruce-Smith could answer, Zoe broke in. "Oh! Leave him alone!" she cried. "If Jack's D.O.R.A. forbids him to touch psychological-telegraphy, he's perfectly right in refusing to touch it with a barge-pole!"

"I apologise!" said the professor quickly.

Bruce-Smith looked from one to the other. "I know nothing about spiritualism," he said, "except that I'm not allowed to practise it, and my suggestion of fraud was merely an enquiry. You see, I've known men who've consulted clairvoyants."

"The professional clairvoyant's usually a fraud," answered Zoe; then she turned to her father. "Isn't automatic writing extremely unreliable?" she asked.

"Most unreliable!" answered the professor. "One may easily be actuated by a blend of sub-conscious memory and imagination."

"Do you mind me asking something?" said Bruce-Smith. "What is automatic writing?"

With a smile, the professor buried the hatchet. "One takes up a pencil," he replied, "one tries to sink one's will, and one allows some unknown power to guide one's hand. The weakness of this method is, that one may unconsciously guide the pencil oneself and write down some sub-conscious memory or some pure effort of the imagination." He looked at Bruce-Smith. "Do you ever find that a line of poetry comes to you without effort or volition?" he asked.

"Rather!" answered the poet.

"And don't you sometimes find that your line of poetry is an echo of what you have read or written previously, and since forgotten?"

"Rather!"

"And, since the hand may move without conscious volition, as in the writing of a sleep-walker, the whole of the message may be an unconscious effort of the writer. In fact I once met a clergyman, early in 1914, who professed to get the most marvellous revelation about the life beyond the veil by means of automatic writing—sheer unconscious imagination—sheer unconscious imagination!"

"To return to our muttons," said Zoe. "How do you know that your last night's message is reliable?"

The professor produced a sheet of paper and handed it to his daughter. "Have you ever seen those figures before?" he asked, pointing to the quantities against the various chemicals.

"No!" answered Zoe.

"Nor have I," he said. "It took me hours to find out what those figures were, and they prove to be ancient Babylonian. I couldn't possibly have written them of my own initiative."

"And the formula——?" she enquired.

"I have translated the weights into grammes, and the whole works out into the most probable formula I can imagine."

She examined the paper carefully. "*Develop in sunshine with the aid of music,*" she read.

"That shows," said the professor, "that we have already been working on the right external lines."

"*Tanuath!* Who is Tanuath?"

"The soul of some departed Babylonian, I assume."

"How do you know," asked Bruce-Smith, "that it is a departed soul?"

"Mr. Bruce-Smith," replied the professor, with dignity, "my only faith—my one hope of a life beyond the veil—lies in the messages which my friends and I have received from beyond the veil!"

Bruce-Smith was silent.

"I suppose you mean to go on with this experiment on the new lines?" asked Zoe.

"Certainly!" answered the professor. "I appear to have fallen asleep whilst I was writing the message, and the whole of the formula, except the quantities, may have been my own subconscious effort; but Tanuath, whoever he may be, has certainly edited my formula, and the quantities are his."

CHAPTER XII

WHEN THE WIND IS FROM THE WEST

I

NEXT morning was an ideal fishing morning ; for there was a soft westerly breeze, the glass was going up, and the water was coming down in a clear, brown stream from the still swollen bogs. So, after an early breakfast, Bruce-Smith and Zoe got ready for the morning's sport and waited for the professor on the terrace.

Bruce-Smith had already put together a split-cane rod by Hardy, and was running the line through the rings of a two-joint greenheart by Jeffrey of Plymouth.

"I don't say that the split-cane isn't the finer rod," he remarked ; "I don't say that the split-cane hasn't a more evenly distributed spring and that it won't cast a longer line ; but this little chap's my favourite." He ran out a couple of rods' length of line and made a cast on the gravel : the line went out straight as a dart, checked about two inches from the ground, and fell light as thistle-down.

"Try it !" he said, and Zoe tried it. There was a crack like a whip behind, and the line fell on the terrace in coils.

Bruce-Smith laughed, and, putting his hand on Zoe's, guided her cast. "It's all done from the wrist," he explained. "Bring the rod back with a slow sweep, or you'll snap off the flies ; bring it forward, remembering that the soul of the rod is in its top joint. Don't cast with the whole rod ! Cast with the top joint !" This

time the line went forward straight enough, but it came down on the gravel with a thud. "Cast a couple of inches above the water," he explained, "and then let the line fall lightly forward."

Again they tried, and this time the cast was almost good. "Try by yourself," he said; and Zoe tried.

"There're thirty thousand things to remember!" she sniffed, as the line fell in a lump.

"Your fault was," he explained, "that you used your whole arm, and treated the rod as if it was dead. Remember it's a living, springy thing with its soul in the top joint."

"But there's so much to remember," she complained.

"Only three things," he admonished: "Back with a swee-eep! (That's slow.) Forward with fore-arm! Cast with the wrist!"

She tried again, improving as she went; but still the line came down on the gravel with a thud.

"Make your cast an inch or two above the gravel," he explained; "then, when the line's out, lower the point of the rod and let the line fall lightly on the surface."

She tried again, and made an almost perfect cast; half a dozen bad ones followed, and, again, a good one.

"It's only a question of practice," said Bruce-Smith. "You'll make a first-class fisherman before I've done with you. Here's the professor!"

Professor Aylmer came forward with a rod-case in his hand and a look of proud expectancy on his face. He put his hand in his pocket, and brought out a tin box.

"For fear that my synthetic worms might not answer," said he, handing the box to Bruce-Smith, "I told the gardener to dig a few brandlings. Will you see if they're all right?"

Bruce-Smith opened the box, and found a couple of dozen worms apparently cleaning themselves in some damp moss. "It will be interesting to compare these with the synthetics," he remarked.

"Are you sure they're all right?" enquired the professor, anxiously. "Take one up and see!"

"They're firm and well scoured," answered Bruce-Smith, as the worm curled itself slowly round his finger.

"Only," replied the professor, with pride oozing out of every pore, "they happen to be synthetic!"

"What?" cried Bruce-Smith, putting down the worm on the balustrade of the terrace, where it curved its back and wriggled slowly.

"They are synthetic," smiled the professor. "You see, the threads of the filling are joined together at either end, and this makes the worms sensitive to either pressure or heat: it was the pressure of your fingers that made the first wriggle; it is the sun that makes the present movement."

Bruce-Smith whistled. Even when he again picked up the worm, he could hardly believe that it was not alive.

"Now!" said the professor; and he led the way across the terrace, through the rose-garden, and down a zig-zag into the valley, the lovers following him.

"What do you think of the worrums?" asked Bruce-Smith, as he and Zoe stooped over the worm-box.

Zoe touched one; it wriggled slowly, and she drew back her finger with a shudder. "They're worse than the real things," she answered. "They're—they're so soulless and deliberate!"

"They're wonderful!" he murmured.

"He's a wonderful old thing," she answered; "only his inventions are so creepy-crawly. I believe all those toads and adders we saw up the Tregan Valley were really his."

"I bet one of his synthetic adders would bite!"

"And also have the exact poison-value of the reality: he's very thorough."

They reached the river, and Bruce-Smith bent a cast on to the end of the greenheart line and a tackle on to that. Then he fixed a worm on the hooks, and handed the rod to Professor Aylmer.

"You must show me how it's done!" urged the professor.

Bruce-Smith let out about eighteen feet of line, and, with a slow swing back, cast the worm forward into a stickle that was opposite them. In a second there was a pluck at the line, Bruce-Smith struck, and a quarter-pound trout came safely to land.

"Look!" he said, as he snapped the fish's back-bone and held it out for inspection. "He's swallowed the worm half way down his gullet."

"The food-value is obviously satisfactory!" remarked Zoe.

Bruce-Smith cut a twig from an alder, and, flattening the end, used it as a disgorging. Then he dropped the trout into his creel, and examined the worm. "Are you sure that someone hasn't substituted real worms for your synthetic worms, professor?" he asked.

The professor took the bait, placed it on a rock, and slit it open with his pocket-knife. "See for yourself!" he said.

Bruce-Smith looked, and saw the threads of the synthetic filling; he took up the worm, and the brute wriggled. He dropped it with a shudder. "After this," he said, "I shall join the anti-vivisection society."

"But the thing couldn't feel!" argued the professor.

"Why shouldn't it have synthetic feeling?" suggested Zoe.

"Contrariwise," urged Bruce-Smith, "the people who have only synthetic feelings and synthetic culture must themselves be merely synthetic beings:

"A mere synthetic man
Wed a synthetic wife;
And they resolved to lead
The plain synthetic life.

"They lead this simple life
In a house, so neat and pretty,
That's situated in
A synthetic garden-city.

I believe half the people in England, including all the garden-cities and most of the suburbs, are only synthetic!"

"How you loathe the garden-city people!" laughed Zoe.

"Hush!" he answered. "To tell you the truth, I've never met any of them; it's John Bruce-Smith I loathe —

"Who sold his living soul
To fill his empty purse,
And wrote for the people who live in garden-cities
Mere damned synthetic verse.

I'm a humbled man for the rest of my life."

"Whatever nonsense are you young people talking?" asked the professor.

"Only of a much-to-be-lamented and ever-to-be-regretted portion of my past life, sir," answered Bruce-Smith, "during which I wrote the synthetic substitute for poetry instead of the real thing. It was Zoe's sympathy that saved me!"

"How?" asked the professor, his eyes twinkling.

"She told me to write real poetry, or starve. Now, sir!" And, threading a fresh worm on the hook, Bruce-Smith handed the rod to the professor.

But Professor Aylmer put his hands behind his back nervously. "Show me how to do it," he urged.

Bruce-Smith shortened the line to a rod's length, and, swinging it out underhand, let the worm touch the surface of the water, and swung in the line. "There," he said, "it's quite simple: let the worm fall just at the head of that stickle, where the stream rushes into the pool, and let it be carried down by the current. I think the water's sufficiently coloured to hide you."

The professor cast the worm all right; it travelled a few yards down the stickle, and there was a strong, firm tug. With a mighty shout, the professor tried to heave the fish over his head, and, as was only to be expected, the rod smashed at the ferrule. "Take the rod!" shrieked Professor Aylmer.

But what can a man do with only half a rod and a seven-pound fresh-run salmon at the end of his line? Showing one gleam of silver, the fish took Bruce-Smith down-stream as far as the crimson-rambler thicket, and broke him. He managed to recover the top joint, and returned to the professor.

"Those worms of yours are simply irresistible!" he said.

"What was it?" cried the professor. "Was it a salmon?"

"Probably a kelt. We'd have had to put it back anyhow."

"And I've ruined your rod!"

Bruce-Smith smiled. "It's smashed just by the ferrule," he said, "and it'll be all the better for being a few inches shorter. It was too whippy as it was, and I meant to have it shortened."

"Thus do knights-errant lie!" murmured Zoe.

Bruce-Smith glanced at her with a tiny shake of his head, and handed the split-cane rod to the professor. "Now, sir," he said, "you must try to redeem your luck."

But Professor Aylmer refused. He'd smashed one rod, and he wasn't going to smash the other. He'd got a rod of his own, and if Bruce-Smith would be kind enough to prepare that for him, it would answer admirably.

As Bruce-Smith got out the professor's rod, his heart misgave him; for he knew what a non-fisherman's rod was usually like. The sight of two whole-cane joints and a stained deal hand-piece made him feel even more depressed; but, when he had put the rod together and felt its spring and balance, his eyebrows went up. He fitted on the line from the greenheart, made a trial cast, and grew wildly excited. "Where did you get this?" he cried.

"A friend of mine at Camelford got it for me," answered the professor.

"I mean," said Bruce-Smith, "who was the maker?"

"A Camelford fisherman, named Light." The professor

hesitated. "No!" he said; "I'm wrong! He was called Gloom: John Gloom, I think."

Zoe laughed. "He was called John Leeds," she suggested with conviction, and she turned to Bruce-Smith. "You see the *memoria technica*: 'Lead, kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom!' Is it a good rod?" she asked.

He became enthusiastic. The balance was perfect; the spring and drive were magnificent, and the rod could not weigh more than seven or eight ounces. It was an ideal rod for a lady, or, for the matter of that, a perfect trout-rod for anyone. She must try it; and, bending a baited cast on the end of the line, he handed her the rod.

Zoe cast; not underhand like the professor, but as she had practised on the terrace. The worm fell at the head of the same stickle that had yielded the salmon, and, in a second, the reel sang.

"Let him run it out!" said Bruce-Smith; and his directions came quickly: "Reel in!" "Give him his head!" "Put your fingers on the line and check him gently;" for the fish was making down-stream towards the rambler thicket. "Now," he said, "we've got him, if you only bring him in quietly." He stepped into the stream, and, placing his hands like a cradle, held them below the surface of the water. "If you can only guide him over my hands," he said, "I'll lift him out!"

The fish came forward; he was lifted gently; and he lay gasping on the bank, a full pound and a quarter. "The peel seem to be running to-day," he remarked; "that thunder-shower must have brought them up from the lower waters."

Zoe bent over the fish in an ecstasy, whilst the professor went clucking round her like an old hen. "Come! Come! Come!" he cackled. "That's something to be proud of!"

Bruce-Smith killed the peel, removed the hooks, placed a couple of handfuls of damp grass in the creel, and laid the fish to rest. "If you'll only take the split-cane, sir," he

said, "Zoe can go on with your rod. It's all right," he added, as the professor began to protest; "if you smash my rod, you can give me yours: I prefer it!"

Then Bruce-Smith was kept busy; for, no sooner had he looked after the landing of Zoe's catch and re-baited her hook, than the professor was clamouring for him to come and kill his latest capture. "If I'd only got him in the laboratory," moaned the professor, "I could kill him without scruple!"

The professor hooked another peel of about a pound, which he played with such gentle caution that it got off, and Zoe landed one of about three-quarters of a pound; but, otherwise, they caught nothing larger than a six-ounce trout. Yet quantity made up for size, and by luncheon-time the creel was heavy.

"Jack," said Zoe, as they were going up the zig-zag, "is it quite sporting to fish with these worms?"

His uncomfortable habit of truthfulness prevailed. "I shouldn't have done it myself," he owned; "but, all the same, I don't see why it isn't as good as chucking a bundle of wet feathers at the fish. Of course," he explained, "on a chalk-stream, where you cast your fly so that it floats down like a live insect, this synthetic worm-fishing would be poaching; but here, I don't see much difference between a synthetic worm and a bundle of wet feathers."

"I thought they took your bundle of feathers for a fly," she said.

"If a fish rises as the fly touches the water," he answered, "it may have been mistaken for a fly; otherwise the fish take the wet flies for the larvæ or subimagos of insects." He turned to the professor. "I say, sir," he said, "I'd like to send some of your worms to a friend of mine who goes in for bottom-fishing. It would be awfully interesting to know if the carp would spot them."

"From what I have heard of the carp," replied the professor, "the test would be conclusive. I will let you have the batch of worms I made before breakfast this morning."

Zoe stretched herself with a sigh of complete contentment. "Sport, or no sport," she said, "it's been the morning of my life !"

II

Lunch was finished. Professor Aylmer and Bruce-Smith had lit a couple of the professor's excellent cigars, and Zoe was munching the sugar which she had fished up from the bottom of her coffee-cup.

"I am expecting my chemicals this evening," remarked the professor, "and I hope to start my new colloid to-morrow, but I have not the slightest idea of the form of music that we should employ."

"Why not try the Moonlight Sonata?" suggested Zoe. "That ought to move anything !"

Bruce-Smith hesitated. He had no wish to assist with a formula obtained through spiritualism, but, on the other hand, he did not believe in Tanuath; it was so much easier to believe that the figures in the professor's sleep-writing had happened to have some slight resemblance to ancient Babylonian characters. Finally he came to the conclusion that he was suffering from scruples, and suggested that the professor should try pattern music.

"What is pattern music?" enquired Professor Aylmer:

Bruce-Smith explained that it was a form of music in which the melody repeated itself with variations, weaving itself into a kind of decorative pattern just like a decorative pattern in painting or sculpture. "Like this," he said, and whistled "Pop Goes the Weasel." "You see," he added, "the pattern can go on repeating itself for hours at a time."

"Or like this," said Zoe; and, going over to Squarcia-lupi's organ, she commenced the introduction to Alicia Needham's setting of *The Four Winds*, and sang:

"When the wind is in the East,
'Tis neither good for man nor beast !"

And so on to the triumphant couplet :

" When the wind is in the West,
Then it's at its very best."

Then the accompaniment caught the air, and Zoe, carrying it on through the introduction, repeated the song.

" What a lovely thing ! " cried Bruce-Smith. " Where does it come from ? "

" From Alicia Needham's Songs of the Golden Days," answered Zoe, " and isn't it just what you wanted ? "

" Exactly ! " replied Bruce-Smith.

" There's a primitive note about it," remarked the professor, " a pastoral air of simplicity, that suggests the beginning of life."

" Sing it again ! " said Bruce-Smith.

Zoe sang, and her flute-like voice, not very large in compass and not very strong, but wonderfully sweet and true, blended with the tones of the Medici organ. And, as she sang, Bruce-Smith seemed to see a woodland glade with the shepherds and nymphs and fauns singing together until Pan should appear.

The professor had left the room, and now he returned carrying a quaint instrument like twin pipes. " I had this made," he said, " for the Attic Orchestral Society ; but unfortunately the Society collapsed at the commencement of the war. It is modelled on the shepherd's pipe of the Greek vase, and I have added a screw attachment whereby the pitch can be altered at will. Do you happen to play the shepherd's pipe, Bruce-Smith ? "

" Only the penny whistle, sir," answered Bruce-Smith, with a grin.

" Try ! " ordered Zoe ; and, after the pitch had been adjusted to that of the organ, the poet was able to accompany the simple air quite nicely.

" So much for the melody of your pattern music," said the professor ; " now for the more resonant tones : our vintage should have body as well as bouquet."

"Dr. Morton plays the double-bass," suggested Zoe.

"Excellent!" cried the professor. "And I myself have already wired for a drum from the Congo, which is in the Sayce Collection at Oxford."

The idea of this orchestra, the learned professor with a Congo drum, himself with Arcadian pipes and a medical man with a double-bass, solemnly serenading a mess of colloid in the hope that it would be moved to give birth to a problematical cell, came home to Bruce-Smith, and he collapsed. Zoe caught the infection, and the professor, after looking helplessly from the one to the other, joined in.

"It ought to be a cradle-song, sir," sobbed Bruce-Smith.

"Can you suggest anything better?" asked the professor, sharply.

"No!" sobbed Bruce-Smith. "It's perfect! Absolutely perfect!"

"Everything, dad," said Zoe, with a wicked gleam in her eye; "everything, from synthetic biology to synthetic poetry, has its absurd side!"

In spite of the professor's presence, in spite of the fact that the professor had not yet sanctioned their engagement, Bruce-Smith caught up the mocking girl, and kissed her.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CELL

I

AFTER lunch on Thursday, Bruce-Smith had laughed at the professor's orchestra; but he was not laughing by lunch-time on Saturday. From 9.30 a.m. on Saturday morning did that orchestra play, and, long before 1 p.m., the poet's lips were raw and his head reeling. How he loathed Bronzino's portraits! How he hated the dried-up professor and detested the smug Dr. Morton and despised Filippino Lippi! Fortunately Zoe's back was turned to him, or he might have hated her too.

Then, about twelve-thirty, The Four Winds began to breed nonsense words in his imagination:

When the wind is in the North,
Th' professor brews his colloid broth!

When the wind is in the East,
We see the forming of the beast.

When the wind is in the South,
The new creation suffers drouth.

When the wind is in the West,
The cell is at the colloid's breast!

And so on, and so on. This was torture unbearable!

At 1 p.m., just as Bruce-Smith felt that he must drop the shepherd's pipe and scream, the professor gave the signal to stop. Dr. Morton mopped his wet forehead with

a large handkerchief; the butler, who had been blowing the organ, stretched himself respectfully; and Zoe turned on her organ-stool, as fresh as rosemary.

"Well?" she said, looking round with a lift of her eyebrows.

"Damn pattern music!" muttered Bruce-Smith, only his lips were so swollen that his remark was inaudible.

"I had no idea," said Dr. Morton, "that one could grow to hate a harmless tune so fervently."

Bruce-Smith held out a limp hand. "Shake!" he muttered.

There was a series of explosive ejaculations from the window, where the professor was leaning over the bowl of colloid. "Zoe! Zoe!" he cried. "Come here!—What's this?—Come here quickly!"

Zoe went, and, taking the lens from her father, began to examine the *Materia Elementorum*.

"Not there!" snapped the professor. "Here!" And his finger almost touched the surface of the compound.

"I can't see anything where you're pointing," said Zoe; "but I wish you'd fetch a microscope!"

"Morton," cried the professor, "come here and see if you can detect anything!" But Dr. Morton failed to detect anything, even when the professor made a hole in a sheet of paper and held it over the exact spot.

The professor turned to Zoe. "What did you fancy you saw?" he asked.

"I fancied that particles of chromatin were beginning to isolate themselves," she answered; "but, of course, I couldn't tell without a microscope."

"Oh!" murmured the professor, his face falling; for this state of things would represent an elementary phenomena in the evolution of life that was probably millions of years anterior to the formation of cells, and he left the room in order to fetch a microscope.

Dr. Morton was still examining the colloid through the professor's powerful compound lens; now he made an

exclamation, and enquired if a certain minute patch of green were not a sign of life.

"That's probably some vegetable spore which has blown in through the window and started to grow," answered Zoe; "we must look below the surface if we want to find originating life. You see," she explained, "an experiment like this is usually carried out in a sterilised chamber; but, in this case, my father has a theory that the surface of the colloid will isolate the remainder from the atmosphere, and that anything which happens below the surface may be regarded as conclusive."

"That's so," murmured the doctor. "And what would be the inner meaning of isolated particles of chromatin?" he asked.

"Many biologists," answered Zoe, "consider that the earliest manifestations of life consisted of formless masses of protoplasm containing particles of chromatin. It will be frightfully interesting to see what the microscope shows us."

But, when Professor Aylmer returned with the microscope, it showed nothing; for he refused to disturb the mass of colloid lest he should disturb the formation of a cell, and, although he removed minute particles from the extreme edge of the surface for inspection, these proved practically useless.

Zoe had left the professor with his microscope and was searching the colloid with the hand lens. "Dad," she said, "I see what you mean."

"It's a cell?" he cried.

"It looks as if it might have the faintest shadow of the appearance of a cell."

"It is a cell!" he asserted.

"I wish you'd take it out and stain it," she suggested.

"No!" cried the professor. "Not for worlds!" And his hands went up in horror.

"Then," said she, "we'd better leave the cell to develop, and go in to lunch."

"I don't like to leave it!" he fussed. "It isn't safe! It isn't safe! Oh, lother bunch!"

But Zoe tucked her arm in his, and led him off.

II

In order that the dining-room might be kept sacred for the genesis of life, lunch had been laid in the drawing-room, and, as Bruce-Smith glanced round the drawing-room wall, he heaved a sigh of relief. "Up to now," he remarked, "I've never appreciated Botticelli at his true value." His eyes wandered on. "Nor have I appreciated Lippo Lippi," he added. "Isn't he a tonic?"

"Bronzino also," answered the professor, "is both strong and polished."

"And," said Zoe, "Filippino Lippi's a dear!"

Bruce-Smith shuddered. "If you'd been piping to these gentlemen all morning," he replied, "you'd have found them out! Filippino's only the precursor of Raphael, and Bronzino's the precursor of everyone else."

"I'm glad," laughed Zoe, "that Botticelli wasn't hung in the dining-room, or you'd have found out by now that he was only the precursor of the Japanese."

"Possibly," answered Bruce-Smith, sadly.

Ever since they came into the drawing-room the professor had been fidgeting. Now he stood up, and, remarking that he could not leave the *Materia* alone, hurried back into the dining-room.

No sooner had the door closed after him than Dr. Morton turned to Zoe. "Has he really manufactured a cell?" he asked.

"Until he stains it and puts it under the microscope," she answered, "it's impossible to say."

"And, if it really proves to be a cell," enquired the doctor, "what will happen then?"

"I should imagine," she answered, "that it would

start to assimilate nutriment and multiply until it had absorbed all the colloid."

"And," said Bruce-Smith, with a real touch of anxiety, "some of it would escape into the Tregan River, and it would fill that; and it would get down to the sea, and it would fill that; and it would——"

But Zoe checked him. "You needn't worry," she said; "I'm practically certain that it couldn't assimilate any nourishment except its own prepared colloid."

"Why shouldn't it?" asked Dr. Morton.

"Because it's only synthetic life, formed by, and out of, a carefully prepared combination of chemicals."

Again they questioned her.

"Jack's seen," she said, "how certain chemicals will assemble themselves into the worm-stuff of brandlings; everyone knows how a saturated solution of certain inorganic salts will produce crystals; thus we are able to produce both matter and form by means of chemistry. If a certain colloid composition, plus certain energy-transforming ingredients, would produce both the material and form of life, it would only take us one step further. We should merely have obtained some of the phenomena of life, without the vital principle."

"And the vital principle is——?" asked Dr. Morton.

"The principle that guides the multiplying cells into the form of the body they shall take, that determines the cycle of growth and maturity and decay, the principle which the modern scientific world calls the 'Entelechy,' and which Mr. Bruce-Smith calls the 'Soul': *'tes all ter wan!'*"

Dr. Morton shook his head. Of course he'd seen something about the development of this idea in the papers, but it was quite beyond him: there had been a complete revolution in science since his day.

"You see," explained Zoe, "when modern intellectual science took the field, it found a vast tangle of illogical hypothetical conjectures built up round Darwin's theory of evolution. The form of any living body was assumed

to be determined by a vague something that was called heredity, and this heredity was supposed to have been evolved by the laws of natural selection and survival. All this was called orthodox science, and the moment a person began to question it he was regarded as a heretic. "In your day," she asked, "how would science have accounted for an embryo taking the form of a baby?" And she looked at him with a calm certainty.

Dr. Morton smiled. "By the law of heredity," he answered.

Zoe nodded. "Exactly!" said she. "Of course," she went on, "the original cell, which shall develop into a baby, was inherited from the parents; but, when that cell multiplies into a number of similar cells, each with the same heredity and the same character, what makes one cell start multiplying itself into the form of the heart and another cell into the form of a limb? That's the sort of question the intellectuals were up against, and the materialists mocked them as heretics."

"It's a poser!" murmured the doctor.

"Next," she continued, "came the modern materialists with their discovery of the action of the ductless glands in the local development of the body; and these modern materialists say that form is consequent on the action and interaction of the pituitary, thyroid, and other ductless glands. We intellectuals answer, 'Yes! but what set some cells developing into the heart, and other similar cells developing into the pituitary gland?'"

The doctor was enjoying this clear statement of the scientific duel. "And what does the modern materialist say to this?" he asked.

"Oh, he shelves the question! He says that the form and quality of the ductless glands are determined by the nature of the living material that is inherited from the parents—which is perfectly correct, but which is no answer to the question."

He nodded. "Please repeat the question," said he.

"Why do some multiplying cells of a forming body develop into the heart, whilst other cells of exactly similar character develop themselves into the thyroid gland?"

"And the intellectual answer——?"

"That, since there cannot be an effect without a cause, there must be some efficient cause which guides and organises the multiplying cells into the form of a body; and, in order that we may be able to think clearly, we call this cause the 'Entelechy.'"

"But," suggested the doctor, "isn't it possible that local development may be due to position—that a cell in a certain position in the body may have an heredity impulse to develop into the heart, a similar cell in another position into the thyroid gland?"

Zoe shook her head. "I don't think that could be argued logically," she replied; "besides, there's an absolute answer: cut off a young branch from a rose-tree and plant it in the ground; it does not continue its local development into a branch, but it starts an entelechy of its own and grows into a rose-tree. In the same way, a bit of root does not continue its local development into root; but it starts growing into the form of a plant."

"You're right!" he said. "Please go on with the definition of the entelechy."

"Since we call the cause of form in living organisms, the 'Entelechy,'" she continued; "the entelechy is simply our term for the cause of form. It is associated with living matter, and yet appears to be beyond the realms of matter. Its effects can be detected by the microscope, but itself is altogether beyond the scope of the microscope. It moves through a regular cycle, guiding growth into form, guiding form into maturity and reproduction, guiding maturity into decline. During the whole of this cycle, it moves the cells to multiply so that they may replace waste and repair damage, and it checks them from multiplying into abnormal growths."

"In fact," he argued, "it's only a theory."

"No!" she answered, "Although it can only be

proved by reason, it's an efficient cause—as efficient as the sculptor's hand which models the clay.”

“Do you assume,” he asked, “that it is inherited from the parents?”

“Since the entelechy is beyond the realms of exact science,” said she, “there can be no definite answer. Personally, all things considered, I should answer in the negative.”

“Then,” he objected, “how can you account for hereditary likeness and character?”

“If you were a clever sculptor,” she answered, “and you had to make various portrait statues of the same man out of various materials—marble, granite, gold and lead—wouldn't you form your portrait statues quite differently? And, if your gold and lead men should happen to come alive, wouldn't they have quite different characters? The human likeness is formed according to the quality of the inherited living material.”

He nodded his head, for her argument was logical.

“Take the marriage of two cretins,” she instanced; “the inherited body-stuff of the child is unsuitable for making thyroid glands; consequently the child has inferior thyroid glands, and grows up a cretin like its parents.”

“At last I see what you're driving at,” cried the doctor; “since your father's cell would only be a synthetic production, and quite apart from the regular scheme of life, we have no reason to assume that any guiding principle of form will be associated with it!”

She looked at him with open admiration. “You're a very clever person!” said she.

“Which is due to the clear and lucid manner in which you stated your arguments,” he answered.

“Thank you!” said Zoe, flushing with pleasure.

During this argument, most of which he had heard before, Bruce-Smith had been thinking. “Suppose the professor manages to make living matter, minus a soul,” he suggested; “and suppose your friend Tanuath

associates himself with the multiplying cells so that he may form them into a body : what then ? ”

“ You darling ! ” cried Zoe, and she slipped her hand underneath the tablecloth so that it could touch his. Her mind, clear-cut and brilliant as a diamond, delighted in his fanciful imagination. It seemed to supply the quality which her mind lacked.

III

That evening, after Professor Aylmer had retired into his laboratory, Bruce-Smith resumed his questioning.

“ Do you really think the professor’s found a cell ? ”

“ Or cells,” suggested Zoe, picking up Abdul and beginning to pet him, whilst Smith laid his head jealously on her knee.

“ Or cells ? ” he amended.

“ I’m blessed if I could see them,” she answered ; “ and yet, somehow or other, I can’t swear that I didn’t see them. In fact I’m rather inclined to believe he’s right.”

“ But,” said he, “ your sight must be better than his ! ”

“ You see,” said she, “ if I’ve any doubt about a transparent object, I always stain it at once, so I’ve practically no experience in this sort of work ; whereas he’s had years and years of training in exact observation, and I’ve never known him make a mistake.”

He came over and sat down beside her on the sofa. “ Suppose,” he said, “ your father should succeed in making his living cell, what is there to prevent Tanuath from taking it and forming the multiplying cells into a body ? ”

She looked at him, half amused, half mocking. “ I didn’t know you believed in reincarnation,” she retorted.

“ I don’t ! I’m not assuming that Tanuath’s an ancient Babylonian ; I’m assuming that he’s a devil ! ”

"Oh!" she cried. "How delightful! Then, of course, he'd turn the *Materia Elementorum* into the form of a satyr or a lycanthrope or a hellhound and work awful woe. Jack! Jack! What a heavenly imagination you've got!"

"Imagination, yourself!" he laughed. "How about old Soliano?"

"That's just a token that I'm lacking in imagination! When I want to imagine anything, I've got to imagine someone to imagine it for me."

Again he laughed, and, muttering something about complimentary opposites, put his arm round her. Then the door opened; they started apart, and the professor came in.

Professor Aylmer was in a fuss, and a bad fuss at that. He was making the cell safe for the night—or, rather, he should say the cells; for he was certain that cleavage had already set in—and he wanted them to come and see if his arrangements were safe.

So they followed him into the laboratory, to find the vessel of colloid on a small iron table that was placed close underneath the open window. A hail of questions assailed them.

Was the colloid safe like that? Would it be safe if he covered the vessel with muslin? If he left open the window would gurglers bet in—he meant would betters gurgle in? Was there any danger of bats touching the stuff?

They calmed him as best they could, Zoe explaining that the muslin would protect the colloid from bats, and Bruce-Smith assuring him that, as himself and Smith were sleeping in the room above, the dog would be certain to give warning if there were burglars about.

"Naughty Abdul!" cried Zoe; for Abdul had followed them into the laboratory, and was investigating the *Materia*.

"You must shut him up for the night!" said the professor, and Zoe caught him as he was again scrambling on to the iron table.

"Naughty Abdul!" purred Zoe, as she carried him to the kitchen door. She opened the door, kissed him, put him inside, and shut the door carefully.

"Now say good-night, Jack," she ordered, "because I'm going to bed!" But ten minutes later they were still in the kitchen passage.

"Poor old piper!" murmured Zoe; and her lips touched his, light as thistledown.

CHAPTER XIV

NIGHT

I

BRUCE-SMITH slept badly. Perhaps the continuous repetition of one short air during the whole morning had jangled his nerves ; perhaps the soreness of his lips irritated him ; anyhow, he dreamed a series of vivid dreams.

He was looking on. Just as a man looking through a powerful telescope can see the living picture of what is going on miles away, so he could see exactly what was going on in the bowl of colloid. The professor had been right ; for, not only was the cell a reality, but also it was multiplying itself into quite a number of tiny cells.

He fixed his attention on one of these cells, and, as he watched, he could see exactly what was going on inside the cell. There were numerous tiny particles of matter strung like beads upon a thin thread, and there was another little particle that was altogether distinct from them and apparently the master particle ; then, as he watched, each particle divided itself into two, and one half of the number collected towards one end of the cell and the other half towards the other end ; then his attention passed on to the surface of the cell.

The surface of the cell was behaving in an unusual manner ; it was rippling as though it were alive ; it was contracting as though it had been nipped in at the centre ; it was—yes ! it was dividing the cell into two distinct but adhering cells !

His curiosity made him peer inside these cells, and he

saw that the tiny particles of matter had arranged themselves round the two new master particles, and that the arrangement was in every way the exact facsimile of the arrangement in the cell that he had already watched : the cell that he had already watched had absorbed nutriment and duplicated itself under his very eyes ; and, as he now watched, the daughter-cells were already commencing to repeat the process.

With an effort, he withdrew his attention from the particular cells that he was watching and fixed it on the whole mass. There were now dozens, hundreds, thousands of cells, each distinct, all adhering, and the whole was shaped something like—he cast about in his mind for a simile—something like a mulberry. Then, this was what Zoe had meant when she talked about living matter with the energy to multiply itself by subdivision : it was just living matter that the professor had made, living matter without the principle of form, and it would go on increasing until it had absorbed all the colloid in the vessel.

His imagination worked on like the ordinary dream imagination : why should not he multiply himself by subdivision ? It would be an interesting experiment, and he would be able to write double the quantity of poetry and earn double the amount of money. All he had to do was to divide his inside into two equal parts, and squeeze in his waist until he had effected the cleavage. He began to squeeze ; he squeezed and squeezed ; but unfortunately, just as he was dividing himself into two, he bit his lips with the effort, and, waking himself up, spoilt what might have proved a most interesting scientific experiment.

The dream had been extraordinarily vivid, and for a moment he lay still, laughing at himself ; then he got out of bed to get some vaseline for his sore lips, and became conscious that his recent efforts after self-multiplication had made him quite tender round the middle. He looked at his watch, found that it was past midnight, lay awake for a time, and again dozed off,

Again he found himself in the laboratory, and at once went over to inspect the colloid. He gave a gasp: there was something in the centre of the vessel that was distinctly visible. It was the size of a small frog, and its shape was uncertain. It might have been the first development of a foal or a pig, but he could not say more; it certainly had limbs, and was a mammal. This mammalian quality struck him as strange; it was as though a tree might be a tree without being any particular kind of tree, or as though a fish might be a fish without belonging to any distinct species of fishes.

Then the thing had acquired an entelechy! Whence? Possibly from its creator, and it would grow into a human baby who should grow up into the likeness of the professor.

But stay! The thing was growing! He looked at it with contempt, for it was growing into the form of a monkey, a synthetic monkey that would jape and jeer at the professor. It would make a remarkably stout monkey if it should keep on developing on its present lines. He drew a deep breath. If this monkey should continue to develop on its present lines, it would be more than a monkey: it would be the missing link!

Bruce-Smith tried to straighten himself, and the sweat poured off his forehead. This was no monkey! It was no missing link! It was a baby, and there was a strange suction-pipe attached to its middle through which it was sucking in the colloid and growing visibly.

He was stooping over the vessel in a most uncomfortable attitude, but, although he could not move so as to ease himself, he was in the best possible position for observation. There was something strange about this baby. For a moment he could not tell where the strangeness lay; then he saw that the legs were formed wrong, with the knee-joints turned the wrong way. The thighs were well developed, but the lower part of the legs was abnormally thin, and he was afraid that the poor little beast would be club-footed. With an effort, he looked

at the head ; the face was longer and less chubby than that of an ordinary baby and the nose was larger. Again he looked at the legs ; the thighs appeared to be growing hairy and the club-feet were more pronounced than ever. The whole was abnormal, abominably abnormal, and yet it seemed strangely familiar ; he was certain that he had seen it in pictures, and there was a statue. He had it ! The thing was a faun—a young satyr !

By now the faun had absorbed most of the colloid, and its weight must have been nearly six pounds. As the head came above the surface, it moved ; the faun opened its eyes and looked round ; it opened its mouth and filled its lungs ; it was as conscious and fully awake as a newly-hatched chicken.

Then it began to move. Its legs had been bent like those of a sleeping goat, and now it stretched them straight out. This movement brought its head above the edge of the bowl, and it looked at Bruce-Smith with a questioning and suspicious expression. It was not in the least like the timid, wistful faun that artists are accustomed to paint, and there was something that was hostile, almost malignant, that seemed to be peering out of its eyes.

The faun stretched its arms. It caught hold of the side of the vessel, and, bringing its club-feet over the side of the bowl, sat up. Bruce-Smith tried his best to step forward and catch hold of it, but, strive as he would, he could not move a muscle : the whole situation was like a nightmare. Then the faun began to lower itself slowly over the side of the vessel.

II

With the crash of breaking glass in his ears, and the bull-terrier barking like fury, Bruce-Smith started up. He sprang out of bed, slipped on a pair of pumps, and, without waiting to put on a dressing-gown, ran downstairs. The laboratory door was locked on the outside ; and,

standing so that Smith might be able to dart in the moment the door was opened, he unlocked the door and flung it open. The dog rushed in, and, with one sniff round the room, looked up at him, wagging his tail.

The laboratory was both empty and untouched, and for a moment Bruce-Smith thought that it must have been a false alarm ; then he saw that the small iron table upon which the colloid had stood was upset, and that it had fallen so that the top was resting on the stone-work of the open window : it was obvious that the colloid must have fallen outside the window and that the sound of breaking glass had been the smashing of the bowl. He picked up Smith, for fear that he would cut his feet on the broken glass, and, putting him under his arm, climbed through the casement and on to the terrace.

It was sufficiently light for him to see what he was doing, and he started with an examination of the colloid. Considering that there had been about eight pints of the mixture, there was surprisingly little on the gravel, and he looked round to see if there were any traces or tracks leading away from the window ; there was a distinct trail on the wet grass leading from the direction of the window, across the lawn, and on towards the woods. He examined the line that led from the window to the commencement of the trail, and found traces of the colloid ; so he concluded that whatever had made the trail had first smashed the colloid bowl.

Of course his dream was still clearly in his mind, and it seemed as though this were a continuation of his dream and that the faun had upset the table when it climbed out of the bowl ; but he side-tracked this idea as absolutely absurd, and crossed the terrace to examine the trail.

Now, if one happens to have read hunting adventures, there is nothing that seems so easy as unravelling a spoor ; but if the ground happens to be fairly hard, and a trail has been made across a dewy lawn, sporing is entirely a different matter, and, after a careful study of the track, Bruce-Smith came to the conclusion that it might

have been made by a man who dragged his feet, or it might have been made by a moderately small animal, or, with a shrug, it might even have been made by a faun. He tried to set Smith on the trail, but the dog only wagged his tail and looked up at him. Then there was the yell of an animal in pain, and Bruce-Smith hurried forward.

There was no need to urge on Smith now: taking almost the line of the track, he went forward like an arrow; he entered the wood; there was the sound of a body that was larger than a terrier breaking through the undergrowth; there was the noise of Smith's challenging growl; there was the sound of Smith following the intruder through the brushwood. Bruce-Smith hurried on.

He had crossed the lawn, had penetrated some fifty yards into the bracken, hazel, and briars that formed the undergrowth, when he found the body of Abdul. The cat was lying amongst the trodden-down bracken; one foreleg was almost torn off, and a closer examination showed that the neck was broken. Bruce-Smith threw a handful of bracken over the body, and went on after Smith. But a hundred yards' scramble, his pyjamas soaked with the dew and torn with brambles, his pumps cut by the granite, showed him that his progress would be slow, and the sound of the chase was already faint in the distance; so, with a sigh of regret, he returned to where Abdul was lying.

He removed the bracken and examined the body. There were traces of colloid on the head, under the chin, and upon the paws, one foreleg was nearly torn off, and the neck was broken: it was just as though a hand had caught hold of the foreleg, and another hand, smeared with colloid, had caught hold of the head and, with a wrench, had smashed Abdul's neck. Bruce-Smith picked some fresh fern, wrapped it round the cat's body, and carried Abdul back towards the house.

III

Bruce-Smith found the professor kneeling on the gravel and mourning over the remains of the *Materia Elementorum*. He was wearing an old Jaeger dressing-gown that was much too big for him, and, with his skinny neck sticking out of the voluminous garment, he reminded Bruce-Smith of a tortoise; but his real grief prevented him from looking absurd. "The work of a lifetime ruined!" he moaned.

"But you can make a fresh batch of colloid, sir," suggested Bruce-Smith, "and repeat your experiment."

The professor's face brightened. In his disappointment, he had not thought of that.

"Now, professor," said Bruce-Smith, "I've got some more bad news for you," and he went on to tell of the noise in the wood and his discovery of Abdul.

Professor Aylmer was honestly distressed, for he had been fond of the animal; but, when he began to inspect the body, his sorrow gave place to the spirit of enquiry. Obviously the cat had escaped from the kitchen and got at the colloid; the crash of the table and smash of the bowl had frightened him, and he had run away into the wood; then some animal had caught him and killed him. "You will remember," he added, "that Abdul twice tried to get at the colloid last night. Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"

"But what could have killed him?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"Probably a stray dog. Dogs appear to have a natural antipathy to cats."

"A dog wouldn't have done that. He might have broken the back or torn the throat, but he wouldn't have torn off one paw and broken the neck!"

The professor stooped over the body. "It locks," he said, "like the unreasonable violence of one of the larger apes."

"Or a man?" suggested Bruce-Smith.

"Or a man suffering from an excess of rage," amended the professor.

"In fact, a man with the temper of a fiend!"

Again the professor stooped and examined Abdul.

"A madman," he suggested, "might have tried to get in at the open window; the room being dark, he put his hand into the colloid and upset the table; this frightened him and he ran away into the wood; in the wood he met Abdul, and, his fear changing to rage, he caught hold of the head, his hand still wet with the colloid, and thus killed him."

"If you look again, sir," said Bruce-Smith, "you'll see from the marks of the colloid that the hand which gripped the head must have been smaller than that of a man."

"Yes!" answered the professor; "it's more like the grip of a boy, or of one of the higher apes."

"I must be getting into some clothes," remarked Bruce-Smith. "My pyjamas are wet through." He had got the information he wanted without referring to his dream. But, before he left, he paused a minute. Smith was returning across the lawn, and by the dog's manner it was evident that he had failed to overtake his quarry.

IV

It was Sunday, and Bruce-Smith intended to drive over to Camelford for Mass; as the Mass was at ten, he came down to breakfast early. The post was already in, and amongst his letters he found one from Fr. Arbuthnot.

After the professor's experience with automatic writing, he had written to the Jesuit asking for some details of spiritualism; and here was the answer:

"DEAR MR. BRUCE-SMITH,

"The attitude of the Catholic Church towards

the practice of spiritualism, as distinct from the mere study of psychic phenomena, is clear and unmistakable. Ever since the middle of the last century, when believers in mediumistic communication with the spirits of the dead began to take themselves seriously and to treat their experience as a new revelation, the most authorised exponents of Catholic moral teaching have denounced such attempted intercourse.

"Whilst agreeing with you that most of the professional clairvoyance is mere trickery; whilst agreeing with you that much of the so-called spirit intervention in private automatic communications is due to the unconscious memory and imagination of the medium, as well as to unintentional thought-transfer from others at the séance, there are still some spiritualistic phenomena which the cleverest scientific investigators have been compelled to acknowledge as genuine, and I submit the following suggestions for your consideration:

"By mediumistic séances and attempts at automatic writing the enquirer is brought into contact with mysterious forces and intelligences of which he knows nothing, certainly nothing good. Right through the Old and New Testament, and right through all Christian centuries, we are put on our guard by solemn warnings against invoking agencies which seem in every way analogous to those now so popular.

"In the second place, the atmosphere of these séances is thoroughly unwholesome. The most strenuous upholders of spiritualism admit that the communicating intelligences are sometimes evil and malignant, and still more commonly utterly untruthful, or at least freakish.

"As I suggested before, Fr. Morat of Stonyhurst is far better able to advise you on these matters than I am. Why not write to him?

"Yours sincerely,

"SYDNEY ARBUTHNOT, S.J."

Bruce-Smith whistled softly to himself. Reading

between the lines of this most cautious letter, the Jesuit considered—and he had the Church behind him—that the intelligences which inspired spiritualism were not the souls of the dead, but spirits that were sometimes evil and malignant, often lying and freakish.

Suppose the professor had been right about the automatic writing, but wrong about the source? Suppose some evil spirit had given him a formula for producing living matter, and that the evil spirit had entered in and possessed the living matter, guiding the growing matter into the form of a body? Suppose his own dream had been true, and that the embodied demon, small in stature but demoniacal in strength and evil, had upset the bowl? Then all the rest fitted in.

The dining-room door opened to admit Zoe. For one instant Bruce-Smith thought of telling her his dream and deductions; but in an instant he saw that her logical, scientific mind would certainly reject them without question, and that she would probably think him a fanciful idiot.

So he consoled her and petted her as best he could, and, with the comforting suggestion that they should bury Abdul in the rose-garden after lunch, set off for Camelford.

V

Bruce-Smith had cut a sod in the prettiest part of the rose-garden, and Abdul had been laid to rest on a handful of fresh roses. Then the lovers had gone to spend the Sunday afternoon in the shade of the loggia.

They had talked over the death of Abdul, and Zoe had spoken of his intelligence and his charming ways, when the conversation drifted naturally to the professor's recent experiment.

"How does a cell divide?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"It just divides into two reproductions of the original,"

answered Zoe. "These two daughter-cells are distinct, but adhering."

"Are there a number of tiny particles of matter in the cell?" asked Bruce-Smith, "and are these particles joined by what looks like a fine thread?"

"Yes," answered Zoe. "They're particles of chromatin, and they're called chromosomes."

"And is there a master particle distinct from the rest?"

"Yes: It's called the centrosome."

"And do all the particles divide themselves in two and gather into two groups, and does the surface of the cell contract so that it may divide the cell into two?"

"Yes," she answered. "Where did you learn all this?"

"I dreamt it!" he replied.

"How strange!" she murmured; then her eyes twinkled and there came a dimple at the corner of her mouth. "I was dreaming about dad's cell last night," she said, "and perhaps this was a sort of dream-transfer. You know we're complementary opposites, Jack!"

"H'm!" he muttered. "Did you dream all those details, Zoe?" he asked.

"I don't remember," she answered. "I only remember that I dreamt about the cell, and that I was trying to see it through a microscope."

He nearly told her of his last night's experience; but, on second thoughts, he resolved to keep silence for the present. But, if the first part of his dream had been the truth, as opposed to imagination, why should not the whole of it have been true?

CHAPTER XV

A DINNER-PARTY

I

ON Monday evening the Aylmers and Bruce-Smith were dining with General and Mrs. Fordyce of Tregan View. The house was on the opposite side of the Camel, and, as it was only twenty-five minutes' walk by the foot-bridge across the river, whilst the drive round by Gam Bridge took at least an hour, they resolved to take advantage of the fine autumn evening, and walk.

Down through Tregunden Woods, leaving the empty cottage on the left, across the foot-bridge and along a path close beside the Camel, the walk was delightful. The moonlight wove patterns through the branches and made the foaming river glitter like frosted silver, and there was just a hint of keenness in the air.

As they approached the house, Zoe touched her lover's arm. "Remember, Jack," she said, "that Mrs. Fordyce had a son who was killed in the retreat from Mons."

"I'll remember," he answered.

"And remember," said the professor, "that the good lady has a weakness for spiritualism, and that she is apt to be unpleasant in controversy."

"Am I easy to draw into controversy?" replied Bruce-Smith.

The professor chuckled.

II

The party was not a large one ; the general and Mrs. Fordyce and two nieces, the Aylmers, Bruce-Smith, and Dr. Morton, that made eight ; there were also a Major Bewes from Michaelstowe and a Mr. and Mrs. Trelawny and their daughter from Helgan : twelve in all.

The house was comfortable, the dinner excellent, the champagne beyond reproach, and Mrs. Fordyce proved herself a most amusing hostess. Trelawny had taken in his hostess ; Bruce-Smith had taken in a very charming Miss Trelawny, and sat next Mrs. Fordyce and almost opposite Major Bewes.

Everything went well until the savoury, and then Bewes unconsciously turned the conversation into the dangerous topic.

"By the way, Bruce-Smith," he asked, "are you any relation to the Bruce-Smith who wrote 'Songs of a Subaltern'?"

"I'm the man himself," answered Bruce-Smith.

The major put up his eyeglass and fixed him. "Good!" he said. "I wish you'd carried them further ; no sooner does one get the flavour in one's mouth than they stop." He turned to Mrs. Fordyce. "Do you know," he asked, "that Mr. Bruce-Smith has done some magnificent poems about the army?"

"Zoe told me that he wrote poetry," she answered ; and, turning to Bruce-Smith : "So you were in it?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"Were you in the retreat from Mons?"

"No. I had to pass through an O.T.C., and only went overseas in 1915. I was on the Somme."

"And did you by any chance meet anyone who had seen the Angels of Mons?"

Bruce-Smith smiled and shook his head. "I'm afraid," he answered, "that the Angels of Mons were a newspaper story."

"You unbeliever!" chid Mrs. Fordyce. "Now I happen to have had the story confirmed by a friend of mine, and she received her information at first hand by means of automatic writing." She looked at him with interest. "Do you believe in spiritism?" she asked.

Major Bewes grinned. "If you'd read Bruce-Smith's poems," he said, "'Regina Angelorum' for choice, you'd know why he isn't allowed to dabble in the occult."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Fordyce.

"Because I'm a Catholic," answered Bruce-Smith, "and my Church forbids it."

"Why does your Church forbid it?"

"Because it disapproves of the practice," he answered, dreading what might be coming.

The major's voice joined in: "Thinks most of it fraud, Mrs. Fordyce, and the rest devil worship. I'm not sure that's wrong!" And he looked at Bruce-Smith with a broad grin.

"Is that true?" asked Mrs. Fordyce, with a baleful glare.

But if she thought to overawe Bruce-Smith she was mistaken. "I don't go as far as that," he answered; "but I do say that no one knows anything good of the intelligences behind spiritualism, and that these intelligences are sometimes evil and more often utterly untruthful."

"What a wicked and abominable statement!" she cried.

"Yet," answered Bruce-Smith quietly, "it has the support of both the Old and New Testaments." He loathed being dragged into this argument, and he was wishing desperately that he knew a little more about the subject than he had learnt from Fr. Arbuthnot's letter.

As the argument had gathered way, the conversation through the rest of the table had died down; now the professor's voice came very clearly. "To a great extent," he said, "Mr. Bruce-Smith is correct. There can be no doubt that spiritualism was forbidden to the Jews,

partly because it was the cult of a vicious heathen priesthood, partly because men were not then sufficiently versed in science to enable them to study psychic phenomena with safety, and partly because the pursuit of spiritualism, without scientific knowledge, might have tended to obscure the idea of a divine Jehovah."

Mrs. Fordyce was furious. "Professor Aylmer," she cried, "I always understood that you believed in spiritism."

"My dear lady," replied the professor, "I have never believed in spiritism."

"But," she cried; and she stopped, scarcely able to believe her ears.

"Spiritism," he remarked coldly, "is the constructive spiritualistic theory of the Frenchman, Allan Kardec, and, as it involves a belief in the idea of a progressive reincarnation, I have never been able to accept it."

"But," remonstrated Mrs. Fordyce, "everyone calls it 'spiritism' now."

"Which shows they don't know what they're talking about," snapped the professor.

"You believe in spiritualism?" suggested Dr. Morton.

"If it is handled cautiously," answered the professor. His voice became academic: "When Mr. Bruce-Smith speaks of evil and deceiving intelligences communicating through a medium, he is perfectly correct. Those who have been evil on this earth remain evil still, and the souls of evil and lying men try to communicate evil and lying thoughts through the lips of the medium; consequently, spiritualism should only be practised by those who have educated and balanced minds. As a matter of fact, I believe that we are cautioned by the Apostles that we must test the spirits and not believe every spirit."

"What do you mean by testing the spirits?" asked the doctor.

"First I should suggest the application of severe mechanical tests," replied the professor, "so as to make certain that the message came from a disembodied intelli-

gence, and not through the intentional or unintentional action of the medium ; next I should suggest the testing of the spiritual identity. For instance, if a spirit professed to be the departed soul of John Jones, I should require information that could only have been known to John Jones."

"And you mean to tell me," asked Major Bewes, "that these conditions have been actually fulfilled?"

"Certainly!" answered the professor. "I myself have obtained most reassuring messages from departed friends under test conditions."

Mrs. Fordyce turned to Bruce-Smith. "So this is what your Church condemns!" she remarked.

Again the professor's quiet voice broke in. "Yes," he said. "And, what is more, the Roman Catholic Church is wise in forbidding the general public to practise spiritualism."

"I," sniffed Mrs. Fordyce, "call it both narrow and bigoted."

"And I," replied the professor, "call it most expedient. Fortunately, I myself am not bound by ecclesiastical ruling."

This gave Zoe her chance. "Mrs. Fordyce," she said, "if you were forbidden, either by your religion or country, to do a certain thing, would you do it?"

"And yet," replied Mrs. Fordyce, "I seem to remember having seen scald-cream at your tea-table when it was prohibited by D.O.R.A."

There was a roar of laughter ; for Mrs. Fordyce had not only smitten Zoe hip and thigh, but she had also winged most of those present. She took strategic advantage of her success, and prepared to make a move.

As the hostess collected the ladies with her eyes, the pretty girl next Bruce-Smith touched his arm. "I've been so sorry for you!" she murmured.

He laughed, and muttered something.

"I tried the planchette once," she whispered, "and I asked it who I should marry, and it wrote, 'Ever with

her mother ! ' and I've never tried it since ! " And, with a smile, she hurried after the others.

As the ladies left the room, there was a sigh of relief. General Fordyce came round the table with the decanters, seated himself in his wife's chair, helped himself to port, started the decanters on their journey, and turned to Bruce-Smith. " I'm sorry my wife gave you such a raggin'," he said. " She's the unfortunate habit of speakin' out her mind."

" It's a woman's prerogative," chuckled Trelawny. " Their arguments always have a sting ! "

" I didn't mind, sir," answered Bruce-Smith. " Unfortunately, I know nothing about spiritualism, otherwise—" and, glancing at Professor Aylmer, who was now sitting opposite him, he raised his voice, " otherwise I should have got my knife into the professor. I'm morally certain his arguments weren't sound."

As the professor looked up, there was a twinkle in his eye. " You would probably have argued," he suggested, " that my spirits were in reality demons ? "

" Of course ! " murmured Bruce-Smith, wondering how this natural conclusion could have escaped him.

" In which case," said the professor, " I should have asked you if your saints had not communicated with the living, and whether they had not even accomplished the psychic phenomenon of materialisation."

" He's got you again," chuckled the general. " I'm sorry for you, Bruce-Smith ! "

As the laugh died down, Major Bewes stood up. " Bring your glass and come with me, Bruce-Smith," he said, " and we'll leave these spiritualists alone. I want to ask you something about your ' Songs of a Subaltern.' " And he sat down at the other end of the table. " I can't stand spiritualism myself," he murmured.

" Now," he said, sinking his voice, " I'm not asking any questions, but I want to give you a hint. My valet's keeping company with a girl who's a sister of Zoe Aylmer's maid, and he told me yesterday that you and Zoe were

engaged. I'm telling you this because, unless there's something in it, Zoe's far too nice a girl to get herself talked about."

Bruce-Smith thought a moment before he answered. "Thank you for your hint, major," he said. "As a matter of fact, we hope to be married in twelve months."

The major sipped his port, raising the glass unostentatiously in salutation. "You lucky dog!" he whispered.

"It's damned awkward," said Bruce-Smith softly. "You see, we've got the professor's consent to be married, but he won't hear of an engagement. We're to be as much as possible together during the coming year, and we may get married at the end of it; but there's neither to be an engagement nor an engagement-ring."

Major Bewes glanced down the table at the professor. "How like him!" he murmured. "He's got some scientific theory in that silly old head of his, and he quite forgets that everything is bound to leak out through the servants."

"Zoe's going to give a hint to Mrs. Fordyce this evening."

"That'll do the trick!" replied the major below his breath. "Well, I've known Zoe since I was a subaltern, and you've got the best, sweetest, dearest girl in the county. Listen!" he said.

The general had grown enthusiastic. "That brandy," they heard, "must have been in Mostyn's cellars for at least fifty years, and I've secured four dozen of it!"

"Still talking psychology!" murmured Bewes; then: "Halloa, general!" he said. "I hope that spirit of yours will materialise with the coffee!"

III

The Aylmers left Tregan View about eleven, and Dr. Morton, who lived a mile further on, walked with them as far as Tregunden. The professor and Morton walked together, the lovers following at a discreet distance.

"What a vicious old lady Mrs. Fordyce is!" said Bruce-Smith, as they crossed the bridge over the Camel.

"It's only when she gets arguing about her beliefs," answered Zoe; "a lot of people are like that. Besides, I forgot to tell you that her son became a Catholic just before he died, and that's made her spiteful against Catholics. She was quite nice to you when you came into the drawing-room."

He slipped his arm into hers. "Zoe," he said, "what do you think of all this spiritualism?"

"You won't like my opinion," she answered; "but I can't help thinking that the weight of evidence is in its favour. Jack," she added, "is it true that the Catholic Church puts it down to diabolism?"

"Yes," he answered. "The Church considers that it's either trickery, or auto-suggestion, or the other thing."

"Of course," said she, "both dad and I agree with you on the first two counts—there's a lot of trickery and a lot of unconscious suggestion from self and others—but why do you think the real thing is diabolic, and not the communication from departed spirits?"

With a smile, he explained how little he knew about the subject except that it was forbidden by the Church. "But I should imagine," he said, "that departed souls, without any physical energy left, wouldn't have the power to communicate."

"Science has accepted mental telepathy," she answered.

"But," he argued, "I imagined that thought-transfer was due to some sort of electrical discharge from one to another."

"It's the commonly accepted hypothesis," she answered; "but, since we've got no instrument that will record the 'N Rays,' it's only a working hypothesis. Thought-transfer may be due to some unknown mental power, and departed spirits may retain this power."

They had left the river and were going up through the woods, when Bruce-Smith saw something in the bushes

about thirty yards from the path; there was an open patch, and the moonlight was shining straight on the bushes. "What's that?" he whispered.

"Where?" whispered Zoe.

But he had left her, and was making a dart straight for the bushes. There was a rustle in the undergrowth, and, as Bruce-Smith reached the bushes, a stone whizzed close to his head. Another stone followed, missing him by only a hairbreadth; and, since he was not going to risk being knocked out and leaving Zoe unprotected, he went back to her as quickly as he could.

"What is it?" cried Zoe.

"All I know," he answered, "is that I saw a small face watching us from the bushes."

"Oh!" said she. "It was a gipsy boy after the rabbits. That's why he threw stones at you!"

But Bruce-Smith felt morally certain that it was no boy, and he felt morally convinced that the thing was connected with his dream and with the professor's attempt at creating life. So he hurried Zoe on until the trees began to thin.

Perhaps it was the thought of the thing in the wood, perhaps it was a sense of the physical danger that might have come to his sweetheart, but, somehow or other, a great wave of tenderness towards her came over him. "Sweetheart!" he murmured, and put his arms round her.

She let him draw her close to him, clinging to him on her part and murmuring endearments. She had never clung to him like this before, and she had never kissed him like this before, and, in a flash, he had given her one last kiss, had put his arm round her waist, and was leading her out of the wood.

As they reached the house, he drew Zoe into the shadow of the house and kissed her more calmly.

"Jack," she whispered, "I—I didn't know love was like this! It—it frightens me!"

IV

After he had gone to his room, Bruce-Smith began to think vigorously.

Until now, the love between him and Zoe had been the wholesome love of two singularly nice young people who had just become engaged. It was a strong love, a virile love; but still there had always been something particularly—he could think of no other word—something particularly wholesome about it.

The incident in the wood had startled him, startled him horribly. It was just as though their two clean selves had come under the influence of some power that was both passionate and sensuous, and this influence had come on them in the wood and had ceased when they had left the wood. The whole thing seemed to fit in with that thing they had met in the wood, and that thing seemed to hinge on the professor's creation of life.

Could the professor have created synthetic living matter, and could some fiend have seized on it and used the living matter as a vehicle for materialisation? The idea seemed preposterous, incredible, and yet he could not put it away from him.

Let him think it over! If his dream was in any way true, the professor had received his formula from some demoniacal intelligence who called himself Tanuath, and, working on this formula, the professor had made synthetic living matter that lacked an entelechy (or principle of form), and Tanuath had entered into this living matter and given it the form of some demoniacal body that should presently grow into a materialised power of evil.

So far he had only attained the size and shape of a small faun; but he was essentially malicious, and already he was beginning to exercise an unwholesome influence on those who went near him. What would he be like in a few month's time?

Well, at any rate Zoe was due back at Oxford in a few

days, and, in the following months, he would have time to find out about the possibility of his theory and the way to meet the danger.

So, putting away disturbing thoughts, Bruce-Smith said his prayers like a good Christian, and, turning in, slept till morning.

CHAPTER XVI

MURDER

I

SEVEN out of the twelve months' probation had already passed.

The Christmas vacation Bruce-Smith had spent with Zoe and the professor at Oxford ; at the end of March he had been called abroad by the serious illness of his mother, who had been wintering at Cannes ; the rest of his time had been spent in honest hard work. For, besides his poetry—the Translations were to come out in a few weeks' time, and he had already found a publisher for " Poems of Life and Love," which were to appear in the early autumn—he had settled down to the writing of articles for the *Saturday Review* and other of the more serious weeklies.

Having left his mother on the road to recovery, Bruce-Smith had just returned from Cannes. His rooms on the Embankment had been spring-cleaned during his absence ; the fresh April air was coming in through the open windows, and the welcome smell of frying bacon was ascending from the kitchens. He glanced at the clock and unfolded the morning paper.

" MYSTERIOUS TRAGEDY IN CORNWALL."

His eyes wandered down the column. " Tregunden," " Morton," " Bewes " arrested his attention. He folded the paper and began to read, and he went on reading whilst the

bacon cooled on his table. Once he paused to pour himself out a cup of coffee, but even this remained untasted.

"The Cornish County Police are baffled by what threatens to become a ghastly mystery.

"Early yesterday morning, as Police-constable P. Tregaskis approached what is locally known as Tregunden Cutting, about eight miles from Bodmin on the eastern Bodmin-Camelford road, he saw what appeared to be an overturned dogcart in the middle of the highway. A closer inspection showed a dead horse between the shafts; but it was not until he had reached the trap that the gruesome nature of the discovery was revealed. Lying beside the horse, in the very centre of the road, was the body of a middle-aged man, stripped absolutely naked, and a detailed examination proved that the head was bent backwards in an unnatural attitude and that life was extinct.

"Covering the body with the carriage rug and tying his lantern to the dogcart in order to warn passing vehicles, for dawn had not yet arrived, P.C. Tregaskis went for medical assistance; fortunately he found Dr. Morton of Tregan House, which is half a mile from the scene of the tragedy, at home, and they returned together.

"A further examination disclosed the fiendish nature of the outrage. The horse, a fine, upstanding thoroughbred, had evidently been brained by a large piece of rough granite, which was lying close to its head; then the driver must have been attacked with wanton violence, half strangled, and his head bent back until his spine snapped. The doctor considered that life must have been extinct for at least four hours, and his own personal evidence confirmed this supposition.

"The deceased proved to be Major Reginald Bewes, a neighbouring resident who was well known to Dr. Morton; he had served with distinction in Flanders and had recently returned to his ancestral home of Tresilian, near Michaelstowe. Major Bewes had driven in to Bodmin

on the previous afternoon. Having transacted his business, which included the withdrawing of a considerable sum of money from the bank, he returned about 5.30 p.m. and called to see Dr. Morton at 6.30. Being an old friend of the doctor's, he was easily persuaded to remain for an informal dinner, and he left for home at 11.30 p.m. in the best of spirits. That was the last that Dr. Morton had seen of him.

"The moment that the news reached Bodmin, our local correspondent called at the police-station and was fortunate enough to find Police-Inspector Thomas about to start for the scene of the tragedy. The Inspector kindly offered to give our correspondent a lift, and they reached Tregunden Cutting at 8 a.m. Tregunden Cutting is a shallow cutting through the granite rocks, situated about half a mile beyond the little hamlet of Tregan Smith and some three hundred yards from the entrance gates into Tregunden, and, at the point where the assault was made, the banks are twelve or thirteen feet high. From here the road slopes down-hill into Tregan Valley.

"Judging from the nature of the wound on the horse's head, which is close to the right ear, the assailant must have stood on the right or eastern bank of the cutting, and hurled the stone downwards with a deadly aim. Then, so far as the Inspector and our correspondent could ascertain, Major Bewes appears to have been thrown violently against the dashboard of the dogcart, and, whilst still dazed from the force of the concussion, to have been quickly dragged out of the trap, half strangled, and his head pressed backwards until the spine was fractured. The flesh round the throat was much congested, and the marks of fingers were distinctly visible. Every stitch of clothing had been stripped from the body and removed.

"As the weather has been dry for the past week, there are no traces of the murderer's footsteps on the bank, and the moorland cattle, which appear to have wandered round the dogcart, have obliterated all tracks upon the road. So far, a careful search has failed to discover any

clothes that might have been discarded by the criminal ; no suspicious individual has been noticed in the neighbourhood ; and, up to now, the police are without a clue.

"Major Bewes, who had been distinguished by the D.S.O. in the recent war, was forty-two years of age ; he was unmarried, wealthy, and both respected and beloved in the vicinity ; as far as can be ascertained, he had no personal enemy. His portrait, which is reproduced on the back page, shows a smart and soldierly man of considerable attraction.

"Of the recent epidemic of crime which has swept through the country, this outrage, committed solely for plunder, is, perhaps, the most heartless and diabolical."

Bruce-Smith gulped down his coffee and lit a cigarette. The murder, horrible enough in itself, was brought home to him because he knew both the victim and the exact spot where he had been murdered. Besides, he had taken a great fancy to Bewes when he had met him at Tregan View, and he had looked forward to a real friendship with him. Let him reconstruct the crime :

Neither Bewes nor the doctor drank, of that he was certain ; so Bewes must have been perfectly sober when he started for home. He had come to the hill down into the valley, tightened the reins, tried to recover the horse when it went down, and had been flung against the dashboard. He had then been pulled out of the cart and throttled without the chance to show fight.

Who could have done the thing ? Not a tramp, for no tramp would have had the pluck ; not a quarryman or clay-miner, for neither of these would have stopped to strip the body ! Who would have stopped to strip the body ?

He went through the various classes of criminals until he came to the escaped convict. An escaping convict might have stripped the body so that he could change his convict's clothes ; but where would he have been escaping from ?

If he had been escaping from Bodmin Gaol, the police

would have known of his escape and seized the clue. Dartmoor was the nearest proper convict prison : could he have been escaping from Princetown ?

If he had been a convict escaping from Princetown, what would he have been doing in the Tregan Valley ? Bruce-Smith got out a map, and found that the distance from Princetown to Tregan was fully thirty-five miles, and that the man would have had to cross the Tamer Valley on his way. No, the idea would not hold water ; for not only was Cornwall the last place in the world for a convict to think of hiding in, but the Cornish Moors were the worst hiding-place in Cornwall. If a man in a convict's dress tried to cross the Bodmin Moors, he would be noticed over and over again.

Next, take the exact spot. The main Bodmin-Camel-ford road was on the other side of the Camel, and the road through Tregan Smith was but little used. Bewes was the only person who had used the road on the night in question, and he doubted whether it was used during the night-time more than once or twice a fortnight. Besides this, the brow of the hill leading down into the Tregan Valley was both exposed and open, and, although it was an excellent spot for anyone who wished to attack a cart passing through Tregunden Cutting, it was a most dangerous place for a man who intended to lie in wait hour after hour and night after night. Consequently, the murderer must be assumed to have chosen his station with a definite purpose : in other words, he must have expected Bewes to drive along the road on the night of the murder. And, what is more, it would not have been any common scoundrel who had seen him draw money from the bank and who had acted accordingly, because the natural way for Bewes to return to Michaelstowe was by the western high road, and he could only have driven through Tregan Smith because he wanted to see Dr. Morton. Therefore the murderer must have been one who had definite knowledge of Bewes's plans, together with the added knowledge that he was stopping to dine with the doctor.

Bruce-Smith stopped to light a fresh cigarette, and went on with his deductions. What was the object of the murder? Money? Clothes? He could pass over the money, for money was the habitual perquisite of a highway robber, whether he was hard up or no; but the robbery of the clothes, involving the risk of being caught whilst stripping the body and the risk of the clothes being recognised afterwards, was altogether out of the common, and the need of the clothes must have been overwhelming. Thus the murderer was one, not an escaping convict, who not only knew of Bewes's plans and movements, but also required clothes most desperately. Who could commit murder and risk hanging for the sake of a suit of clothes?

Bruce-Smith took up the paper and read through the account in search of a clue. The last words, "heartless and diabolical," caught his eye, and he laid down the paper.

Suppose that the dream of his, confirmed by his experience in Tregunden Woods, had been true! Suppose a demon had fashioned a body out of the professor's synthetic living matter! Suppose the materialised demon had foraged for food and grown to man's stature—he remembered how quickly the faun had grown in his dream! Suppose this demon with a quasi-human body, having reached man's stature, desired to perform the task for which he had materialised! Would his task be to hide at Tregunden, naked as a satyr, and weave evil spells for the one or two lovers who chanced to walk through the woods, or would his task make him move out into the world where he might influence men? If he intended to go into the world, his first step would be to acquire clothes!

Heartless? Tanuath would be more than heartless, he would be inhuman! Diabolical? Tanuath would, by his essential nature, be diabolical, and the snapping of Bewes's neck would mean no more to him than the snapping of a trout's spine would mean to a fisherman!

Bruce-Smith felt a cold nose against his hand, and, with a caress and a word to Smith, got up, rang the bell,

150 PROFESSOR AYLMER'S EXPERIMENT

and ordered some fresh bacon. After breakfast he would go over and have a talk with Fr. Arbuthnot at Farm Street.

II

"And so," concluded Bruce-Smith, "I want to know if you think my theory possible?"

The Jesuit smiled and shook his head. "If you recall your Penny Catechism, you will remember the following:

"Does the first Commandment forbid superstitious practices?"

"The first Commandment forbids superstitious practices, such as consulting spiritualists, and trusting to dreams, and suchlike fooleries."

"In avoiding the frying-pan, you seem to have fallen into the fire."

Bruce-Smith bit his lip; for, until now, this view of his theory had not entered his head.

"If you reconsider your theory," continued Fr. Arbuthnot, "you will see that it is built up entirely on your dream. The professor claims that he has made a cell; Miss Aylmer, herself a trained biologist, fails to detect this cell, and therefore its existence is, to say the least, doubtful. The professor finds his bowl smashed and a trail of colloid leading to where the body of his cat is lying; he naturally concludes that the cat, attracted by the synthetic food, has upset the bowl and run away frightened into the wood. You point out that the cat was not killed by the class of dog you are accustomed to, and the professor suggests that it was killed by an ape; but why should not the cat have been killed by some other class of dog—a greyhound, for instance—or by a fox or badger, or even by that little boy whom you saw in the woods? The assumption of the materialised Tanuath is built up entirely on the foundation of your dream."

"But the incident in the wood?" said Bruce-Smith doggedly.

"If you refer to the imp," answered Fr. Arbuthnot, "I prefer to accept Miss Aylmer's explanation of the small gipsy boy. If you refer to the wave of passion which overtook you"—and he looked at Bruce-Smith kindly—"you must remember that you are neither a disembodied saint nor an angel, and that your natural inclinations will soon be sanctified by marriage. As it was, you acted in a right and proper manner."

Bruce-Smith rose to go. "Then," he said, holding out his hand, "you think my theory's moonshine?"

"Honestly, yes!" answered the Jesuit.

"And you would advise me to keep it to myself?"

Fr. Arbuthnot paused a moment. "Yes," he answered. "A Catholic, who believes in the personality of demons, might understand your train of thought, a Protestant would most probably consider you a visionary."

III

Smith was waiting outside the front door; Smith followed his master down Mount Street, across Park Lane, and into Hyde Park.

"We'll go for a walk, old chap," said Bruce-Smith. "I'm not in the humour to work." And they went on until they found the most isolated chair that could be found.

Was that dream mere superstitious foolery? Bruce-Smith was ready to bow to the Jesuit's ruling and put the dream from him as far as possible, but, on the other hand, he meant to keep his eyes open. Let him ignore the dream and consider the materialisation of Tanuath as an idea, a fancy—just a theory that was worth a moment's consideration.

Suppose Tanuath had materialised and killed and robbed Bewes—what would be his next move? Either

he would go out into the world, in which case Bruce-Smith would entirely lose sight of him, or he would settle down near Tregunden. If he left the place, his materialisation would be no affair of Bruce-Smith's ; but if he remained near Zoe's home—possibly trying to scrape an acquaintance with the Aylmers—then his coming would be of vital importance.

That was his key ! He would say nothing about his suspicions to anyone, but he would listen for the rumour of any mysterious presence in Tregunden Woods ; he would watch for the arrival of any stranger in the neighbourhood, and, if he found anything in the least suspicious, he would keep his eyes open. That was all he could do ; that was all he ought to do ; and that was what he meant to do.

"Come on, Smith," said his master. "We'll go round the Serpentine, and back by Constitution Hill !" And off they tramped.

CHAPTER XVII

EN ROUTE

At the end of the Oxford Trinity Term, Bruce-Smith had planned to meet Zoe at Waterloo Station and travel down to Cornwall with her ; but early in the morning he had received a telegram from the Villa Sforza on the Lake of Como, saying that his mother was seriously ill and bidding him come to her. So he had altered his plans, wired Zoe to meet him in Town and go on to Camelford by a later train, and himself booked a seat in the night Continental express.

They were having an early lunch at the Cecil, and had come on to the coffee. Zoe's chance of a First in Science had been discussed, Bruce-Smith had shown her some very flattering reviews of his Italian Translations, and the conversation had taken a more intimate turn.

"Unless you change your mind, sweetheart," he said, "you've only got two more months' liberty."

"And that's what I wanted to ask you about, Jack," she answered. "Do you mind if we start quite simply, with just Creencia and another servant?"

"I should love it!" he said.

"You see," she explained, "it was one thing to manage dad's house for him, with servants who have been with us for years and no worry about expenses; it's another thing to manage my own house, with everything new and everything to learn. I want our home to be the most comfortable one in the world, Jack."

He smiled happily. The prospect of a small, comfortable house, where he and Zoe could work in peace, and

where rest would be rest and not a whirl of gaiety, fascinated him.

"I'm trying to develop your soul-theory," she said, "and work it up to date—that means starting with Aristotle and working downwards—and I shall want you to help me in your spare time; then I want to learn to throw a fly properly; and we must buy a light car for shopping and to take you in to Mass, and there'll be the house and garden to get into order. We've plenty to do!"

"It's a heavenly programme!" he answered.

"The first thing," said she, "will be to find a house that's not too far from Tregunden."

"How about that empty cottage at the bottom of the woods?" he asked. "It would do to start with, and we'd be able to fish the moment we'd done our work."

Zoe shook her head. "Didn't I tell you it was let?" she said.

"No!" he answered. "Who's taken it?"

"A man named Tanner. Dad says he's charming: delicate, a student, a gentleman and all that. He was ordered down to Cornwall by his doctor."

Bruce-Smith frowned as his resolution to keep a watch on any new arrival in the neighbourhood came back to him. "I didn't know that the professor intended to let the cottage," he said.

"He didn't; but Mr. Tanner discovered it, found that it was exactly what he wanted, and persuaded him. Dad says it's a real pleasure to have him there."

"H'm!" muttered Bruce-Smith, thinking quickly. "You won't see more of him than you can help, old girl, until I come back from Como?" he asked.

"Jealous?" enquired Zoe.

"Yes!" he answered grimly. "I'd meant to take that cottage and run a six-foot fence round it before I married you."

The girl smiled. "Seriously, Jack," she said, "why don't you want me to see much of Mr. Tanner?"

Any other man would have made some excuse—for

instance, he would have explained that he'd known an undesirable man named Tanner, who fitted in with the description of the new tenant, and that he wanted to see if this was the same individual—but Bruce-Smith had an unfortunate weakness for the truth, and the question posed him. "I've got a reason," he said. "I can't explain it at present; but I'm only asking you to keep out of his way until I get back from Como."

"All right," she answered. "I don't suppose I should have seen much of him in any case."

Bruce-Smith gave a sigh of relief. "You brick!" he said softly. "Most girls would have worried one for the reason."

"Why should I?" she answered. "I can trust you!"

"I don't want you to be silly or unreasonable," he explained. "I only want you to be a bit cautious until I'm back. Now," he groaned, "I'm afraid it's time for us to be moving."

"Poor old Jack!" said Zoe, as he put an armful of papers into the compartment and she kissed him good-bye. "Give my love to your mother, and tell her I'm longing to meet her!"

"Right-o!" he answered. "One last kiss!"

"Stand away from the carriage, please, sir!" shouted the platform inspector.

As Bruce-Smith was travelling down to Folkestone, he kept on puzzling his head about this Mr. Tanner: the name seemed so familiar, and yet he could not remember ever having met a man of that name. Then, suddenly, the mental association flashed into his mind—"Tanuath"—"Tanner!" And Bruce-Smith swore softly to himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW TENANT

I

THE Camel was in perfect condition. Three days before the heavy rains had allowed both salmon and peel to cross Dunmere Weir, and, although some of the fish had run up the De Lank River, to be checked by the turbine of the quarries, the large majority of the running fish had been faithful to the Camel, and, of these, not a few had lingered in the succession of pools that are known as Tregunden Halt. Now the water was fining down; the time of the worm and minnow had passed, and the fly-fisher had come into his own.

Zoe Aylmer had assembled the new peel rod, built for her by Mr. Leeds of Camelford, and was about to try it for the first time. It was a charming rod of Chinese bamboo, light but not whippy, and with a spring that sent out the line absolutely without effort; she had mounted one of Mr. Leeds' special Camel Fancies, and was ready to make her first cast. As she prepared to cast, she remembered what Jack had told her about putting herself in the place of the fish, and she wondered where she would lie if she were an ascending peel.

Poor old Jack! How she wished he were here instead of rushing southward in a stuffy train! Now where should she lie if she were a peel?

How about the tiny backwater behind that granite boulder? The rock was only some five yards out, and consequently well within her casting distance, and the deep stream was flowing on either side. If she were a

fish, she would certainly lie there, protected from the current and yet in the full fresh swirl of the deeply-running water. She would try to cast just this side of the boulder to start with, and then to cast over the rock so that her trace should touch the lower edge of the boulder. She felt the landing-net that was hooked on to her creel-strap so as to make certain that it was handy ; then she cast.

The first cast was a duffer, falling short and making a splash ; but it had fallen so short that the splash could not have scared the fish. Her second cast went out straight, the fly falling some two feet beyond the rock so that it was carried round exactly where she wanted it to go, and she began to work in her line with the pull, pull, pull, so beloved by the species *salmo*. There was a gleam of silver, a pluck at her line, and she had struck the hook well into the rising fish.

Heaven ! How the brute pulled ! The reel literally sang, and she was terrified that her line would presently break and come back to her limp and lifeless.

Mercy ! The fish had jumped right out of the water ! Some instinct prompted her to drop the point of the rod so as to ease the strain ; then the line flew out like mad. She had no idea that peel ever ran so large, and she longed for Jack to be there so that he might tell her what to do.

The fish was going up-stream like a submarine, and above her there was a tumble of water with a fallen tree lodged in the rapid. If the line caught in the branches——

" Hold him ! " said a quiet voice behind her. " Give him the butt ! "

She raised the top of her rod backward over her head so as to ease the strain by means of the play and spring of the bamboo, and held the fish firmly. There was a short fight, and the peel, taking the course of least resistance, turned and came back into the pool.

" Keep the strain on him, " said the voice ; " don't let him sulk ! " and a fresh struggle began. So the fight went on, the calm voice behind her directing her in every crisis, until it directed her to bring the fish into the deep water

beside a ledge of rock, and she felt a hand take the landing-net from her creel-strap and she saw a man kneeling beside the stream with the landing-net deep in the water.

The fish came in, with one last feeble struggle; she brought him over the landing-net with the fight gone out of him; the net was lifted quickly and quietly.

"What a huge peel!" cried Zoe.

"I should scarcely call it a peel," said the man, smiling; and, taking a rounded stone, he knocked the fish on the head, caught hold of it just above the tail, and held it out at arm's length. "A fresh-run salmon of six or seven pounds," he remarked; "and I congratulate you on killing such a fish with so light a rod!"

"Oh!" murmured Zoe, happy as a girl could be.

"You must be Miss Aylmer," said the man; "your father told me he was expecting you."

Zoe nodded her head. "And I suppose you must be Mr. Tanner?" she replied.

Tanner acknowledged his identity. "Are you going to try for another salmon?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "It's my first afternoon, and I must get back for tea. I may come down again later."

"Then," said Tanner, "if you'll bribe me with a cup of tea, I'll carry your fish home for you." He smiled, and Zoe realised that his smile was most engaging. "I believe," he said, "that I've got a standing invitation from the professor."

For one second Zoe remembered her promise to Jack; but she dismissed it, partly because she did not see how she could refuse the offer, and partly because Jack had not wished her to be foolish and unreasonable.

"It's very kind of you," she said.

"To come to tea?" he chaffed.

"No. To carry my parcels," she retorted.

So they started for Tregunden, and, as they went, Zoe began to examine Mr. Tanner critically. Of course she was interested in him—what girl could help being interested in a man with a possible past and a probable

mystery?—and she found him a worthy subject of interest. He was tall, very thin, and he walked with a stoop; his nose was longer than the ordinary, his cheek-bones pronounced, and the lower part of his face was covered with a dark and neatly-trimmed beard; his eyes seemed somewhat unusual, but she did not like to examine them too closely. Then she noticed that he walked strangely, and, looking down, saw that he was walking without bending his knees.

His eyes followed hers. "You don't mind if I walk slowly?" he asked. "I'm simply crippled with arthritis; that's why I'm here."

"I'm so sorry!" she murmured.

"It's been much better since I came down to Cornwall," he said, smiling.

"Did you get it in Flanders?" she enquired.

He shrugged his shoulders. "No!" he answered. "I've stayed at home with it: it came on in 1913, when I was fishing in Norway."

Then Tanner began to talk, and Zoe listened fascinated. He seemed to have been everywhere and done everything and to be in touch with foreign diplomacy and to be abreast of modern research; and, through all, he had the charm of easy manners and perfect breeding.

"I'm afraid you'll find it dull down here," said Zoe, as they neared the house.

"Not I!" he answered. "I'm busy with research."

"What sort of research?" she asked.

"Psychological," he answered.

"So am I!" said she. "Mine's rational psychology, specialising on the relation between soul and body."

"Mine," he answered, "is what may be termed experimental 'post-mortem' psychology, especially relating to the condition of the soul after death, and with the possible intercourse between the dead and living."

"Spiritualism?" she asked.

"Scientific experimental spiritualism," he answered.

"My father will be interested!" she cried. Then, immediately, she saw why Jack had warned her to steer

clear of this man. He was a prominent spiritualist, and Jack had been cautioned against him as a spiritualist. Dear old bigoted Jack!

II

The good impression which Tanner's appearance and manner had created remained during the walk and during the first part of tea; then, as Tanner began to discuss spiritualism with the professor, Zoe got a gleam of what was behind his eyes. Imagine hazel eyes that were green in most lights, give them a feline twist, endow them with a hidden fire that shone deep down in moments of excitement, complete them with the cold wisdom of a serpent and hood them with heavy lids. Zoe felt as though the soul of a lynx was waiting to pounce out on her, and she was certain that, in spite of his suave manner, Mr. Tanner could be very cruel on occasions. But the conversation drifted on to the difficulties of spiritualism, and Zoe lost her uncanny impression in the interest of the discussion.

"With Conan Doyle on the one hand," remarked Tanner, "and his foolish advice that every girl should try her power as a medium; and with Vale Owen's absurd vapouring on the other hand, preserve me from my friends!"

The professor snorted.

"Did you see the *Times* review of Doyle's history of the war?" asked Tanner.

"No," replied the professor.

"The *Times* said that 'Sir Arthur Doyle lacks the knowledge,' and 'fails in literary skill.' He is just the same when he treats of spiritualism!"

"I only read one of Vale Owen's revelations," remarked Zoe. "He said that every ray of starlight was the energised will of a conscious spiritual being; and, as though this were not sufficiently absurd, he added that fairies and pixies were real spiritual beings of a low grade, and mostly benevolent."

"What did you make of Vale Owen's automatic writing, professor?" asked Tanner.

"A record of unconscious memories, explained and woven together by an unbalanced imagination. The man's mind must have been a perfect rag-bag of half-digested scraps of knowledge."

"In other words, you think that he sat in his vestry with a pencil in his hand, and wrote down any vague thought that happened to come into his mind?"

The professor left the room, and returned with a book of newspaper cuttings. "Here you are," he said; "this is what Mr. Vale Owen told the *Weekly Despatch* about the beginning of his revelations: 'During April and May, 1913, my wife was constrained by an influence independent of her wishes to take a pencil in her hand and write what was put in her mind.' If that's what he calls automatic writing, he has not the haziest idea what automatic writing means!"

"Why," cried Zoe, "surely the essence of automatic writing lies in your turning yourself into an automaton: you must try to keep your mind free from any kind of thought, and let the spirits guide your hand!"

"Exactly!" answered Tanner. "And that brings us to the overwhelming difficulty in ordinary automatic writing: it is almost impossible to make certain that your sub-conscious mind is not guiding your pencil."

"Yes," said the professor, with a nod. "And how do you guard against the danger of auto-suggestion?"

"By avoiding both automatic writing and the planchette," answered Tanner.

"Then you use the ouija-board?"

"I don't even trust the ordinary ouija! There is always the chance that one has memorised the arrangement of the letters."

"Then what do you do?" enquired Professor Aylmer, with considerable curiosity.

"I've taken Sir William Barrett's hint," replied Tanner, "and made a special ouija-table of my own. The letters are arranged in a fresh sequence each time I use

the table, and I am screened off so that I cannot see what I am doing. There can be no possibility of auto-suggestion."

"But," enquired the professor, "if you cannot see the board, how can you read the message?"

"I make my servant take down the message," replied Tanner. "As the message usually comes in French or Latin, and he only knows English, I can be certain that he does not twist the words round."

"How clever of you!" cried Zoe.

Tanner smiled, obviously gratified. "If you and the professor care to come down to my cottage," said he, "I shall be delighted to show you the table, and we might get a message. Then you can go on with your fishing."

So, as they had finished their tea, they strolled down through the Tregunden Woods in the direction of the cottage.

III

The old keeper's cottage by the Camel was a large one, and Tanner had furnished it with an admirable simplicity; from the white pine table, made by a local carpenter, to the designs of fir-branches painted on panels of balloon-fabric by Tanner himself, the arrangement would have delighted the heart of a Japanese. The floor of Delabole slate gave local feeling, the moss-roses peeping in through the windows gave a touch of colour, and the Camel, rushing down not thirty yards from the door, gave its music. Zoe found herself longing that she and Jack had managed to secure this cottage.

"This is my ouija-table," said Tanner, as he uncovered an oak table about three feet square. There was a sheet of plate-glass on the top of the table, and, underneath the glass, lay an alphabet on squares of cardboard, arranged anyhow. "You see," he said, "one can raise the glass and rearrange the letters before each sitting."

Next he brought out a small triangular piece of board,

standing on three short legs. "This is the indicator," he said, "and you will notice that the legs are tipped with felt so that the indicator will glide easily over the plate-glass."

"And your screen?" asked Zoe.

Tanner brought out a piece of match-board, three feet long by two feet wide, with two holes near the centre. He fixed this screen to the edge of the table by means of a couple of struts, so that it stood upright; and, sitting down, put his arms through the holes and placed his hands on the indicator. "You will notice," he said, "that I cannot possibly see the letters or know where the indicator is travelling."

"You have solved the problem!" cried the professor. "There can be no chance of auto-suggestion with this arrangement!"

"Now," said Tanner, "I'll go out of the room and leave you to raise the plate-glass and rearrange the letters. Then, whilst I work the ouija, the professor will read out the letters and Miss Aylmer take them down. Here's a pencil and writing-pad." And he left the room, closing the door after him.

Zoe lifted the sheet of plate-glass whilst the professor arranged the letters. He arranged them in two rows, thus, so that each letter was two inches from the next:

F H N A Q L Y D W C X P G
S I R M J T B Z K O U V E

Then he covered up the table, and muttering, "This is most ingenious!" opened the door and admitted Tanner.

He came in, saw that the letters on the ouija-board had been covered with a cloth, and nodded his approval. "I wonder," he said, "whether we'll get the same message that I've been getting every day for the past fortnight," and, scribbling down the message, he folded the paper and handed it to Zoe. "It will be interesting to see if the message is repeated," he remarked.

"Now!" he said, as he seated himself behind the screen, put his arms through the holes and laid his hands on the triangular indicator.

Without a second's pause, and as though driven by some irresistible force, the indicator slipped over the glass and stopped with the apex of the triangle pointing to F. "F!" said the professor, and Zoe wrote it down.

Again the indicator glided across the glass. "O!" said the professor. Again, "R!" A movement of two inches, and: "M!" There was a pause to mark the conclusion of the word, and the indicator started on the second word. After spelling out five words, the message ceased.

"Read what you've written!" said Tanner.

Zoe read: "*Form a circle at Tregunden.*"

"If you'll open the paper I gave you, Miss Aylmer," said Tanner, "you'll find that I've been receiving the same message for the last two weeks."

"But," said the professor, "who's to form the circle?"

Tanner's hands were still on the indicator and, without a moment's pause, it glided off in answer. Tanner, Zoe, and the professor were the first names it spelt out; then Dr. Morton, Mrs. Fordyce, Canon Carnedhu, who was a neighbouring squire-parson, and half a dozen others.

"What does this all mean?" cried the professor.

"It means," replied Tanner, "that there is an intelligence who wishes to make some important communication."

"But why doesn't he make it through you and your ouija-table, with us as witnesses?" cried the professor.

Tanner smiled and shook his head. "What is the standing of those chosen to form the circle?" he asked.

Zoe glanced down the list. "They are all well known," she answered: "and they're all people of influence."

"Then," said Tanner, "we may conclude that the communication is of general importance, and that it is to be vouched for by eleven people of good repute, besides myself. We can scarcely disregard the message!"

The professor hesitated ; he hummed and hawed ; he was afraid that psychical research would interfere with his quest after synthetic life. But Zoe put down her foot with a determination that the circle should be formed.

"How long will the séances take ?" she asked.

"From one to two hours about three times a week," answered Tanner.

"And you and I could do all the secretarial work, tabulate the communications, and so on ?" she suggested.

In a moment Tanner saw what she was driving at. "The intelligences who have called the circle," he said, "have a definite message to communicate, and therefore there will be no wasting of time. If the professor would devote three hours a week to the research, it should be ample."

"All right !" sighed Professor Aylmer.

"Then I shall go back and write to the people at once," said Zoe. "May I ask them to dinner to-morrow, dad ?"

The professor sighed. "You will give them no time to answer the invitation," he objected.

"If I send off a groom with the notes," said she, "we'll hear this evening."

"But——" began the professor, and, before he could get any further with his protest, Zoe had kissed him and slipped away.

As she hurried up through the woods, Zoe felt compunction. She had disregarded Jack's warning against Tanner, and what would Jack say to the formation of a spiritualistic circle with herself as secretary ? But the workmanlike and scientific nature of Tanner's ouija-table had fascinated her, and the prestige of such names as Crookes, Wallace, Sidgwick and Barrett had cast a scientific glamour over serious psychical research.

"Jack's religion is quite right in preventing the general public from dabbling in spiritualism," she murmured, unconsciously repeating what her father had said at the Fordyce dinner-party ; "but it has no right to interfere in serious psychical research."

CHAPTER XIX

FORMATION OF A CIRCLE

I

DINNER at Tregunden was over, and, the moment that the slips had been removed from the old walnut table and the servants had left the room, Professor Aylmer cleared his throat and stood up.

"You have been asked to meet here," he said, "so that we may discuss the possibility of forming what is known as a circle for psychical research. As many of you know, I am not usually in favour of the formation of such circles; but there are exceptional circumstances in this case which make the formation of a circle, in my mind, most desirable. Since Mr. Tanner, who is the moving spirit in the formation of the proposed circle, can explain the circumstantial exceptances—I mean, the exceptant—er—er—— I mean he can explain." And the professor sat down heavily, gulping down his glass of port in his agitation.

Pretty Miss Trelawny, who was sitting on Tanner's right hand, struggled desperately against a fit of suppressed giggles; but the rest of the guests were hardened to the professor's involved Spoonerisms, and Tanner at once relieved the tension by standing up. With a glance at Zoe, he began:

"Conscious reason," he said, "is usually held to be the highest faculty of the human soul. But is it—is reason the highest faculty of the human soul?"

This was not the opening that anyone had expected, and, as he glanced round the table with a smile, Tanner could see that he had roused a general curiosity. "Take

almost any subject," he went on, "from religion to politics, and you will find that a number of equally clever men, working solely by reason, have arrived at totally different conclusions. Therefore I have the right to argue that, since only one of these opposite conclusions can be correct, the result arrived at by reason is usually wrong."

His quick eye took in the feelings of his audience. "But you will tell me," he argued, "that, if the result of reasoning is usually wrong, then the probability is that my reasoned argument is wrong, and that, consequently, the result of reasoning must be usually right."

He looked round the table with a dazzling smile, and gave another twist to his argument. "Yet," said he, "if the result of reasoning is usually right, it is most likely that I am right in my argument, and I am quite justified in maintaining that the result arrived at by reason is usually incorrect—which conclusion, supported by the illustration of the differing clever men, completes the vicious circle of my argument."

It is doubtful whether many of the diners saw the fallacy in this tortuous reasoning. Possibly Canon Carnedhu did, probably Dr. Morton did, certainly the professor would have detected the fallacy if he had not been upset by his recent Spoonerism; but Zoe was down on Tanner like a knife. "Your clever men have differed in their conclusions," said she, "because they were free to select any premises they liked from the wide fields of religion and political economy. In order to establish your case, you must start your men with identical premises."

Tanner's smile was like the play of summer lightning, his laugh was soft and infectious. "Thank you, Miss Aylmer!" he said. "You have answered my original question: reason is not the highest faculty of the human soul!"

"Then, what is?" flashed Zoe. "And what has all this to do with the subject of spiritualism?"

"A friend of mine, who is an ardent Roman Catholic," answered Tanner, "tells me that angels do not reason as we do, for the keenness of their intellect enables them to see by

intuition the conclusions which are involved in principles. Women share this gift with the angels, and, by their intuition, choose the right premises and arrive at the right conclusions without the laborious process of reasoning." He turned to the rest of the company. "A man," he said, "would have taken at least ten minutes to reason out and expose my sophistry; Miss Aylmer, acting on intuition, both saw and exposed my error in a second."

Zoe got up quietly, and, fetching a box of cigarettes from the mantelpiece, passed it round.

"An example of intuition," murmured Tanner to Miss Trelawny, as he helped himself; then he raised his voice. "Miss Aylmer wants to know what my arguments have to do with psychical research," he said. "The root of all scientific psychical research is founded on the realisation that most of our thoughts and nearly all our actions are the result of intuition." He lit his cigarette deliberately, so that his words might have time to soak in, then went on: "When a clever man answers a question, the train of reasoning through which he arrives at his answer is scarcely, if at all, realised. If the same clever man were to write down his answer, the action of his pen in the formation of the words would be spontaneous. This, you will see, brings us to the subject of automatic writing."

He took a pencil from his waistcoat pocket, reached for a menu-card, and, sitting down, held the pencil so that it touched the card. "If I were to sit like this," he said, "and will myself to answer a question, there is every probability that the answer would flash into my mind through intuition, and that my hand, acting on the impulse of my brain, would transcribe the answer. This destroys the spiritualistic value of much of the so-called automatic writing—in fact, I may say that it destroys the value of all conscious automatic writing, including the revelations of Mr. Vale Owen."

There was a sigh of relief from the other side of the table. "Then you think that Mr. Vale Owen's messages are all nonsense?" said Canon Carnedhu.

"From Mr. Owen's own evidence," replied Tanner, "both the professor and myself have come to the conclusion that the reverend gentleman merely sat in his vestry, and wrote down any nonsense that came into his head."

Again the canon sighed with relief. "Thanks to Mr. Vale Owen's articles," he said, "I nearly refused to attend this meeting."

Tanner was still sitting with the menu-card before him, and, holding the pencil so that it touched the paper, he continued: "We have exposed the uselessness of conscious automatic writing," he said; "but, suppose I should manage to subdue all conscious thought, thus reducing my mind to a blank, what would happen? In all human probability, I should only have succeeded in overlaying my mind with a layer of mental cotton-wool, and my sub-conscious mind would still be working underneath this coverlid. I should, so to speak, have reduced my mind to its dream-state, and my so-called automatic writing would have no more psychic value than the writing of a sleep-walker."

He looked round the table with a quiet smile. "Is my contention quite clear?" he asked. "Have I made it quite clear that the ordinary form of automatic writing, either with a pencil or a planchette, is unreliable as evidence?"

There was a general murmur of assent.

As Tanner stood up, he could see that he had succeeded in rousing the general expectation to fever-point. "I have devised a method of receiving psychic communications," he said, "which I believe to be absolutely proof against either conscious or unconscious deceptions." And, with a calm voice, he went on to describe the details of his ouija-table. "And, since the professor rearranged the letters whilst I was out of the room," continued Tanner; "since I could not see either the letters or indicator during the transmission of the message; and, since Miss Aylmer took down the message, I could not possibly have tampered with the communication. Am I right, professor?"

"There can be no doubt of the authenticity of the message!" said the professor.

"It was absolutely genuine!" added Zoe.

"Will you kindly read out the message, Miss Aylmer?" said Tanner.

Zoe read: "*Form a circle at Tregunden.*"

There was a murmur of astonishment from all present.

"Now," said Tanner, "we come to the most extraordinary part of the communication. The moment Miss Aylmer had read out the command to form a circle at Tregunden, the professor enquired about the possible members, and, without a moment's pause, the indicator commenced to spell out a list of twelve names. Mind! I had not been expecting this question, and could not have been prepared for it; besides, at least half the names were quite unknown to me." He turned to Zoe, and asked her to read out the list.

Zoe produced the list, and, as those in the room heard their names read out, each must have experienced a thrill.

"But," asked Canon Carnedhu, "what can it all mean?"

"It must mean," replied Tanner, "that the intelligence who gave the message has some very important communication to make public."

"Yet why," enquired Dr. Morton, "should the intelligence wish to communicate through a circle, when he had already a perfect instrument and three skilled operators?"

"What would have happened," replied Tanner, "if the communication had been made through me as medium, in the presence of Professor and Miss Aylmer? Would public attention have been concentrated on the message, or would it have been concentrated on me, and the possibility that I was deceiving my witnesses?"

"On you, and possible trickery!" answered the doctor.

"On the other hand," continued Tanner, "if the message should prove to be of vital importance, besides myself, we have a jury of eleven well-known county

people as witnesses, and, consequently, the message will receive the attention it deserves." He looked round the table and held up his hand. "Will those who are willing to join the circle please hold up their hands?" he said quietly.

Twelve hands were held up.

"Now," said Tanner, "before I sit down, I wish to propose that Miss Aylmer be elected as secretary."

"I will second the proposal!" said Mrs. Fordyce promptly.

Then, Zoe having been elected as secretary, the ordinary business of the meeting proceeded.

Where should the circle meet?

Mrs. Fordyce suggested Tregan View, and pointed out that her drawing-room was both central and convenient.

"But," protested Canon Carnedhu, "the message stated that the circle should be formed at Tregunden!"

"So it has!" snapped Mrs. Fordyce. "That's no reason why it shouldn't meet at my house!"

"My dear lady," laughed Tanner, "a circle is a plane figure, bounded by one line. You cannot move a circle!"

"I could!" said Mrs. Fordyce; but, instead of snorting, she returned Tanner's smile.

"How about the belvedere?" suggested the secretary. "It's a solid building with a marble floor, and no one could imagine the possibility of trickery!"

So the business of the meeting proceeded, and it was arranged that the opening séance should be held in the belvedere on the following morning.

"Will you bring that ouija-table of yours, Tanner?" asked Dr. Morton.

"I think it will be best," replied Tanner, "to leave everything to the intelligence who has called the circle."

As the ladies rose to leave the room, Miss Trelawny looked at Tanner. "There won't be anything to frighten one?" she whispered.

Tanner smiled. "Except for a possible message," he answered, "I'm afraid you'll find it rather dull and prosy!"

When the door had closed, the canon came round and sat next Tanner. "I wish you'd tell me more about the Vale Owen business!" he begged.

II

Zoe had gone to bed, and the professor had retired to his laboratory. During the past seven months, he had made no progress with his creation of synthetic life; twice, indeed, he had imagined that he had detected the formation of a cell; but further examination had shown him that his imagination was only imagination. Now, with Tanner's extraordinary message fresh in his mind, he took a sheet of paper and, placing it before him, held a pencil so that it touched the paper.

For some minutes nothing happened; then, just as in his previous experience, the pencil began to write. This time, although he was unconscious of what he was writing, he seemed to be wide awake; and, when the message was finished, he felt no unpleasant after-effects.

He held the paper near the lamp and read what he had written. The formula was headed 'Materia Pilosi' instead of 'Materia Elementorum,' and, except for a slight difference in the weights of the various ingredients, it seemed practically the same as the previous formula.

But stay! Here was a noteworthy variation! Instead of the weights appearing in Babylonian figures, they were given in the ordinary English numerals. Possibly he had erred in translating the Babylonian weights into their English equivalents; or it was quite within the bounds of possibility that whoever had compiled the text-book of ancient weights had been mistaken about the weights of ancient Babylon.

With a sigh of mingled relief and expectation, the professor folded the paper, placed it in his pocket, and went off to bed.

CHAPTER XX

THE CIRCLE

THE belvedere at Tregunden was eminently fitted for the object in view. Octagonal by construction, so that all were equally placed; classical in design, which gave a sense of dignity to the proceedings; light and airy, so that the enquirers would be able to give their whole attention without bodily discomfort; associated with the meetings of the old philosophic academy, the belvedere was the very spot for the séance of the newly-formed circle. In the centre of the room there stood the round Cromwellian table, and around this the members took their seats.

Professor Aylmer took the chair furthest from the door; Mrs. Fordyce sat on his right, Dr. Morton on his left, Canon Carnedhu next to Mrs. Fordyce, whilst Tanner sought the chair that was nearest to the door and Zoe sat down next him with an open note-book before her. The bust of Plato had been removed, and the table littered with pencils and sheets of paper.

"Will Mr. Tanner kindly explain the object of this meeting?" said the professor; and Tanner commenced, his sympathetic voice charming the senses, whilst his perfect lack of hesitation and absolute mastery of the subject compelled belief.

"In all the history of religion," he began, "there has never been such a feeling of unrest, such a craving after light, such a longing for the truth absolute, as there is now. The Catholic is weary of that blend of Christianity and paganism (of Christ and Aristotle) which was taught

by Thomas Aquinas ; the Anglican, hearing quasi-Romanism from one pulpit and rationalism from the next, is sick with doubt ; and all, even those who have no formal creed, are yearning for a knowledge which shall bind them closer to their dear ones who have died in the recent war."

He looked round the circle. "Was there ever an effect without a cause ?" he asked quietly, and smiled.

"Why does a boy become restive under parental authority ?" he went on. "Because he has outgrown the period of parental authority ! Why does a nation become restless under its government ? Because the social life and social circumstances have developed, and a new form of government is required ! Why are we now unsettled in our religion ? Because, during the past nineteen hundred years, civilisation has developed, and we are parched for a new revelation that will satisfy our present needs and meet our present circumstances ! This sounds shocking : it is shocking ! A lie may disgust or it may anger : only the truth administers a shock.

"But, after all, is this truth so shocking ? Was it shocking that the half-savage Israelites, coming out of Egypt, should receive a revelation of the law of justice—'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' ? Was it shocking that the same nation, after fifteen hundred years' progress in civilisation, should receive a second revelation of love and mercy ? Is it shocking that we, who have moved nineteen hundred years further along the path of civilisation, should require a new revelation to meet our present needs ?"

Again he paused, and looked round the circle, smiling.

"I am not suggesting," he went on quietly, "that this circle has been formed so that it may receive some wonderful revelation ; but I am suggesting that we should treat these séances as something more than merely scientific research, and that we should be prepared to receive and record any messages with a proper sense of our responsibility."

Zoe had listened, with her eyes shining and her lips parted, for it seemed to her that Tanner had said exactly the right thing and neither too much nor too little ; but, as Tanner sat down, the professor rose to his feet with a considerable show of agitation.

"In suggesting that we should treat these séances as something more than psychical research," he said, "in suggesting that we should receive any message as a potential revelation, I consider that Mr. Tanner is laying us open to the serious danger of becoming the victims of deception. We know that there are lying spirits, that there are frivolous spirits, that there are malicious spirits, all of whom delight in the deception of the unwary, and I do not see why we should relax any of the ordinary safeguards of research. Personally I am a roematic nationalist——" He caught himself up sharply. "I mean I am a national roematicist—a rœ—a rœ——" His voice became faint. "A nöe—a nöe——"

"A noematic rationalist," suggested Zoe softly.

"And what is the meaning of that?" asked Mrs. Fordyce.

"That I don't believe in anything!" snapped the professor. And, flushed and miserable, Professor Aylmer sat down.

In a second, Tanner was on his feet. "The professor has mistaken my meaning!" he said. "I do not suggest that we should drop one of the ordinary tests or safeguards ; in fact, when I suggested that we ought to record any messages with a proper sense of our responsibility, I implied that we should be even more cautious than usual. I meant that an authentic message should be regarded as a serious communication, and not as a mere piece of evidence in favour of spiritualism."

"Mr. Tanner is right," cried Canon Carnedhu. "Messages from those who are in the Presence of the Infinite must be treated with reverence."

Dr. Morton looked up keenly. "What do you mean by the ordinary tests and safeguards, Mr. Tanner?" he asked.

"First," answered Tanner, "we must make certain that the message is a genuine communication from a spiritual intelligence, and not a communication of the sub-conscious thoughts of the medium. And, secondly, we must make sure of the identity of the intelligence and so safeguard ourselves against the fraudulent impersonation of some wanton or lying spirit."

"And," broke in the professor, "we must guard against the chance of the message being mere thought-transference from some member of the circle, or telepathy from some distant friend. I apologise for having misunderstood you just now, Mr. Tanner," he added.

"Why not use Mr. Tanner's ouija-table?" asked Dr. Morton. "If the ouija-table prevents the possibility of the unconscious auto-suggestion of the medium, it must also prevent the danger of thought-transference or the danger of telepathy."

But Tanner shook his head. "That's just what I want to avoid," he said. "If we get some important message through my ouija-board, public attention will immediately settle on my ouija-board, and the message will be disregarded."

"That's true!" answered the doctor. "We'll have a dozen conjurers coming forward with patent ouija-boards that will spell out any message they like."

"I don't mind the conjurers," said Tanner; "it's the general public that I'm afraid of. Whisper 'mechanical appliance,' and the public will scent trickery. They even believe that the roulette-tables at Monte Carlo can be manipulated."

"Why not persuade some spirit to materialise?" suggested Mrs. Fordyce.

The professor chuckled. "Then the public will cry, 'Spooks!'" he answered. "That's worse than the ouija-board!" Then he felt better: he had repaid Mrs. Fordyce for her question about the noematic rationalist.

Zoe turned to Tanner. "What do you suggest?" she asked.

"And I propose," broke in Dr. Morton, "that we adopt Mr. Tanner's suggestion without further discussion. He knows more about the subject than the rest of us."

"We have a member of this circle," replied Tanner, "who is both widely known and above suspicion. I propose that Professor Aylmer should start with an attempt at automatic writing. This will give the spirits a chance to direct further proceedings."

There was a murmur of relief from the circle; but pretty Miss Trelawny felt a tinge of disappointment—the proposed test was so commonplace and lacking in an appearance of the supernatural.

Tanner left his seat, drew some of the curtains that had been fitted to the belvedere windows so as to modify the light, and handed a pencil and piece of paper to the professor. Then he sat down.

"To start with," he said, "I propose that we test the spiritual nature of the control, and make certain that Professor Aylmer is not writing down something that he knows sub-consciously. Is there any particular class of literature in the house, Miss Aylmer, that your father never reads?"

"Poetry!" answered Zoe. "He loathes poetry!"

"Will you write down a list of half-a-dozen books of poetry that your father has never read, and pass the list to Mrs. Fordyce."

Zoe did so.

"Now," said Tanner, "will Mrs. Fordyce please tick off one of the volumes?"

"Masefield's 'Everlasting Mercy,'" said Mrs. Fordyce, putting a pencil-mark against the title. "No one except a fool or rake would dream of reading that!"

"Which am I?" asked Zoe sweetly.

"Certainly not the latter," said Mrs. Fordyce.

"Now," said Tanner, "please pencil a page and line against the volume. Don't page it too high, it's only a slim volume."

Mrs. Fordyce wrote down: *Page 72. Line 8.*

The professor drew a deep breath, and, holding the pencil naturally, tried to reduce his thoughts and will to complete negation. In about a minute he felt a shock run through his arm, and the pencil began to write :

*The gate was Jesus' way made plain,
The mole was Satan foiled again,
Black blinded Satan snouting way
Along the red of Adam's clay ;*

There was a minute's pause, and again the pencil wrote :

*The mist was error and damnation,
The lane the road unto salvation,
Out of the mist into the light ;
O blessed gift of inner sight.*

Again the pencil paused.

"That will do," said Tanner quietly ; then he turned to Zoe. "May I ask you to fetch the volume, Miss Aylmer ?" he said. "No one else knows where to find it."

Zoe went for the book ; the professor opened his eyes and roused himself ; and Tanner suggested that the paper should be passed to Dr. Morton for verification.

The doctor put on his tortoise-shell spectacles and examined the writing ; he asked the professor to write down the opening line on a second piece of paper, and compared the two handwritings. "The calligraphy of the message," he remarked, "is certainly not that of Professor Aylmer. It is much more legible than the professor's ordinary handwriting, but lacking his strength of character ; in fact, it is far more like the writing of a board-school boy. What on earth," he asked, "does the line, 'Black blinded Satan snouting way,' mean ? It sounds to me like pure nonsense !" And he passed the paper over to Mrs. Fordyce.

"It reads like Masfield's animalism," she sniffed ; "but I don't pretend to understand his meaning."

Tanner smiled. "I don't see," he remarked, "that Masfield's obscurity, or Masfield's imagery, affects the test : I should say that it rather strengthens it. We

chose the lines ; we asked to have them transcribed ; and the test rests on the accuracy of the transcription."

"That's so !" chimed in the professor. "The greater the nonsense, the greater the difficulty of its transcription."

As the paper on its way round the circle reached Tanner, the door opened and Zoe returned with "The Everlasting Mercy." She handed the book to Tanner and looked over his shoulder at the manuscript, and her eyes opened wide with astonishment at the accuracy of the transcript.

"What does Masfield's line, 'Black blinded Satan snouting way,' mean, Miss Aylmer ?" he asked.

She glanced at the context. "It means that the mole, which poor Saul Kane had seen, reminded him of Satan snouting away like a filthy pig amongst the sins of fallen humanity. Any poet has a right to put 'way' instead of 'away.'"

"It's a disgusting simile !" sniffed Mrs. Fordyce.

"I call it," retorted Zoe, "a brilliant description of Satan's vileness."

"But why allude to him ?" asked Mrs. Fordyce.

"It's hardly polite, is it ?" said Zoe.

Tanner looked from one to the other, his eyes gleaming. "Perhaps," he suggested, "the professor and Dr. Morton will verify the transcription ?" And he passed along both book and manuscript.

Professor Aylmer and the doctor bent over the manuscript, checking each line by the book ; then they looked up.

"Perfectly correct !" reported Dr. Morton.

"Accurate, down to the last comma !" said the professor.

"But," suggested Canon Carnedhu, "although the professor does not know the poem, Zoe does ! Might not this be a case of thought-transference ?"

Zoe's laugh was delightful. "Oh, Canon !" she cried. "Even if I did know Masfield well enough to quote him, could I possibly begin at the eighth line of the seventy-

second page without some tag to start me? Have you any book you know by heart?"

"I have used the same prayer-book both morning and evening for many years," he answered.

"Then," said she, "could you begin at the tenth line of the seventh page?"

The canon tried hard to remember what was on the seventh page, but could not. "No!" he answered, shaking his head. "My suggestion was absurd."

"Now," said Tanner, "if Miss Aylmer will take down my questions, whilst Professor proceeds with the automatic writing, we will start the second test."

"Shall I read out the answers?" asked the professor, as he took a fresh sheet of paper and held his pencil ready for writing.

"Please!" answered Tanner, and he cleared his throat.

"Who were you that transcribed the passage from Masfield?" he asked.

The pencil moved, and the professor read out: "Rector."

"Why did you pause after you had written four lines, and then start afresh?"

"I wrote what I remembered and then went for more. It is a special effort to read, and useful only as a test."

"What is the advantage of this test?"

"Take and read, and recognise our power, and the permission which the great and good God gives us to show you of our power over matter. To Him be glory. Amen."

"You say that your name is Rector. Are you the same Intelligence who used to communicate through Stainton-Moses?"

"Yes. I used to assist Imperator."

Tanner looked round the circle. "Stainton-Moses," he explained, "used to be a clergyman; he was one of the best known and most respected of the early spiritualists. He received communications from both Rector and Imperator." He raised his voice. "Is Imperator here?" he asked.

The writing changed into a clear, bold hand. "*I am Emperor.*"

"Emperor," said Tanner, "we know that the spirits who communicate are sometimes deceitful; can you give us any proof that we may rely on your message?"

"*Call Cyril Fordyce,*" wrote the pencil.

Tanner turned to Mrs. Fordyce. "May we call your son?" he asked.

In spite of her strength of character, Mrs. Fordyce had begun to tremble. "Yes," she murmured; and she called: "Cyril!"

Almost at once the pencil began to write in the typical handwriting of a public-school boy: "*Did you call me, mother?*"

"Yes," she cried.

"Cyril Fordyce," said Tanner, "we wish to establish your identity. Write something that's only known to your mother."

"*Will you only show it to her?*" wrote the pencil.

Tanner got up quickly, and, going round the table, placed a fresh sheet of paper before the professor, and held a double sheet of foolscap over his hands so as to shield the writing.

The pencil wrote for some two minutes, then stopped; and, still keeping the message covered, Tanner handed it to Mrs. Fordyce.

She read; and, as she read, she began to cry softly to herself. "It's Cyril!" she sobbed. "No one knows this but me—not even his father. It's something foolish he did the last time he was at home, but I never knew why he did it until now. It's Cyril's writing too—and—and his spelling!" She crumpled the paper into a ball and held it tightly in her hand.

"Cyril Fordyce," said Tanner, "who is Emperor?"

"*He is our master,*" wrote the pencil, "*who the great and good God has appointed to teach us the truth.*"

"Whom does he teach?"

"*Those in my sphere. Those who wish to advance.*"

"Are you happy, dear?" cried Mrs. Fordyce.

"Yes, dear mother," wrote the pencil.

Poor Mrs. Fordyce buried her face in her hands, and Tanner went on with the questioning.

"Imperator," he said, "are we on the eve of a new revelation?"

Again the writing changed into the firm hand of Imperator: "*The Christ-idea*," he wrote, "*the spiritual truth that he proclaimed, is dragging out a lingering life, choked by the weeds of Sacerdotalism and of human Theology.*"

"Will you teach us the truth?" asked Tanner.

"I am busy," wrote the pencil. "*Meet me here on Saturday. I have other duties now.*"

Then the pencil ceased to write, and they could obtain no further message.

"I think that's all for the present," said Tanner quietly. "Miss Aylmer and I will stop on and file the messages."

"It's marvellous!" murmured the professor as he left his seat.

"I've something to live for now!" whispered Mrs. Fordyce to herself.

"Dad," said Zoe, as the professor passed her, "will you give Mrs. Fordyce some lunch? Don't wait for me; I must finish this whilst it's fresh in my mind."

II

Zoe finished the arrangement of the messages, corrected her notes, and leant back in her chair. "I suppose," said she, "that I'd better embody all this in the minutes to be signed at the next meeting?"

"Yes," answered Tanner, seating himself on the edge of the table. "And we'd better get the signatures of all the members."

"I propose," said Zoe, "to arrange the minutes like this:

"(a) Your opening remarks and the resulting discussion.

"(b) The test of spiritual control in the automatic writing, and Rector's account of the nature of the phenomenon.

"(c) The test of the identity of Cyril Fordyce.

"(d) Cyril's testimony as to the identity and character of Imperator, and Imperator's message.

"It's pretty conclusive evidence, isn't it?"

"The recognition of young Fordyce by his mother," answered Tanner, "seems a strong point. In fact, I don't see how the sceptics are going to get over that, unless they suggest that Mrs. Fordyce unconsciously controlled the professor by means of thought-transference."

Zoe shook her head. "Just think of what that would imply!" she objected. "If the message had been an account of Cyril's indiscretion from his mother's point of view, it might have been her thought-transfer; but it was written from his point of view, in his handwriting, with his spelling. Besides," she added, turning to her notes, "Mrs. Fordyce said, 'I never knew why he did it until now,' and that proves that it couldn't have been all thought-transference!"

Tanner took out a cigarette and lit it. "What sort of a boy was Cyril Fordyce?" he asked.

"The ordinary sort of army boy—a nice boy, but very High Church and a tiny bit of a prig—he became a Catholic just before he was killed." She thought a moment. "It looks as though there wasn't much difference between Catholics and other people after death."

"Of course there isn't!" said Tanner. "All human religions are simply the earthly groping after the one true religion, coloured by race instincts."

"What do you mean?" asked Zoe.

"I mean that the teachings of Christ, supported by materialisations, levitations, faith-healings, and other phenomena, appealed to European instincts; and, the Latin race being supreme at the time, the original

teachings became coloured by Latin thought-methods. When the Teutonic races became civilised, the Christian traditions became coloured by northern thought-methods, and Protestantism was the result. What we need is a simple revelation of eternal truths, uncoloured by either Latin sacerdotalism or Teutonic theology."

"That's exactly what Emperor said!" cried Zoe. "Had you thought of it all before?"

"Of course!" answered Tanner, smiling. "Everyone's sick of the teachings of Fr. This or Parson That, and they're equally bored with all the theories that religion is the survival of the sun-myth or ancestor-worship." He got off the edge of the table and flung his cigarette out through the door. "People are beginning to realise," he said, "that they are eternal souls who are mixed up with matter, and who are muddled through their contact with matter, and they want some definite knowledge about the hereafter."

"Oh!" murmured Zoe, for Tanner seemed to be almost inspired. There was the strange light, which she had already noticed, behind his eyes; but now it seemed as though it were his soul shining out.

"I know," he said, "that I, Simon Tanner, came into existence through my parents; but I am only the grub of the real Simon Tanner, imprisoned in matter, thinking through matter, bounded by matter. Some day my soul will leave this material body, and the real Simon Tanner will be able to think and act free from the influence of matter. It is of this eternal state that I long to know." He pulled himself together with an effort. "I've been carried away by my theories," he said, smiling.

Zoe wanted to ask him more; but there was something in his manner which told her that the conversation was closed.

"I must be going," he said. "This morning has given me much to think over." And, waving aside her invitation to stay for lunch, he went off towards the Tregunden Woods.

III

As Zoe went towards the house, Creenia met her with a telegram. She tore open the envelope, and read :

"All well—am returning immediately.—Bruce."

For a moment she thought of the strange wording of the wire, and supposed that Mrs. Bruce-Smith was much better and Jack free to return. For a moment she thought of Jack's warning against Mr. Tanner, and concluded that Jack must have mixed him up with some undesirable man of the same name. Then her thoughts went back to the morning's experience, and especially to her conversation with Tanner.

Until now she had not come into actual contact with spiritualism, and the morning's séance had impressed her tremendously. Of course she had both read and heard a good deal about the subject ; but the real thing was so very different from what she had imagined. Could anything be more cautious and matter-of-fact than the attitude of her father, Mr. Tanner, and the doctor ? Could anything be more straightforward and convincing than the behaviour of the communicating Intelligences ? Could anything be more scientific than the whole proceeding ?

Jack objected to spiritualism ; but had he any more right to object to her investigations into psychology than she had to object to his belief in Catholicism ? Live, and let live ! Believe, and respect the belief of others !

Of course Jack's Church banned spiritualism ; but, if half of what Mr. Tanner had said was true, it must ban spiritualism ! For had not Imperator declared that very morning that the spiritual truths which Christ proclaimed had been choked by the sacerdotalism and human theology of the Catholic Church ? The Latin development of the Christian revelation must fight for its very existence against a new revelation which should expose its accretion of errors !

Her thoughts swept on. Of course Jack's theory of the human soul, with its three faculties, had caught her fancy just because it had seemed to fit in so well with her theories of speculative biology. But, after all, was not Jack's Catholic psychology merely a survival of the old Grecian psychology of Aristotle and the result of pure reason? When she came to compare Jack's theory with what she had learnt that morning, what was the result? She found a human theory of a soul, backed by reason and its arguments, on the one side; she found the actual disembodied soul of a boy whom she had known very well during his life on the other hand. Cyril had been an absolutely straightforward and absolutely truthful boy when she had known him, and she could not possibly disregard his evidence as to the truth of spiritualism, nor could she disregard what he had said about Imperator.

But this new belief in spiritualism meant nothing short of a mental revolution! She looked across the moor, with the blood singing in her ears. Her present religion contained nothing very definite, and this could easily be revised; but her belief in her theory of biology, and her tremendous reverence for life and the handing on of life, and her—— She started wildly as a hand was laid on her arm.

"Aren't you coming in to lunch, dear?" asked Mrs. Fordyce.

CHAPTER XXI

IMPERATOR

I

It was Saturday morning, and the Tregunden Circle was ready to hold its second séance. The members were chatting as they took their seats, and Professor Aylmer, who had already sat down, was holding a pencil idly in his hand. Suddenly the professor felt a violent thrill run down his arm, and the pencil began to write :

"Our teaching," it wrote, "is in fullest accord with that divinely inspired revelation of the good God which He gave through Jesus Christ—a revelation which man has done so much to debase, and from which the best of the followers of Christ have so grievously fallen away." As the professor wrote, Dr. Morton leant over his shoulder and read out the message :

"Why seek ye the living truth in the dead casket of dogmatic teaching? The spirit has risen, and lo! we proclaim to you sublime truth, a nobler creed and a Divine God. We proclaim to you a spiritualised religion, we call you from the dead formalism, the lifeless, loveless, liberalism of the past, to a religion of spiritualised truth, to the lovely symbolism of angel teaching, to the higher planes of spirit, where the material finds no place and the formal dogmatism of the past is for ever gone."

"That will do!" said Tanner sharply; and the writing stopped. He looked round the circle and smiled. "I'm certain that was Rector," he said. "He seemed to be having the time of his life!"

"The message," remarked the professor, "sounded to me like the flowing language and rounded periods of a deceased Nonconformist preacher."

"Have you ever heard a Nonconformist preacher?" asked Mrs. Fordyce.

"No," answered the professor thoughtfully; and the circle smiled.

"Is Imperator here?" asked Tanner.

The pencil began to write: "*Not at present; but I will try to fetch him.*"

"As I told you at the last meeting," explained Tanner, "Imperator was the control who wrote through Stainton-Moses; he is by far the greatest of the Intelligences that have communicated so far."

As he spoke, the professor's hand began to twitch, and the pencil wrote in a bold, firm hand: "*I am here.*"

"Are the conditions favourable?" asked Tanner.

"Yes," replied the spirit. "*I will write direct.*"

"But," objected Tanner, "we have no medium present!"

"*Zoe Aylmer is a medium,*" wrote the pencil, "*and the circle is sympathetic. I will write direct.*"

Tanner turned to Zoe. "Are you ready to try?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "What have I got to do?"

"Only fall asleep. I will draw the curtains so that the light is restful, and you will go off quietly into a trance."

"But," asked the professor anxiously, "isn't the trance state injurious?"

Immediately the pencil began to write. "*Have no fear,*" it wrote. "*The spirits will take care of you!*"

"There's your answer!" said Tanner. "Besides, unlike materialisation, writing is not a severe strain on the medium, and, as Imperator has told us, the circle is sympathetic. Of course, the other members must help all they can by concentrating their minds on the writing. Will you take down the questions we ask, professor?"

"I suggest," replied the professor, "that Dr. Morton,

who can have no possible collusion with my daughter, shall——”

“All right,” broke in Tanner, “let the doctor take down the questions.” And, picking up a pencil, he broke off the point and placed it on a sheet of paper that was lying in the centre of the table. Then he went over to the windows and drew the curtains. “Can you see to write, doctor?” he asked.

“If the questions are not too long,” answered Dr. Morton.

For a time there was silence, marked by Zoe’s slow, deep breathing and the quick, excited breathing of the circle; then the sheet of paper began to grow distinctly luminous in the twilight.

“What is the foundation of spiritual knowledge?” asked Tanner in a clear, sharp voice; and Dr. Morton took down his enquiry.

They saw the luminous paper move; it seemed to be snatched up into the air; there was the sound of rapid writing; and, in some few seconds, the paper fluttered down on the table, its luminosity growing dim as it fell.

“Will you ask the next question, professor?” said Tanner.

“Is there a God?” asked Professor Aylmer; and pretty Miss Trelawny shuddered at the directness of his question.

“Both question and answer to be marked ‘2,’” said Tanner.

Again the sheet of paper grew luminous; but this time it remained still, whilst they heard the scratching of the lead. The sound of the writing ceased and the glow faded from the paper.

“The next question, please, Morton,” said Tanner.

The doctor hesitated a moment. “Is there any truth in Christianity?” he asked.

“Both question and answer marked ‘3,’” added Tanner.

And so the questions and answers went on; Canon

Carnedhu enquiring whether the bondage of Roman Catholicism would continue ; Mrs. Fordyce, as to the state after death ; and so on, until the failing luminosity of the paper showed that the medium was becoming exhausted.

"A last question !" said Tanner. "Who is Emperor ?"

For a second the paper glowed, showing the faces of the circle quite distinctly ; then, with a snap, just as though someone had turned off the light, the glow vanished.

Tanner went over and opened the door a little, so as to let in some fresh air, and there was a restless movement in the circle. "Keep still," he said, "until Miss Aylmer wakes up ;" and the movement stopped.

He returned to Zoe, placing his left arm round her shoulder and his right hand on her forehead. "Wake up," he said. "You've had a refreshing sleep, and you must wake up perfectly well."

Zoe stirred a little. "Where am I ?" she murmured.

"In the belvedere," he answered. "And, if you're feeling all right, I'll take you across to the house." And, with directions to the members that they must meet together in an hour in order to read the message, he took Zoe over to the house.

He made her lie down on the sofa and dosed her with coffee. Then he sat beside her, holding her wrist with his hands, and, although the girl was feeling both sick and shaken, it seemed to her as though new energy were flowing from Tanner into her.

II

At the end of an hour the members of the circle returned, to find Zoe and Tanner waiting for them.

An hour's pause and an hour's discussion of the phenomenon had cooled everyone. There could be no doubt about the luminosity of the paper and the noise of the writing ; but the supernormal character of the message

had become an unreality, and it is improbable that anyone was now expecting a vital result ; in short, no one would have been astonished if the paper proved to be covered with illegible scrawls.

"Will Dr. Morton read the first question," said Tanner, "and Professor Aylmer read the reply?"

"What is the foundation of spiritual knowledge?" read the doctor.

There was a long pause. "Tut, tut, tut!" murmured the professor as he examined the message. "There is no reply! There's nothing on the paper except a series of broken, but even, pencil lines!"

There was a gasp from the circle.

Tanner took a magnifying-glass out of his pocket and handed it to the professor. "I borrowed this from your laboratory," he remarked.

Again the professor examined the message, adjusted the focus of the lens, muttered something below his breath, and handed both paper and magnifying-glass to Dr. Morton.

"It's writing!" cried Dr. Morton. "It's copper-plate writing of the finest description, every letter perfect!" And, lens to eye, the professor began to decipher the writing, whilst the doctor read out the questions.

The language of the message was clear and decided ; the arguments sounded logical and concise ; even the questions and answers seemed to come in a logical sequence. Briefly summed up, the statement was as follows :

THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.—There weretwo worlds, the material world and the spiritual world, the world that was perceived by the senses and the world that was perceived by the mind, the world of decay and the world of light, the world of time and the world of eternity ; the former was therefore material, sensual, corruptible and transient ; the latter was spiritual, vivifying

and eternal ; in the former there were gross pleasures and gross pains ; in the latter there was everlasting spiritual development and everlasting spiritual happiness. Man had to choose between these two worlds, and true happiness could only be found in cultivating the soul's higher life, in seeking communion with and instruction from the spirit-world, and in thus gradually fitting the soul for life in the highest spirit-spheres hereafter.

CONCERNING GOD.—The spirits who communicated with earth had not seen God, nor did they yet hope to approach His presence. Myriads of ages must run ere the perfected spirit—perfected through knowledge and experience—could enter into the inner sanctuary to dwell in the presence of the All-pure, All-holy, All-perfect God.

THE ERROR OF CHRISTIANITY.—If they would read the Gospels, which so imperfectly record the earth-life of Jesus, they would not find that He claimed for Himself any such position as the Christian Church has since forced upon Him. He was the Son of God—for were they not all the sons of God ? He was Incarnate—for was not each soul that was imprisoned in a human body an incarnation in the truest sense ? But the spiritual idea of Jesus the Christ was no more like the human notion, with its accessories of Atonement and Redemption as men have grasped them, than was the calf ignorantly carved by the ancient Hebrews like the God who strove to reveal Himself to them.

THE BONDAGE OF CATHOLICISM.—Imperator's actual words were : " The burdens that a dogmatic priesthood has bound upon men's backs, we fling them to the winds ; the dogmas which have hampered the soul, and dragged down its aspirations, we tear them asunder and bid the soul go free. Our mission is the continuation of that old teaching which man has so strangely altered."

THE STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.—As the soul has lived in the earth-life, so does it go to the spirit-life : it is not changed save in the accident of being

freed from the body. The soul that has been pure and upright when on earth will, when freed from the realms of matter, progress in an unfettered path of holiness and happiness ; but the earth-bound soul, whose character has been a daily and hourly growth, will have cultivated habits that have become so ingrained as to be an essential part of its individuality. Thus the spirit that has yielded to the lusts of a sensual body will have become in the end their slave ; it will not be happy in the midst of purity and refinement. Such a soul can only progress by penitence, and through the instruction of the higher intelligences. When an earth-bound soul has become amenable to holy and ennobling influences, it is tended by those pure and self-sacrificing spirits whose mission is to tend such souls.

THE TRUE HELL.—They knew of no hell, save that within the soul. Of punishment they knew indeed, not the vindictive lash of an angry God, but the natural outcome of sins once committed in the flesh, and the consciousness that these sins, which had bound the earth-fetters so closely round them, had hindered their advancement in spiritual knowledge and progress.

THE PRESENT STATE OF CYRIL FORDYCE.—In answer to a second question from Mrs. Fordyce : Cyril was already freeing himself from the recollection of material sacraments and man-made observances, and was desiring spiritual enlightenment. He was like one who was emerging from the mists of night into the clear light of morning.

IDENTITY OF IMPERATOR.—In reply to Tanner's question : " Who is Emperor ? " The answer was, " Emperor ! " The spirit was not going to disclose his identity !

There was silence ; then Mrs. Fordyce spoke.

" How enlightening ! " she said softly.

" How wonderful ! " murmured Miss Trelawny.

" It is both clearly reasoned and clearly reasonable," said the professor.

"It helps, rather than hinders, the position of the Broad Church Party," remarked Canon Carnedhu, who was himself very broad in his views.

"What are we going to do about it?" asked Dr. Morton, his forehead wrinkled in thought.

Tanner smiled quietly. "It seems to me," he said, "that we have the choice of two courses: we can either treat this as the scientific spiritualists have treated similar messages, and regard this simply as a piece of evidence; or we can collect more instruction, collate the whole, and become the disciples and apostles of a new revelation."

"We have no choice!" said Zoe.

III

Zoe and Tanner were sitting in the loggia of the belvedere with a simple lunch before them. The rest of the circle had gone in to lunch with the professor; but, partly because Tanner and his secretary wanted to arrange the papers whilst everything was still fresh in their minds, and partly because Zoe wished to be quiet after her morning's experience, the two had chosen to have some cold chicken, salad and fruit sent out to them.

"Are you feeling satisfied with this morning's séance?" asked Zoe happily.

"I'm satisfied with the opening revelation," he answered, "and I'm more than satisfied that the circle has resolved to take definite action." He looked at her with a flash of his eyes. "If it hadn't been for a certain little lady," he said, "the professor would have contributed a paper to the Society for Psychical Research, the rest of the members would have talked and talked, and that would have been the end of it!"

"But, surely, with such a message," she cried, "they'd have been forced to take some action!"

"Would they?" he said, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Zoe could see his eyes becoming dreamy, as though his thoughts were far away. "I had longed for something like this," he said. "I had longed and longed until my heart grew sick. I have been receiving these messages for years and years, sometimes on my ouija-board, sometimes—sometimes in other ways; but never with anyone to vouch for them. Now—don't you see what it means?—a new gospel—a new revelation—written by the spirits themselves—witnessed by eleven witnesses—and the gospel will be published."

"What is the key to this gospel?" she asked. "You know what I mean," she added: "just as the key to the Christian revelation was love."

He smiled at her, speaking as though he were quoting from the records of their new revelation. "And, drawing Simon Tanner aside, Zoe asked for the secret of this mystery." Then his voice became very serious. "As far as you and I are concerned, Miss Aylmer, we have learned that we are only pilgrims passing through this material world, in it, and not of it; that we must free ourselves from the snare of the senses, so that we may enter into the progress of eternity without the memories of the longings of the senses to fetter us and hold us back; that anything which may tend to bind us to matter—material pleasures, earthly ambitions, even such harmless pleasures as love and marriage, even such harmless ambitions as scientific success—are not for you and me. That is the key to our gospel, as far as you and I are concerned."

"But—marriage?" murmured Zoe. "Surely marriage is not forbidden?"

Zoe had always recognised that there was a certain distinction, a certain spiritual aloofness, in Tanner's face; now she realised that it was almost royal in its dignity. "Let those other dear souls, who have gone in to lunch, marry," he answered. "To forbid marriage to most, is to encourage worse materialism. But you and I—you who are called as the handmaid of the spirits, to spend your energy for the work of the spirit, to act as the medium of

communication between the spirit and the world—and I who am called to prompt and organise and guide—are we to bind ourselves by the material ties of marriage? Are we to give half our souls and all our bodies to others, so that we may dim our spiritual sight and lose the earnestness of our purpose?" He looked away across the moor, smiling quietly to himself. "There was once a great medium," he said, "who was controlled by a very great Intelligence—*Sermo Scientiæ*, 'the word of knowledge'—and he was permitted by this same spirit to write some wonderful warnings against marriage for people like you and me: you will find them in the seventh chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians." He stood up, and looked at her searchingly. "How are you feeling?" he asked.

"Oh, quite all right," she answered.

"Then, shall we get on with our work?" he suggested.

IV

They had finished their work, and were resting for a few minutes before they left the belvedere. Tanner lit a cigarette.

"There!" he said, with a smile. "I'm forging another fetter to bind me to earth! I shall miss smoking in the future state!"

"Then, you don't believe in the spiritual cigar story?" asked Zoe.

Tanner laughed. "Before you go, Miss Aylmer," he said, "I want to give you a word of advice and a word of warning. My advice is that you should conserve your energy by every means in your power; my warning is, that you should avoid placing yourself under the control of any spirit except Imperator."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because," he answered, "you are the means through which we get our revelations, and a very important

person." And he went on to explain that the energy required for even such a simple phenomenon as direct writing was a serious drain on the physical strength of the medium. It was not as though she herself were wielding the pencil, in which case the waste of energy would be but slight; that very morning she had supplied such a flood of energy that the paper on which the writing had been formed had become distinctly luminous. Then, again, he was afraid that they must arrange for at least one materialisation, and the sooner that took place, the better.

"But," said Zoe, "I thought that materialisations were more sensational than useful."

Tanner shook his head and smiled. Of course, the phenomenon of direct writing was far stronger evidence, far more valuable in result, than any materialisation; but, as long as man was bound to matter, so long would he require an appeal through his senses. Even the greatest medium of all had strengthened the faith of His disciples by the materialisation of Moses and Elias, and He Himself had materialised after death. "Besides"—and he smiled grimly—"would we have any peace from Mrs. Fordyce until she had seen her son materialised?"

"Will I find it difficult?" asked Zoe anxiously.

"Difficult?—No! Exhausting?—Yes!" And he explained that Zoe would only have to let herself fall into a trance, as she had done that morning, and the spirits would effect the materialisation. But she would find the experience exhausting; for, as he understood the phenomenon, the spirits would transform the energising material of her body into fluid energy, withdraw it from her body, use it as the material for the materialisation, and then restore it to her body. During this process there would be some loss—in fact, she would lose sensibly in weight—and besides, it would take time for her tissues to settle down. She would probably feel both sick and exhausted when she recovered from the trance, and she must try to build up her strength beforehand with regular meals, regular rest, and regular gentle exercise. But this was

only a matter of ordinary precaution, and there was a real danger that he must warn her against.

As long as she acted as the medium for Imperator and his group of spirits, she was in safe hands ; for not only was Imperator a spirit of good, but he had also much experience in dealing with human beings, and he could be trusted to take every possible care of his medium. But, when other spirits saw that she was an efficient medium, they might wish to communicate through her, and these other spirits might be thoughtless of her welfare and absolutely careless of her health. Besides, as they had learnt that morning, there were also spirits in a low state of moral development, and the less she had to do with these the better. "Remember, Miss Aylmer," he ended, "you're the only medium through whom we can receive our messages, and you must help us to guard you in every possible way !"

After all she had gone through and all she had heard, there is little wonder that Zoe sighed.

Tanner placed his hand on hers. "Remember," he said softly, "that life here is only short ; the life beyond is everlasting !" And, after asking her to put away the papers in the professor's safe, Tanner left for his cottage.

The girl sat still for some minutes. She did not doubt the truth of the new revelation ; she acknowledged the honour that had been conferred on her ; but, all the same, she was crushed down by the thought of the life that was before her. She would certainly have to give up her scientific work, and, in its place, she would have to become a medium with an impaired vitality and a possible loss of health. Then there was Jack ! Would she have to break off her engagement and give him up ? She could not face the idea at present ; and, with a deep sigh, she began to gather up her papers.

CHAPTER XXII

BRUCE-SMITH'S THEORY

I

ON his arrival at the hotel on the Lake of Como, Bruce-Smith had found his mother in the best of health and spirits—better indeed than she had been for months. She had sent no telegram summoning him ; his sister, who was with her, denied all responsibility ; a strict enquiry at the telegraph-office failed to solve the problem. Yes ! as the duplicate showed, the telegram had been handed in and paid for ; but who had sent it ? Heaven knew ! Many telegrams were handed in daily, and, as long as they were paid for, no questions were asked. Did the signor expect that they would ask a stranger to show his passport before they despatched his telegram ? See ! There was no name on the duplicate ; and, for all they could tell, the message might have been despatched by San Michele or by the devil himself ! This set Bruce-Smith thinking wildly of his theory, and enquiring about the express-service with France.

And, through his journey home, Bruce-Smith worried over his theory. He knew it was all fancy, founded on his dream, and built up on a number of inexplicable incidents which he had associated with his dream. He had not a single bit of sound evidence to go on ; but still his theory persisted in assuming a reality that refused to be put aside. And now there was this forged telegram !

Who could possibly have sent the telegram ? Of course the obvious answer was that his mother might

have sent it through an overwhelming longing to have him with her. But this was entirely contrary to his mother's character; he had never known her to stoop to the slightest deceit, and her honest surprise at the whole incident was beyond dispute. As for his sister: she had never been especially fond of him, and he could see that his arrival had upset some of her plans.

Then who could it be? Someone who wanted to get him out of England! He went through all the people he could think of, both personal friends and acquaintances and business associates, and he could think of no single human being.

But, suppose his fancy was correct; suppose Tanuath had materialised, had grown into the form of a man, had taken clothes and money from Bewes and had settled down in the cottage beside the Camel under the name of Tanner; might not this Tanner desire his temporary absence from England? Suppose this fiend had known that he and Zoe were to travel down to Tregunden together, and suppose the incarnate Tanuath had wished to make the acquaintance of Zoe before he could prevent it?—what could be more effectual than the summons to Como? And who could doubt that an incarnate fiend would have the skill to engineer the despatch of the telegram?

And so his thoughts ran on, tortured at intervals by the slowness of continental travelling.

He reached Camelford late on Sunday night, resolving to stay the night at the hotel and go on to Tregunden immediately after he had heard the first Sunday Mass.

II

During most of the night Zoe had lain awake. It was all very well for Mr. Tanner to tell her that she must take regular rest; but how could she rest with the problem of the future facing her?

There were two worlds, the material world and the

spiritual world, and she had to choose between these two. At first sight the choice had seemed easy, or rather it had seemed as if there had been no choice for one who would be true and honest to herself—no more choice than there would be between a mess of pottage and eternal happiness—but further thought had shown her that the problem was not so simple as it had seemed.

Before she had gone to bed, she had turned up the passage in Corinthians which Tanner had told her to read, and she had found :

“ There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit : but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”

At first the choice had seemed to be between mediumship and marriage, a choice between serving the spirit and pleasing Jack, and, in reality, there had seemed to be no choice between duty to the higher state and pleasure for herself and her husband. But, on second thoughts, she had seen that her choice involved Jack as much as it involved herself, and that, if she chose to throw away her mess of earthly pottage in order that she might grasp eternal happiness, she was also throwing away Jack's mess of pottage without giving him a share in the happiness beyond the veil ; for she had no hope of converting Jack.

Then there were Mr. Tanner's words about marriage for the ordinary person : “ To forbid marriage to most, is to encourage worse materialism.” Of course she did not dream that the breaking-off of the engagement would drive dear old Jack to any coarse type of materialism—he was far too good, far too dear a fellow to be driven into low dissipation ; but it would certainly tend to drive him closer into the bondage of Catholicism, thus hampering his soul and dragging down its aspirations. In short, she

could only win her spiritual freedom by driving Jack into worse materialism.

With an effort she turned her thoughts back to her old views of body and soul. She might have likened the body to a locomotive and the soul to steam, and she might have defined her view of their mutual relationship thus : " What is a locomotive ? An engine that is driven forward by steam ! What is steam ? That which drives forward a locomotive ! " She had never realised that the steam had any other function than the driving forward of the locomotive ; she had never realised that the spiritual steam only commenced its eternal career of life and usefulness after it had left the engine. This did not mean the rejection of her old views of the importance of love in the scheme of creation ; but love and marriage might be left to those good folk who are bound to the wheel of material life, and these could be trusted to mate and bring forth the fresh individuals who should dissolve into new and eternal souls : the stream of life might safely be left to take care of itself, whilst she and those who had realised the truth of the higher life, keeping themselves free from the taint of the senses, acted as apostles of the new revelation.

This brought her back to her engagement with a jerk. Her short excursion into the thought-realms of biology had dimmed the memory of Tanner and spiritualism. She found that she was feeling very tired and very soul-weary, and she longed with a passionate longing for Jack and the peace which he had always brought.

III

Sunday morning had turned intensely hot ; the moors shimmered in the heat-haze, and the air was suffocating ; the woods promised torture, the valley promised torment, and the only possible resting-place was the most shady loggia of the belvedere.

"You're looking awfully tucked-up, old woman!" said Bruce-Smith, his eyes fixed on Zoe.

She ignored his remark, settling herself more comfortably in her deck chair. "Jack," she asked, "would you marry me if I became a spiritualist?"

The question came as a shock, for so far Zoe had never shown any leanings towards the occult, but Bruce-Smith did not turn a hair. "Yes," he answered.

"But, if I told you that I intended to devote myself to spiritualism very seriously, that I intended to become a medium, that I was a medium, that I wished to remain unmarried, would you release me from my engagement?"

He didn't look at her; he looked away across the moor. "If you told me that you'd stopped loving me," he said, "I'd release you; otherwise, no."

"But your religion?—you couldn't!"

He drew a long breath. "Of course you could refuse to promise that our children should be brought up Catholics," he answered, "which would effectually stop our marriage; but, bar that, I've taken you for better or worse!"

She held out her hands to him with a sob; and, before she could rouse herself to resist, he had her safe and sound in his arms. "Now," he said, "begin at the beginning, and tell me all about what's happened."

She began, starting with her capture of the salmon and her first meeting with Tanner.

He stopped her. "About that salmon," he said; "was it a firm, plump, fresh-run fish?"

"Yes," she answered. "Why?"

"Oh, I only wanted to know," he said; but this capture of a fresh-run salmon in July added another link to his theory; for, although there is a spring run of salmon up the Dart, no fresh fish come up the Camel until the first floods of autumn. This arrival of Tanner and the salmon at the same time must be more than a coincidence.

Zoe went on; she told about the ouija-board, and about the first séance, and about the revelation through direct writing, and about the proposed materialisation;

and, all the time, Bruce-Smith petted and encouraged her so that she might tell him everything. As she finished, he gave her a little squeeze.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I wish you could put off the materialisation a bit; you're not strong enough to stand it yet."

But she couldn't put it off; all the arrangements had been made and Tanner and Mrs. Fordyce were coming to lunch so that they might discuss it.

It was typical of the man that he did not attempt to argue, nor did he try any further discouragement. He knew that Zoe's mind was made up and that any opposition on his part would be worse than useless. "Look here, old woman," he said, "this mustn't make any difference between us."

She cuddled up closer to him. "I've been wanting you so badly," she whispered.

"Well, now that you've got me," he answered, "you're not going to get rid of me! And," he added gravely, "if you should want me at any time, remember I'm standing by."

As they went in to lunch, Zoe stopped him. "You'll be nice to Mr. Tanner?" said she.

He looked at her with a grin. "Watch me!" he answered.

IV

During the months which had passed since he dined with Mrs. Fordyce, Bruce-Smith appeared to have learnt diplomacy; for he was charming to that lady, and, except for one short second, during which he and Tanner seemed to sense each other's antagonism, his behaviour towards the spiritualist was all that could be desired. In fact, after that first second, Zoe found herself positively enjoying the subtle play between her sweetheart and her teacher; they were fencing—fencing with the buttons on, measuring

each other's skill in rapier-play, acting with the studied courtesy that marks the salute before the duel. Only once was the button discarded, and then Bruce-Smith was the culprit.

The professor and Mrs. Fordyce had been discussing the recent séances, the convincing nature of the phenomena and the absolute proof of identity which the controls had given. Tanner had added a remark.

"I grant all you've said, Mr. Tanner," broke in Bruce-Smith, "except one thing; what proof have you that your controls are not the other kind of spirits, personating the departed and forging their hand-writing? They'd be able to do it!"

Tanner gave him one glance, so malignant that it made Zoe shudder; then lowered his eyelids.

"Mr. Bruce-Smith," he answered gently, "nineteen centuries ago, the followers of the old revelation made the same charge against the Founder of Christianity. They said: 'Now we know that thou hast a devil!'"

"Touched!" cried Bruce-Smith. "You got the best of that bout!" And Tanner smiled.

The professor looked pained at his future son-in-law's lack of tact; Mrs. Fordyce looked very angry; but Zoe, remembering her lover's warning against Tanner, guessed that there was something behind his apparent gaucherie.

With this exception, lunch passed smoothly; and, after lunch, Tanner waited for a few minutes and then joined Zoe and Mrs. Fordyce on the terrace. As he came up, he heard Mrs. Fordyce railing against "the pharisaical intolerance and devilish ingenuity of that young man," whilst Zoe, her face flushed and her breath coming quickly, was standing up for her lover's right to hold his own opinion.

They paused as Tanner joined them, and he looked from one to the other. "I quite agree with Miss Aylmer," he remarked. "From what I have seen, I have formed a very high opinion of Mr. Bruce-Smith. It's not his fault that he was born a Catholic, and, being a Catholic, he cannot think other than he does."

"I shouldn't have expected you to speak like that!" stormed Mrs. Fordyce.

"My dear lady," answered Tanner, "there is nothing that requires deeper sympathy and greater patience than invincible ignorance. It isn't our province to relight the fires of Smithfield!" And, saying good-bye, he strolled off across the lawns.

"Fool!" snapped Mrs. Fordyce.

But, in his chivalrous defence of Jack, Zoe forgot all about his look that had frightened her during lunch.

V.

When he went upstairs to bed, Bruce-Smith had a conversation with Smith; for Smith was a highly educated dog who slept on a mat in his master's bedroom.

"Well, old fellow," he said, "what did you think of our friend Tanuath?"

The bull-terrier wrinkled his nose and gave a subdued snarl.

"All right!" said the master. "I saw you didn't like him!"

Again the dog snarled.

"Now I'll tell you something," said Bruce-Smith. "I noticed his legs a little more closely than you did. Zoe says he can't bend his knees because he's got arthritis, but I saw a bulge behind the knee-cap as well as in front. That knee-cap's artificial, and he's got the legs of a goat. He's Tanuath right enough, grown into a full-fledged devil!"

He stopped fooling with the dog, and became deep in his thoughts. Those legs of Tanner's were strange; but let that pass. His long nose and strange cheek-bones were suggestive; but let that pass. But those eyes, and their diabolical gleam when Tanner lost his temper, could not be explained away.

Then the real horror of the situation caught him and

held him. It was not Tanner himself that mattered, it was the effect of his influence : Zoe already a medium ; Mrs. Fordyce and a round dozen of the neighbours crazy about spiritualism, and even the professor bitten with the mania. Besides this, above this, making this seem small by comparison, there was the new revelation of the séances ; this was to be published, and there would be a wave of spiritualism that would ruin countless souls.

For a moment he wondered if it were possible for him to do anything ; but he saw that he had neither the knowledge nor the mental power to rise to the occasion. He must seek advice.

He remembered that there was a brilliant psychologist and biologist at Stonyhurst, whom Fr. Arbuthnot had advised him to consult. What was his name ? Moran ? No ! It was a French or Spanish name, rather than Irish. Morat ! That was it !

He took a telegraph form, and wrote out a wire to Stonyhurst asking for Fr. Morat's address ; for it was quite possible that he might be away from the College. As soon as he knew for certain where he was, he would go and see him. The whole matter was far too complicated to be explained in a letter.

Then he fell to thinking and worrying about Zoe.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MATERIALISATION

I

WHEN the professor came in to breakfast next morning he was in a pretty state of mind. The colloid which he had prepared overnight—the colloid which he had compounded from the most perfect chemicals and according to the latest formula—had gone bad. There was no shirking the matter: the Materia had been attacked by some bacillus of putrefaction, and positively stank! And this was the second time the catastrophe had occurred during the last few days! Of course all chemicals had a tendency to deteriorate when exposed to the air; but, in this case, there was nothing to attract and encourage decay, and the putrefaction was altogether inexplicable.

He detailed the list of chemicals employed. Could Zoe suggest anything? Had she ever heard of a similar experience?

For a few moments the girl's old sense of keenness and mental alertness came back to her; then she realised that this was only a question affecting the world of matter, and of no importance when compared with the spiritual problems before her. "After all, dad," she said, "this is only a part of the eternal law of life. Whether living matter should decay at its inception, or whether it should decay at the conclusion of its life-cycle, is quite immaterial."

"Tut, tut, tut!" muttered the professor; for this was a most unscientific line for a biologist to adopt. "I must consult Tanner," he said.

"Why?" asked Zoe. "Mr. Tanner knows nothing about embryogeny."

"But I got my formula through automatic writing," cried the professor. "I shall consult Tanner!" And he dug the spoon into his egg viciously.

II

The moment breakfast was over the professor hurried off. Zoe and Bruce-Smith went with him across the lawns, and, finding the shade of the wood pleasant, strolled slowly to and fro along the beginning of the pathway.

"Jack," said Zoe presently, "why don't you dissuade me from taking part in this séance?"

Bruce-Smith smiled and slipped his arm round her. "Because there'd be no good in worrying you, sweetheart," he answered.

She looked at him, wondering. "Do you know," she said, "that six months ago you'd have argued and dissuaded, and lost your temper with me? What's changed you, Jack?"

He gave her a tiny squeeze. "Love!" he answered.

He could feel her coming closer to him, and a shiver ran through her. "Are you frightened, little woman?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered; "horribly! If I was only going to act as medium for direct writing, I shouldn't mind; but to have the spirits take my very self, and— and model it like Cyril Fordyce, and—and——"

Bruce-Smith clenched his teeth; for he had realised that, whatever his own feelings might be, the calmer Zoe kept before the séance, the less her danger. And so he took care not to tighten his clasp, but shifted his right hand and began to stroke her arm. "Poor little girl!" he said gently.

"Jack," she sighed, "I can never tell you what you've been to me these last two days. I—I think this has

brought us closer than we've ever been before—and—and it mightn't ! ”

“ Remember,” he said, “ that I'm standing by if you want me ” ; and, with an effort, he managed to turn the conversation away from spiritualism.

They heard steps, and the professor came fuming up the pathway. If ever a man was angry, that man was Professor Aylmer. When he saw them, he exploded into words.

“ He won't help me ! ” he cried. “ He won't help me a bit ! ”

“ What is it, dad ? ” cooed Zoe. “ What's happened ? ” And gradually, amidst splutters of rage, Tanner's enormity came out.

He had said that he knew nothing about biology. He had said that communications with the spirit world ought not to be used for any scientific or material purposes. He had said that, if people were allowed to use automatic writing for earthly purposes, there was nothing to prevent them from obtaining a formula for the transmutation of lead into gold or information that would enable them to speculate on the Stock Exchange. He had absolutely refused to attempt to hold any communication with Tanuath through his ouija-board, explaining that a spirit who was still wrapped up in earthly science must be in a very low state of spiritual development and unworthy of attention ; and he had pointed out that the professor must not regard the soul as a by-product of evolution nor spiritualism as a by-product of science.

As the professor talked, Bruce-Smith found himself looking at Zoe with a gleam of amusement. For the first and last time they both found themselves in sympathy with Tanner's point of view.

“ I don't trust the man ! ” cried the professor. “ I believe—I believe that he's hostile to Science ! ”

“ But you'll come to the meeting, dad ? ” said Zoe.

“ Yes ! ” snapped the professor. “ I mean to see that he doesn't play any tricks with you ! ”

III

Outside the sun was shining. Inside the belvedere the light had been subdued until it was just possible to recognise a face and features at a yard's distance. At the far end of the room a curtain of some dark material had been draped against the wall, and Zoe was sitting on a chair that had been placed before the curtain. The table had been moved; other chairs had been arranged in a double semi-circle round the medium; and the members of the circle had been seated so that male and female alternated. Tanner came forward and stood beside Zoe.

"This morning," he said, "we hope to witness a materialisation. This is no higher manifestation than the one which we received last Saturday; in fact, since it will appeal chiefly to our material senses, it may be called an inferior manifestation. But, still, just as a letter may be confirmed and strengthened by the enclosure of the writer's photograph, so this may help us to grasp the truth of our spiritual messages more vividly.

"The materialisation will appear in the form of Cyril Fordyce. Since Cyril Fordyce is a spirit with no material body, this will not be Cyril himself; but it will be modelled by Cyril Fordyce into the likeness of the body he used on earth. Through this material form, he will be able to communicate as though it were his own.

"From what will this visible body be formed? Partly from the fluid energy contributed by the medium, partly from the fluid energy which will be contributed by every member of the circle. The fluid energy, contributed by the circle, will be modelled by the spirit into the phantom or apparition of his body.

"I must warn you that the strain on the medium will be no small matter, and I intend that the materialisation shall be short. I also ask you, by the strength of your will and the concentration of your thoughts, to assist the medium in her effort." He returned to his seat between

212 PROFESSOR AYLMER'S EXPERIMENT

Mrs. Fordyce and Miss Trelawny, taking hold of their hands. They took the hands of those next them, and so on, until the circle was complete.

IV

Dr. Morton, who had once been well known as a consulting physician, was a trained observer in the full power of his faculties and somewhat sceptical by temperament ; so Dr. Morton's account, which is entered in the records of the circle, is the most reliable version of what happened. After recording the way in which they were seated, the doctor wrote :

" For about ten minutes after Mr. Tanner had finished speaking nothing happened. I could feel the hand of Mrs. Fordyce on my left gripping my hand very tightly, and the pressure of Miss Allen's hand on my right was considerable ; also I had a sensation as though waves of magnetic energy were beginning to surge round the circle.

" At the end of this period, Zoe Aylmer lapsed into a state of unconsciousness with symptoms that were similar to those of a person coming under the influence of chloroform. I could see the white of her face and hands against the dark background.

" As far as I could judge, some three minutes afterwards the phenomenon began to materialise, and as it materialised my neighbours' knees pressed against mine with a rotary motion and the force-waves increased perceptibly.

" The first manifestation was in the form of a small luminous sphere of a cold-blue tint and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter. The sphere, which reminded me of the *ignis-fatuus*, or will-o'-the-wisp, was first situated about two feet on the left of the medium and some eight feet above the floor. It appeared to me to be attached to the centre of Miss Aylmer's body by a luminous band about

one inch wide ; but this ligament was not observed by any other member of the circle.

" The sphere increased in size until it was as large as a man's head. There were spots of light on its surface and also spots that were less luminous than the rest. The sphere descended to the floor, and taking the course of the letter S ascended to its original position. Again it descended to the floor and rose slowly to the height of an ordinary man, leaving behind it as it ascended a column of semi-luminous emanations of about its own diameter. The upper portion of this column then began to swell, taking an oviform shape.

My eyes having wandered to the medium, I became immersed in Miss Aylmer's physical condition. Her face appeared to have shrunk like the face of a person in the last stages of starvation, and her clothes seemed to hang loosely on her body ; but, unfortunately, the light was not sufficient for me to make an accurate and reliable observation.

" When my eyes returned to the phenomenon, the sphere had already taken the form of a human head. The features were somewhat vague and not unlike those of the medium. The column had also taken the form of a man shrouded in flowing drapery.

" As I watched, both form and features took definite shape. Gradually, and without pause, the features became those of Cyril Fordyce, and arms were thrust out of the torso with hands exactly like those of Cyril Fordyce. At the end of some five minutes the figure was precisely like Cyril Fordyce, whom I had known for ten years before his death.

" There was not sufficient light to observe Miss Aylmer's throat, so I am unable to say whether the voice came from the medium, or whether it came from some outside influence. It appeared to come from the phenomenon itself and was precisely like the voice of Lieutenant Fordyce. It said : ' Mother, I have given you my message, and I confirm it. For your own sake and the

sake of others strive to spread a knowledge of the truth.'

"Mrs. Fordyce then became violently agitated, and I had to do all in my power to calm her.

"When next I looked the phenomenon had begun to disappear. It seemed to melt like wax before a fire, and as it melted the material of which it was formed lay in luminous white pools on the floor. These pools vanished gradually as though they were being absorbed by the atmosphere.

"Miss Aylmer regained consciousness in about four minutes. Her symptoms, including that of nausea, were those of a person recovering from an overdose of chloroform.

"Mr. Tanner and I then carried Zoe Aylmer into the house and, at his suggestion, first administered strong coffee, then bovril. Gradually her pulse, which had been weak and intermittent, regained strength, and at the end of half an hour I was able to leave her.

"*To sum up. (a).*—The appearance of the phenomenon, having both the likeness and voice of Cyril Fordyce, is beyond dispute. But if, as Mr. Tanner asserts, the material of the phantom was drawn from the medium and members of the circle, there is nothing to show that the phantom was not fashioned by the will-power of the circle. As evidence, it is not to be compared with the phenomenon of direct writing as obtained on Saturday.

(b).—Judging from the action of Miss Aylmer's heart after the séance, materialisation must be a severe and injurious physical strain on the medium, and should be discouraged."

With the exception of Mrs. Fordyce, this summing-up was accepted by the circle. The sensational phenomena of spiritualism might be left to ordinary spiritualists; their quest was the pursuit of knowledge. As Tanner pointed out: the Founder of Christianity only employed phenomena to convert sceptics; He did not work miracles for His own disciples.

But poor Mrs. Fordyce, unstrung by what she had seen, clamoured for another glimpse of Cyril.

V

Zoe remained in her bedroom until dinner-time. At first she suffered from the physical reaction after the strain; but when she had drunk several cups of tea and eaten several slices of bread-and-butter her strength seemed to come back to her and she was able to think clearly of all that had happened. Of course, she could not remember what had occurred during her trance state; but she could remember her sense of shrinking before the materialisation and her feeling of loathing when she had woke up from the trance, and she could remember the very wording of Imperator's messages and all that Tanner had said to her about her vocation as a medium. These memories seemed to frame themselves upon the wall of her room like a series of pictures, and none of them were restful pictures; in fact, the scenes before and after the materialisation were distinctly cubist in their suggestion.

Then another series of mental pictures began to arrange themselves on the opposite wall; there was the picture of Jack, as he knelt beside her on Brown Willy, trembling and humble with his love of her; and there was the picture of him in the loggia, when he had told her that, mediumship or no mediumship, he would not let her go; and there was that wonderful scene in the woods, when she had asked him why he did not try to dissuade her from acting as medium, and, later, when she had told him that she was frightened.

She looked from one imaginary pictured wall to the other, and chid herself. "You're as weak as water over Jack!" she murmured. "If you marry him, or even go on with the engagement, you'll be giving up spiritualism!" She was sure that, if he had only remained the old "tell the truth and shame the devil" Jack of six months ago,

blurting out his thoughts and beliefs, she could have stood firm to her convictions ; but this new Jack, straight as ever—his passage of arms with Tanner had shown that !—yet infinitely strong and patient and tender, would in the end conquer her. The very thought of him standing by in the background, never interfering yet ever ready for her if she should need his help, would, in the end, conquer any girl.

Well, she must put the matter aside for the present and go down to dinner ; she'd face it again, and make up her mind definitely, when she went to bed.

So she got up, put on her thinnest and prettiest gown, and went down to dinner looking rather languorous, but very sweet and very lovely.

VI

When they had finished dinner, Zoe and Bruce-Smith went out into the evening. The moon was shining brightly, the air was balmy, and the scents of the night mingled roses with jasmine and the smell of the flowers with the scent of the pine-trees. They strolled down across the lawns, talking softly to each other, until they came to the woods.

"Don't let's go any further," said Bruce-Smith. "I don't like that wood : it's evil."

"I want to talk to you," answered Zoe. "I want to talk to you in the shadow of the wood."

So they went on.

Bruce-Smith had put his arm round her, and now her hand sought his and drew his clasp closer. "Jack," she said, "whatever I do, will you believe that I love you, and only you ?"

"Yes," he muttered.

"Because," she said, "I may have to choose between you and duty."

"Yes," he muttered ; and he took a grip on himself,

for he had realised that she was not quite herself after the séance, and he was not going to risk any chance of an argument.

As they entered the shadows, he heard her murmuring: "I can't! I can't!" Then he heard her sob, and he caught her into his arms.

They were standing still now, where a ray of moonlight pierced the branches overhead and lit up their faces. Zoe was looking up at him hungrily.

His lips met hers; his clasp tightened. "Love me! Love me! Love me!" she whispered.

Then, in the middle of that first burning embrace, something very small and still seemed to warn Bruce-Smith; and, without a moment's pause, he lifted his love into his arms and, almost breaking into a run as he went, carried her up the pathway and out of the wood.

"I don't like that place!" he grumbled, as he stood her down on the lawn.

She laughed softly and a little shyly, and, putting her hand into his, let him lead her towards the house.

When they reached the door, and the light of the hall faced them, Zoe drew back. "I'm going off to bed, Jack," she said softly. "I'm very tired." And she held up her lips for his good-night kiss.

CHAPTER XXIV

A NEW CONTROL

I

WHEN Bruce-Smith came down to breakfast next morning he found Professor Aylmer in a saturnine mood; for, in the first place, Zoe had sent to say that she was feeling tired and would breakfast in bed, and, in the second place, another batch of colloid had gone wrong. The professor's eyebrows went up: what could they expect if they neglected Barrett's warning and made spiritualism into a religion?

"You mean Sir William Barrett?" asked Bruce-Smith.

"Yes!" growled the professor; and he explained Professor Barrett's contention, that spiritualism was at present merely a subject for scientific investigation, and that investigators should confine themselves to the observation, record, and classification of the phenomena and to a study of the physical and psychical conditions most favourable for their production. "The moment we allow ourselves," he said, "to regard psychical research as more than scientific research, or, at the most, a possible proof of survival after death; the moment we permit ourselves to be drawn into spiritualism as a cult: from that moment do we risk making fools of ourselves." He chuckled grimly: "What right had I to assume that a dead and buried Babylonian would know more about the synthetic composition of life than I do? *Materia Pilosi!*" he chuckled; "Material of the Hairy Things! No wonder that the colloid is covered with a long growth of mould!"

But Bruce-Smith was not worrying about the professor's scientific failure. "How do you think that spiritualism's affecting Zoe's health?" he asked.

The professor exploded. "That's one of the things I quarrelled with Mr. Tanner about!" he cried. "Zoe's far too highly-strung, far too slight in build, for a medium. You require a fat, lazy woman for that work!"

Much as he detested the subject, Bruce-Smith knew that he ought to gather all possible details. "Why?" he asked.

"As far as we know," answered the professor, "and as far as we can learn from the controls themselves, the spirits draw from the medium's reserves of energy in order to obtain material for their phenomena. Now translate this into the ordinary language of physics: a person stores up the excess of energy-producing material in the form of say, adipose tissue, and, when required, converts this material into energy; thus, a gross, lazy woman has stored up a large reserve of energy-producing material in the form of fat. Is this clear?"

"Yes," murmured Bruce-Smith.

"Under normal conditions, if this gross, lazy woman were compelled to take a great deal of exercise, her fat would be converted into, and expended as, energy; but, in a materialisation, one is forced to assume that much of her adipose reserve is taken from her in the form of fluid energy; that the fluid energy is converted into some kind of semi-fluid matter, which is modelled into the shape of the apparition; that, after the materialisation, this is reconverted into energy, restored to the medium, and converted back again into the material of her normal energy reserve. The fact that a medium appears to shrink in bulk during a materialisation seems to me to confirm my view."

"How beastly!" murmured Bruce-Smith.

"With a great, fat animal of a woman," continued the professor calmly, "it would not matter—she could afford to have her fat run down into energy, even though she

should lose some in the process ; but, with a girl like Zoe, there is always the fear that the spirits may be drawing on some dangerous energy reserve, the brain for instance. I told Mr. Tanner so."

"And he said?" muttered Bruce-Smith, feeling physically sick.

"That the body was of no importance when compared with the spirit ; that temporal inconvenience could not be compared to eternal truth. I lost my temper, and so did he ; in fact, his violence frightened me !"

For a moment Bruce-Smith was tempted to hint at his theory of the Tanuath incarnation, but he had sufficient wit to restrain himself. "Can't you drop these séances?" he asked.

"No," answered the professor firmly. "We are obtaining some remarkable phenomena and some remarkably convincing messages, and we must go on. But I propose, with or without Mr. Tanner's consent, to secure the services of another medium."

Bruce-Smith gave a sigh of relief ; then, reading between the lines : "Do you trust Tanner?" he asked.

The professor frowned ; he appeared to think deeply ; he scowled.

"Mr. Tanner seems to have a great influence over Zoe," suggested Bruce-Smith.

"Hurrr!" growled the professor ; and they finished their breakfasts in silence.

II

Zoe had fallen asleep almost as soon as her head had touched the pillow, and she had slept the sleep of complete exhaustion. As she woke up, very tired and worn out, but with her mind clear and composed, she resolved to lie in bed awhile and think things over ; besides, she was feeling a little shy at the thought of meeting Jack.

Dear old Jack! How was he to have known that,

when he had taken her into his arms, her cry for his love had only meant that she had made her choice, and that nothing in this world or the next was to come between her and him? He had thought her overstrung, he had thought her over-emotional, and he had picked her up and carried her out of the wood and set her down like a child that had been snatched from danger. She loved him for his chivalry; she loved him for his care of her; but, all the same, the incident had made her feel a little shy and more than a little self-conscious.

Now for the real problem! And, whilst she had her breakfast, and whilst she dressed, she reviewed the substance of Emperor's message, she compared it with Tanner's interpretation, and she weighed the physical effects of acting as medium. Then, having practically made up her mind, she went down to seek the professor.

She found him seated at the writing-table in his laboratory, and, closing the door, she went over and put her arm round him. "Dad," she said, "I want to consult you about something that's most important."

He smiled at her and lifted up his cheek to be kissed.

"It's about being a medium," she began, and went on to state her various conflicting difficulties. "You see," she ended, "it really comes to this: on the one hand, as Mr. Tanner insists, it is absolutely important that I should continue to act as the medium for Emperor's communications; on the other hand, I'm certain that it's bad for my health, and that doesn't seem fair to Jack." She said nothing about the idea of giving up marriage so that she might devote herself entirely to spiritualism, for she had made up her mind on that point when she was in Tregunden Woods.

"I have been studying the same problem," answered the professor, "and I believe that I have arrived at a solution." He paused a moment. "Mind," he said, "I'm not suggesting that we should give up these séances, for Emperor's communications strike me as important."

But have you considered the obvious alternative to your acting as medium ? ”

“ What ? ” asked Zoe, for no alternative had occurred to her.

The professor went over to the empty fireplace, and, motioning Zoe to an easy chair, leant against the mantel-piece. “ Why not engage a professional medium ? ” he suggested. “ Why not employ some fat, lazy woman with large reserves of latent energy, instead of my little Zoe ? ”

“ But—— ” began Zoe, and she checked herself.

“ A medium,” said the professor, “ is only a store-house of energy ; she has nothing to do with the quality of the message.”

“ But,” objected Zoe, “ if we employ a paid medium, there's always the possibility of fraud.”

“ If we use direct writing,” argued the professor, “ how can there be any possibility of fraud ? Imperator seems so powerful and determined, that there should be no difficulty in securing the phenomenon of direct writing with any medium.”

Zoe sighed. “ I don't like the idea,” she said.

“ Why ? ” asked the professor.

She leant back in her chair and the picture of Tanner's fervour, as he proclaimed the dignity of her vocation and the lofty character of their mission, came back to her. “ Hadn't we better consult Mr. Tanner ? ” she asked.

Unconsciously, the professor repeated Bruce-Smith's question. “ Do you trust Mr. Tanner ? ” he enquired.

Zoe smiled. “ When I'm with him,” she answered,

“ I'm beginning to suspect,” said the professor darkly, “ that Mr. Tanner is a fanatic.”

Again Zoe smiled. From her father's manner, he might have been suggesting that Tanner was an anarchist. “ Still,” said she, “ I think we ought to consult him.”

“ No ! ” cried the professor. “ I have already consulted Mr. Tanner, and he has no thought, no consideration, for your physical welfare.” An inspiration flashed into his mind. “ If you must consult someone,” he cried,

"why consult Tanner? Why not consult a higher authority?"

"Who?" asked Zoe.

In reply, he helped Zoe to rise, led her over to the writing-table, and placed a pencil and a sheet of paper before her. "We will ask Emperor!" he answered.

Zoe sat there, the pencil almost touching the paper, for some eight minutes; then suddenly the pencil began to write:

"I am Tom—Tom Aylmer," it wrote. Tom Aylmer was Zoe's cousin who had been killed before Ypres. "Tell mother that I am alive all the time. Don't forget to do so, as it is hard on us, jolly hard, to fight out the feeling of being dead, it is hateful to us chaps. Dying is really rather fun, you know, as we are much freer to do lots and lots of things. When you come here we'll have a gorgeous time. I saw Cyril Fordyce to-day. He is asleep still. He thinks he is in a dug-out, poor old Cyril. He spoke once of you and the darned war. Deam nice chap!"

"It's Tom's writing!" murmured the professor with interest.

The writing changed into a thin, nervous script, and read:

"Miss, I am appealing to your charity. I am getting no help at all, no help, I say. I was called to fight in this cruel war against my will and better judgment: God is indeed cruel to men. I am bitter and so sad alone here. Help me, to you I appeal. You are reposeful; I felt it, and come like the hunted thing I was and am. I go now. . . . Ah . . . ah . . . you women are lucky to be where you are . . . ah . . . ah . . . so late and dark . . . so wet . . . Tino."

The professor had been looking over Zoe's shoulder as she wrote, and, dazed with wonder, he saw the handwriting again change. At first the pencil moved slowly and laboriously, writing in a large, unformed hand;

then, keeping to the same unformed script, its action quickened until it was racing over the paper and running one word into another.

After a few minutes, Professor Aylmer snatched the paper away and took it over to the window, and his face grew white.

"Stop!" he cried. But Zoe had taken a fresh piece of paper, and the writing still flowed on.

"Stop!" he cried.

"I can't!" moaned Zoe. "I can't stop!"

He seized hold of the pencil, and, after what was almost a struggle, managed to take it away; but her hand still continued to move as though she were writing rapidly.

He caught hold of her hand so that she could not move it, and he felt a shudder run through her.

"Are you feeling ill?" he asked hoarsely.

"My nerve-centres—the base of my brain!" she murmured.

He realised that this must be the result of his forcible prevention of her movements, and let go her hand. Immediately it began to move with the action of writing.

"That's better," she said, with an attempt at a smile.

"Can you walk?" he asked, standing ready to catch her if she should collapse.

She tried to stand up; but some power seemed to be forcing her to sit down at the table and write.

"Don't try to move!" he cried. "Stay where you are!" And, running over to the door, he called Bruce-Smith.

"Fetch Morton!" he whispered. "Tell him Zoe's obsessed by a control! Tell him to bring morphia and a hypodermic syringe!"

Bruce-Smith went, running for all he was worth, and struggling against a feeling of deadly nausea.

CHAPTER XXV

BRUCE-SMITH TAKES ACTION

I

SOME two hours had passed, and the professor, Dr. Morton, and Bruce-Smith were in the laboratory. They had left Zoe safe in bed, with the nurse from Camelford sitting beside her. For the last twenty minutes she had lain quite still; but this had been due to the influence of morphia, and, every now and then, she would moan and her hand would begin to move as though it were trying to write.

"Well," said Dr. Morton gloomily, "that's all I can do at present. I'll come again in a few hours, as soon as the action of the morphia begins to wear off."

"Do you think she'll be any better when she wakes up?" asked the professor with a sigh.

The doctor shook his head. "How can I tell?" he answered. "From the twitching of her hand, I should say that the evil's still there, and I haven't the slightest idea how to treat it." He thought a minute. "It's a case for a specialist," he said; "but what specialist? The nerves are all right! The brain's all right! If we lived in the Middle Ages, I should say call in an exorcist!" He fixed the professor. "I tell you what, Aylmer, we've been playing with fire!"

"Perhaps Tanner——" began the professor; and, with a shudder, he checked himself.

"Asking Satan to cast out Satan!" muttered Bruce-Smith; and again the professor shuddered.

"You might wire Barrett and Lodge," suggested Morton; "but I don't fancy they'd know much about this sort of phenomenon. Can you suggest anyone?"

The professor cleared his throat. He didn't know! He couldn't think! He didn't believe that Larrett and Bodge would be any use! His uncertainty and helplessness were pathetic.

Bruce-Smith struck a match and lit a cigarette; for he was feeling almost as helpless as the professor, and he wanted something that would help him to concentrate his thoughts.

"I understand now," murmured the doctor, "why you find people dropping spiritualism like hot coals!"

"Professor," said Bruce-Smith, "we want someone who's not only studied the effects of spiritualism on people, but who also understands the relation between body and soul—reflex actions and all that sort of thing—and I believe that I know the right man; only I warn you that he's a Catholic priest."

Vague horrors flashed before the professor. He seemed to see exorcisms, and bells and books and candles, and Zoe rushing violently down a steep place into the sea. "Who is he?" he murmured.

"Morat—Fr. Morat, the Jesuit—I believe he's well known as a psychologist."

"Not Morat the biologist?" asked Dr. Morton.

"I believe he's Professor of Biology," answered Bruce-Smith.

"Professor Morat of Stonyhurst?" cried the professor.

"Yes," answered Bruce-Smith.

Professor Aylmer heaved a great sigh of relief. Gone was his dread of Papistical mutterings tricked out with the paraphernalia of the dark ages! "Ask him! Ask him at once!" he cried. "Though we always disagree, he's one of the soundest men I know! When can he come?"

"He's at Bristol," answered Bruce-Smith. "I'll wire him now."

"Since the case is neither medical nor surgical," said Morton, "it would be interesting to hear his opinion."

The professor leant back in his chair happily; for, although Fr. Morat was an animist, his deep knowledge and sound logic had won the professor's sincere respect. Also, which counted more than a little, he both liked and trusted the Jesuit personally.

"Will this do?" asked Bruce-Smith. "'See letter of Sunday. Come here immediately. Spare no expense. Bruce-Smith.' I told him something of what was going on last Sunday."

"Admirable!" murmured the professor.

"I'll send it off for you," said Dr. Morton. "I shall be passing the post-office." And he pocketed the wire.

II

The professor clasped and unclasped his hands; then he cleared his throat. "Jack," he said, "how are you feeling about all this?"

Bruce-Smith smiled, for he had grown very fond of the old scientist and this was the first time that Professor Aylmer had called him by his Christian name. "A bit sick, sir," he answered. "It's only natural."

"I want more than that," said the professor. "I want the whole truth."

But Bruce-Smith shook his head. "I'd better hold my tongue, sir," said he; "because I'm feeling more than a bit sick."

"You are feeling," suggested the professor, with an effort, "that we had no right to take the girl whom you are going to marry, and use her as a medium?"

"No," answered Bruce-Smith, "I don't think it's that." Then his real feelings blazed out: "To take a sweet, clean girl like Zoe, and to tell her to sink her own will and identity, and to hand her over to filthy spirits

so that they might control her mind—to hand over her clean body to these spirits so that they might take her very vital energy for their own purposes—so that they might take the very material of her wholesome flesh and mould it into their phantoms—it's—it's sacrilege ! ”

The professor looked down. “ Believe me,” he said sadly, “ I never meant it to go so far—I never meant her to be used as a medium for materialisation. I tried to stop it—only—only Tanner frightened me. I—I was a coward ! ”

The pathos of the confession carried Bruce-Smith away, and for a moment he forgot himself. “ If you only knew who Tanner was——” he began ; then he stopped himself. “ I sympathise with you,” he cried. “ It's his eyes. They numb one—I've felt the same way myself.”

“ It was more than physical terror,” sighed the professor ; “ it was moral cowardice to allow the séance to take place.”

Bruce-Smith went across to the writing-table, and, picking up the third, and last, automatic message that Zoe had received, read it through carefully. “ I think,” he said, “ that I shall go down and have a talk with Mr. Tanner.”

“ No ! ” cried the professor. “ It isn't safe ! It isn't safe ! He's dangerous ! ”

Bruce-Smith laughed. “ With my trusty hound,” said he, “ with my thick oak stick, with my lusty right arm, I fancy that I shall be a match for Mr. Tanner.” And he looked across at the professor.

Professor Aylmer seemed to gather himself together ; he straightened himself ; he looked ten years younger. “ Then,” said he, “ if you intend to go, I shall accompany you. It is probable that Mr. Tanner will behave himself before the two of us ! ”

“ Bravo ! ” thought Bruce-Smith ; and, taking a sheet of paper, he made two copies of the message in a fairly good imitation of the original handwriting. He smiled,

reached for an envelope, and, addressing it to the professor, placed the original message in the envelope. "Now, sir," he said, "we'll deposit the original document in the post and face Mr. Tanner with one of these copies. I've known incriminating documents to be destroyed before now."

"But what are you going to say to him?" asked the professor.

"Not much," answered Bruce-Smith. "I shall show him the automatic writing, and listen to his explanation; that's all. I shan't say anything about Zoe." He glanced at the professor. "He's in the other camp now—isn't he, sir?—the camp of spiritualism as a religion, materialisations, obsessions, and all those things—and we want to hear what he has to say about the message."

"You must do the talking."

"Right! I'll just run up and hear how Zoe's going on, and we'll start."

Creenia was sitting in the passage outside Zoe's door and Smith keeping watch beside her. The girl smiled, nodded, and put her finger on her lips; the dog, in answer to a motion, followed his master downstairs.

III

They found Tanner sitting in his cottage garden. He appeared to be reading one of the monthly reviews, and, as he rose stiffly and came forward to meet them, he looked the perfection of an English gentleman.

"We've just received a spirit-message," said Bruce-Smith, and he held out a copy of the automatic writing.

Tanner took the paper, and, as he read the message, he frowned. "Who's been playing at automatic writing?" he asked.

"Miss Aylmer," answered Bruce-Smith.

"I warned her," said Tanner, with a shrug, "against attempting any communications on her own account";

and again, with a shrug of his shoulders, he read through the message.

"What's happened?" asked Bruce-Smith.

Tanner politely ignored him and turned to the professor. "You know what's happened as well as I do," he said.

"I don't! I don't!" fussed the professor. "How can I know? What's happened?"

"For some reason of her own," answered Tanner, smiling quietly, "Miss Aylmer appears to have been attempting to establish communication with the spiritual world, and the earthbound soul of some drunken black-guard has seized on the opportunity to get control. I warned your daughter against the danger."

Bruce-Smith watched him with admiration; if this were Tanuath, Tanuath certainly knew how to carry off an awkward situation. "In other words," he suggested, "if Miss Aylmer takes a pencil in her hand and attempts automatic writing, there's always the danger that the soul of some drunken loafer—the soul of a man who couldn't possibly have influenced her when he was alive—may get control and make her write his own thoughts in his own handwriting?"

"If she invites any chance spirit to take control!"

"In this case," replied Bruce-Smith, "she'd invited Imperator!"

Again the quiet smile and easy voice. "She may have intended to invite Imperator," said Tanner; "but we may be perfectly certain that she neglected to do so."

Bruce-Smith tried to keep back a grin, for Tanner's ingenuity delighted him. "As a matter of fact," he replied, "the professor was in the room, and the professor heard her ask Imperator to take control. By the way, Mr. Tanner, will you please return the paper; it's an interesting piece of evidence as to the possibilities of spiritualism!"

Tanner appeared to hesitate; then he deliberately tore the message into fragments and stamped them into

the ground. "I shall not allow such vile stuff to be seen!" he said.

"It's all right!" laughed Bruce-Smith. "That was only a copy. The original's safe!"

For an instant Tanner looked at him with the buttons off the foils; then a low, threatening growl made Jack glance at Smith.

"Down, sir!" he cried; for, in another second, the dog would have flown at Tanner. "Heel!" he ordered; and, putting his arm in the professor's, he turned towards Tregunden, followed by the bull-terrier. As they went, they heard the dog growling angrily to himself.

"What eyes!" murmured the professor.

"It isn't as if a wolf were looking out of them," answered Bruce-Smith; "a wolf would be clean and sweet compared with the Thing that lurks behind them!"

"Urrr!" shuddered the professor.

"It's a good thing I handed him a copy of the message, and not the original," remarked Bruce-Smith presently.

"Where did you send the original?" asked the professor, wiping his forehead, for the interview had distressed him.

"I addressed it to you. It will be safe enough in the post!"

"But—but," stammered the professor, "he wouldn't commit a burglary!"

Bruce-Smith grinned. "If he wanted that paper—and it's damning evidence against spiritualism!—he'd not stop short of much!"

"Urrr!" shuddered the professor, for the look in Tanner's eyes had frightened him more than he had ever been frightened.

CHAPTER XXVI

A FRESH OPINION

I

ABOUT ten o'clock on the same evening, the professor, Bruce-Smith, and Fr. Morat, S.J., were sitting in the laboratory, deep in consultation. The Jesuit was a big man, with a large, intellectual head and a stout, burly body; his expression was both keen and whimsical, and his eye showed that he was blessed with the gift of humour. He had already seen Zoe, and as he heard the professor's account of what had happened, he occasionally asked a question and listened to the reply with a nod of appreciation.

When the professor had finished, Fr. Morat took up the copy of the message which Zoe had been writing when the trouble seized her, and shook his head. "I know," he remarked, "that Lombroso says, 'Pious mediums have involuntarily written blasphemies and obscenities,' but I have never come across such a marked case as this."

He glanced at Bruce-Smith's anxious face, and smiled. "The discussion and diagnosis of the case," he said, "will take time; but this delay will not hinder the proper treatment of Miss Aylmer's seizure—in fact it has already begun!" Then he again turned to the professor.

"When I say that I have never met with such a case as this," he continued, "I am not speaking of the physical aspect—forcible local control and so on; what I mean is, I have never met a case in which the control has so completely removed his mask and revealed his malignant

character. As a rule these spirits pose as somewhat ambiguous spirits of light."

The professor shuffled uneasily in his chair. "Have you ever met with a similar case of forcible local control?" he asked.

"I have met with far worse cases," replied the Jesuit sadly. "For instance, there is the wife of a personal friend of mine—he is a well-known man of science and one of the leading members of the Society for Psychical Research, but, unfortunately, I am not at liberty to tell you his name. Madam was a charming and intelligent lady; madam became interested in psychic investigations; under the control of a spirit who professed to give his life-history, madam became a fluent writer with the planchette; then she started automatic writing with a pencil held in her hand, and trouble began. No sooner had she started this automatic writing than she experienced a pain in the back of her brain—at the top of her spine—which increased in intensity as the days went by until it became well-nigh unbearable. Her impulse was to write—to write all the time and constantly, with a pen, a pencil, with a finger in the air—anything, so long as writing was accomplished; and, sad to say, she gave way to the impulse. The fatal mistake lay in not stopping the automatic writing the moment that forcible control commenced, in spite of any consequent pain." And Fr. Morat paused to take and light a cigar from the box that Bruce-Smith had placed at his elbow.

"Please go on!" urged the professor.

"There is no use in going further," said the Jesuit; "for we have taken your daughter's case in the first stage of the attack, and I trust that the real danger will be averted."

"What is the danger?" cried Professor Aylmer.

The Jesuit hesitated, and shook his head.

"Uncertainty is worse than knowledge!" cried the professor.

"The danger is that of entire possession," said Fr. Morat,

"What!" cried the professor.

"As I say, in your daughter's case I trust that this danger has been averted; but in the lady's case the control asserted that he had obtained complete command over her body, and, in spite of every attempted treatment, both mental and physical, she grew steadily worse. No organic or even functional disturbance could be found; but other intelligences joined themselves to the first and urged their victim to suicide. The last time I saw madam she was in a private nursing home, entirely in subjection to these malicious spirits and apparently incurable; but at times she would argue quite rationally, and explain just why she was suffering from possession and not from insanity. That is one of the dangers of these cases: the victims are apt to be treated as insane, and not as possessed."

The professor sat huddled up in his chair, too miserable and broken to speak.

"The terrible risk in spiritualism," continued Fr. Morat, "lies in subjugating the human will to the control of the unknown powers who produce the phenomena. In Miss Aylmer's case, for some days past she has been constantly handing over her own free will to the control of these powers, and, what is more, the great weakening of her physical energy through the strain of direct writing and materialisation has reacted on her will-power; this seems to have enabled the control to obtain command over the hand which she subjugated to him—the hand, with the nerves that actuate it right up to the brain; at least, that is how I diagnose the case."

The professor spoke with an effort. "Is—is the evil likely to spread?" he asked.

"No," replied the Jesuit quickly. "I don't think so. I'll explain my reasons presently; but, for the present, I can only say that I hope for a speedy and complete cure."

"Is it demoniacal possession, Fr. Morat?" asked Bruce-Smith softly.

"Only local!" whispered Fr. Morat, and he signalled silence.

"Thank God!" murmured Bruce-Smith below his breath.

The Jesuit smoked in silence until he could see that the professor had somewhat recovered, then he turned to him. "Professor," he said, "of course there is a lot of conscious trickery and a lot of unconscious auto-suggestion mixed up with most spiritualism; but, besides all this, as in your séances, there are certainly powerful and preternatural intelligences at work. As far as you can determine, what are these intelligences?"

"In one case," replied the professor cautiously, for, since Zoe's experience, he was not feeling so certain about the nature of the controls, "we undoubtedly had to deal with a disembodied soul, for we were able to prove the identity of Cyril Fordyce beyond question."

There was a gleam of expectation in Fr. Morat's eyes. "I believe," he said, "that 'Cyril Fordyce' controlled your hand, and made you write down his unspoken message in his own handwriting?"

"Yes," answered the professor.

"During his life, could Cyril Fordyce have hypnotised you, or willed you, or otherwise actuated you, so that you wrote down his own message in his own handwriting?"

"No-o," answered the professor. "No!" he added with decision. "He always struck me as a singularly weak young man."

Fr. Morat's eyes twinkled. "I grant," he said, "that a disembodied soul may have more freedom of thought, I grant that it may have a power of more rapid thought, a power of stronger and clearer thought; but I should hesitate to grant it a stronger hypnotic power than it had when embodied."

The professor gasped. He had never thought of this view of spirit-control.

Curved lines of enjoyment showed on either side of Fr. Morat's mouth, and he spoke slowly. "If hypnotic suggestion is due to some discharge of magnetic energy

from the hypnotist acting on a brain that is tuned to receive the suggestion—and I seem to remember that this is your theory—then you are conceding to a disembodied soul greater physical magnetic power than you would concede to the living Cyril Fordyce with all the physical energy of his body behind him. Oh, Professor Aylmer! Professor Aylmer!”

“But the proof of identity,” gasped the professor. “It was incontestable!”

“I will tear that to pieces presently!” laughed the Jesuit.

The door opened, and the butler came in with the whisky and soda.

“May I have a cup of tea, professor?” asked Fr. Morat. “I’m too full-bodied to risk stimulant.”

“Some tea, Gibbs,” ordered the professor.

“You’d better bring in a tea-pot,” said Bruce-Smith.

II

Fr. Morat stirred his tea. “As to the nature of the intelligences behind spiritualism,” he remarked, “there are two conceivable theories: either the intelligences are, as they claim, disembodied human souls; or else they are non-human spirits who personate human souls.”

“But why,” asked Bruce-Smith, “should non-human spirits personate human souls?”

“My dear sir,” laughed the Jesuit, “if you were a non-human spirit who wished to establish direct communication with human beings, would you declare your identity at the risk of scaring your circle to death? No! The first instinct of any intelligence who found himself in a possibly unfriendly country would be to disguise himself as a native of that country. As a disembodied soul, a spirit would be certain of a sympathetic hearing!

“Now,” continued Fr. Morat, “take the first hypothesis, which assumes that the intelligences behind spiritual

ism are disembodied human souls. This is the theory of many scientific men who have investigated the phenomena of modern spiritualism, and I think that their acceptance of this theory is chiefly due to the fact that they disbelieve in the existence of either angels or devils, and that, consequently, they do not trouble to examine the phenomena with the object of detecting non-human spirits in disguise. If, on the one hand, the control shows an intimate knowledge of the man whom it claims to be, they accept the identity as proved without ever applying the non-human spirit test; if, on the other hand, they discover that the intelligence is guilty of fraudulent personation, they either explain away the fraud by assuming that the control happens to be the earthbound soul of some human liar, or else they blame the poor medium for allowing her subconscious thought to tinker and tamper with the message. They never think of examining the message to see whether it could have originated from some lying non-human spirit." He looked at the professor. "Did you dream of examining the message of the so-called 'Cyril Fordyce,' " he asked, "in order to find out whether it might have come from a non-human spirit who was personating Cyril Fordyce?"

"No," answered the professor, his eyes wide open.

"For instance, it never occurred to you that some non-human spirit, who had studied Cyril Fordyce during his life, might have been personating him?"

"No," owned the professor.

"Nor did it occur to you that you had allowed the spirit to choose its own proof of identity, and that it might easily have chosen some escapade of which it knew the full details?"

"No," owned the professor.

"And you did not think of taking the simple precaution of asking for information about a dozen different incidents that had happened to Cyril Fordyce at different times and in different places, and pressing for immediate answers? Of course this would not have been an absolute

safeguard, because the spirit might have watched him for many years ; but it would have guarded against impersonation by any chance spirit."

"No," answered the professor. "We never thought of a spirit impersonating him."

"Then as to the writing itself," said Fr. Morat. "Which is most likely to have been successful in the imitation of Cyril Fordyce's handwriting: the departed soul of Fordyce who had absolutely no experience in controlling your nerves and muscles which work your hand, or a non-human control who has had years and years of experience in similar phenomena? I am asking you this question from a scientific standpoint, and I am reminding you that the control did not seem to have caught hold of your hand and guided it as Cyril Fordyce might have done, but that it worked your hand through the complex action of its nerves and muscles."

"It seems impossible that a newly-departed soul could have written an autograph message through the complex action of my nerves and muscles," gasped the professor.

"Now for the internal evidence of the message," continued the Jesuit, turning to the records of the circle, which were lying on the writing-table. "Is it likely," he asked, "that Cyril Fordyce would have spoken of Imperator as, 'our master, who the great and good God has appointed to teach us the truth'?" He turned back a page of the manuscript. "Here," said he, "we find Rector using the same expression; but, instead of speaking of 'the great and good God,' I should have expected an English gentleman to say, 'our master, whom God has appointed to teach us the truth'!"

"It looks," cried the professor, "as though Rector had impersonated Cyril!"

"Or Imperator," suggested the Jesuit. He thought a moment. "We find similar lapses in many spiritualistic documents," he said. "George Eliot is made to declare, 'I hardly know as there is enough light to communicate';

and Mr. Stainton-Moses, a highly-educated Englishman, is made to say, 'Believe you in me and my teachings?' If one is only on the watch, the whole of the spiritualistic evidence will be seen to reek with suggestions of spiritual fraud."

"You have still to account for the materialisation," said the professor.

Fr. Morat laughed. "If you had wanted a portrait bust of Cyril Fordyce modelled in clay during his lifetime, would you have employed Fordyce to make it, or would you have employed a trained sculptor? In the same way, which would have been best qualified to take fluid energy from Miss Aylmer and model it into the likeness of Cyril Fordyce—Fordyce, who was ignorant of the very A B C of the job, or an experienced non-human spirit? By the way, Dr. Morton's suggestion that the phantom might have been fashioned by the will-power of the circle is absurd! How could a dozen people, each with a different recollection of Fordyce, have combined to fashion his portrait?"

Bruce-Smith stretched himself. "There seems an overwhelming presumption," he said, "against the controls being the souls of the departed!"

"And I," said the professor, as he reached forward to take a cigar, "am so far convinced, that I am anxious to hear your second hypothesis argued: that the controls are evil spirits—for that is what you have implied—personating the souls of the dead. But I must warn you, Fr. Morat, that I have no belief in revelation!"

"I have read your 'Evolution of Revelation,'" replied the Jesuit, with a smile, "and I need no warning as to your rationalism." And he helped himself to a second cup of tea.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON THE NATURE OF A CONTROL

I

"THE weakness of the scientific enquiry into spiritualism," began Fr. Morat, "is that, ignoring past history, it assumes that the wall between the spiritual and the physical worlds has only recently begun to 'wear thin,' and that the physical phenomena of spiritualism commenced in the middle of the last century. Consequently it has missed all the accumulated evidence of centuries as to the origin, nature, and dangers of spiritualism."

He took a sip of tea, and went on: "We find that the practice of 'seeking the truth from the dead'—mind, it does not say, 'learning the truth from the dead,' or 'holding actual intercourse with the dead'!—we find that the practice of 'seeking the truth from the dead,' or necromancy, was in full swing amongst the Eastern nations at least thirty-three centuries ago, and we find that it was strictly forbidden by the Jewish Law with the admonition that, 'the Lord abhorreth all these things.' We find that Tertullian, writing in the third century, speaks of evil spirits, 'who make the tables dance'; we find that St. Augustine tells us of the appalling results that sprang from traffic with unseen powers in his day; we find that the Catholic Church has always condemned such phenomena as clairvoyance, the levitation of human bodies and so on as probable marks of a demonic invasion. In fact we have a working hypothesis that accounts for the phenomena of spiritualism; and I do not see how

such an hypothesis can be ignored without serious consideration."

"But," answered the professor with some warmth, for the argument seemed to him to be founded on revelation and dogma, "you claim that your Saints have been suspended in the air, and you hold that your dead have materialised!"

"As to the former," replied Fr. Morat, with equal warmth, "the Saints, St. Teresa for example, tell us that the phenomena of the stigmata and levitation are frequently caused by the devil, and her friend, St. John of the Cross, insists that both the stigmata and levitation are subject to a thousand dangers, imitations, and delusions. Believe me that these phenomena have come to the Saints absolutely unsought and undesired. As to the appearance of holy souls after death——" And he paused.

"Yes?" said the professor, stooping forward, his hands on his knees and his eyes shining, for all the world like a terrier watching a rat.

"I do not say for a moment that Fordyce might not have appeared," rapped out the priest, "provided that God had willed him to appear for some wise and sufficient reason; but I do say that he could not have been called up by your circle in answer to your own will, and fitted out with a visible body made out of stuff drawn from Miss Aylmer! What was your motive? A humble desire for Divine Light? No! You were dissatisfied with the small amount of information about the future that God had seen fit to give you! You were curious about the life after death! You cast doubts on God's revelation, and wanted to know more! You were laying yourself open to the enemies of Almighty God, and begging for trouble; and one of you, the poor, self-sacrificing instrument through whom you sought to satisfy your curiosity, has found trouble! Do you know that in his day Forbes Winslow declared that 'ten thousand unfortunate people are at the present time confined in lunatic asylums on account of having tampered with the supernatural'?"

Fr. Morat drew a long breath. He had seen the professor crumple up, as the result of tampering with the occult and Zoe's trouble was brought home to him, and now he felt sorry for his impetuosity. "Odium theologicum, professor!" he said, with an apologetic smile. "The violence of my belief has betrayed me!"

"I—I did not mean to asperse reflections on—on your religion!" stammered the professor.

"And I did not mean to introduce religion," answered the Jesuit, "except to prove that spiritualistic phenomena were no new events in history, and that, until recently, they have been attributed to the influence of—er—undesirable intelligences. But I will leave the past alone, and try to prove the nature of the intelligences which are behind spiritualism from modern experience.

"Now, professor, every scientific investigator of note has acknowledged that, whether they be departed souls or no, the controls are independent spiritual beings: is not this so?"

"Yes," murmured the professor.

"They are beings who have such an abnormal power over living matter that, with the consent of the medium, they can cause a full-grown man to float out of one window which is seventy feet above the street and in at the next window (as the late Lords Crawford and Dunraven witnessed), or they can enable ordinary men to carry large red-hot lumps of coal without scorching their hands (as Sir William Crookes and Sir William Huggins both witnessed). Am I right?"

"Yes," answered the professor.

"Now let us leave the bulk of their contradictory teachings on one side, and confine ourselves to one doctrine about which departed and other spirits must have definite knowledge: the controls who have communicated with the French and Eastern circles have taught the definite doctrine of the reincarnation of souls, whilst those controls who communicate with English and American circles have taught the exact opposite. Am I correct?"

"Yes," murmured the professor.

"Which proves," continued the Jesuit relentlessly, "that at least one half of these intelligences must be lying spirits who have deliberately deceived men as to their future state."

"Yes," owned the professor.

"And now," continued Fr. Morat, "I must touch on religious belief—not on my religion, but on the controls' religion: From the time when they communicated with Judge Edmonds, seventy years ago, down to their recent communications through Imperator, they have been consistent in declaring that Jesus Christ was a mere man, with no more divinity than any other 'son of God'—that is to say, they are anti-Christian as we know Christianity. And, although they acknowledge the existence of a Supreme God, Who is both 'great and good,' they have not dared to claim that they have seen Him."

"You are correct," said the professor, wondering what Fr. Morat intended to prove by his last point.

"Thus," continued the Jesuit, "I think that we have proved beyond dispute that the powers behind spiritualism are independent spiritual beings with abnormal, though restricted, control over living matter; that at least half of them are lying and deceiving spirits; that they are anti-Christian spirits who are not admitted to the presence of God.

"This brings us to the claim of these spirits that they are disembodied human souls, and I must ask you to let me take one case as a test case. In Sir William Barrett's recently published 'Threshold of the Unseen,' which is probably the soundest book in defence of psychical research that has ever been written, he quotes the case of 'Blanche Abercromby' as 'one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence on behalf of survival after death.' May I take this as a test case, leaving you to apply the same course of reasoning to any other case at your leisure?"

"Certainly," replied the professor; "for this case

is the strongest evidence of identity in the discarnate that I know."

" 'Blanche Abercromby,' " said Fr. Morat, " a lady whom Mr. Stainton-Moses had only once met casually at a séance, died at a distance of two hundred miles from Mr. Moses' lodgings. On the evening of her death, a control who professed to be 'Blanche Abercromby' communicated with Mr. Moses by means of automatic writing, stating that 'she had just quitted the body'; and, a few days later, 'she' again controlled his hand and wrote a few words in her own handwriting as proof of her identity. Since the message was of a private character, Mr. Moses gummed down the pages of the communication in his note-book, marking it 'private,' and it was not discovered until after his death. It was then submitted to 'Blanche Abercromby's' son, who identified the writing as that of his mother. I believe that I have given an exact statement of the case? "

" Exact, as far as I can remember it," answered the professor.

" Now," said the Jesuit, bending forward, " I want you to remember a fact of great importance, that Mr. Stainton-Moses, who was a very valuable supporter of the spiritualist cause, had again and again entertained misgivings as to the real origin of the spirit messages; and I also want you to notice that the message was of so little real importance that, instead of communicating the message to the lady's son, Mr. Moses kept it to himself and gummed down the pages of his note-book. Which was the most probable: that the soul of a practical stranger should communicate the news of her death to Mr. Moses for no ostensible reason, or that one of Mr. Moses' controls, personating 'Blanche Abercromby,' should communicate the news of her death in order to strengthen his wavering belief? Which was more probable: that the newly-departed soul should be able and anxious to write an autograph message for no ostensible reason, or that some lying spirit should be able and anxious to forge 'Blanche

Abercromby's 'handwriting in order to draw Mr. Moses more deeply into the toils of spiritualism? "

"You have proved," said the professor, with a sigh, "that, as a piece of evidence, the 'Blanche Abercromby' case is valueless."

"If we once realise," replied Fr. Morat, "that at least half the spirits behind spiritualism are proved guilty of deceit, that all are anti-Christian spirits who are banished from the presence of God, we will find that the evidence by which they strive to identify themselves as human souls falls utterly to pieces."

Again the professor sighed. "Do you realise," he said, "that you have destroyed what is to me the evidence of a life beyond the grave? "

"And I trust that I have given you in exchange," replied the Jesuit, "some far more valuable evidence. If life ended in annihilation, why should these lying spirits take so much trouble to lead living souls away from the Christian revelation? But let us return to our diagnosis of Miss Aylmer's case."

II

"Now," said Fr. Morat, "I am going to violate my usual habit, and I am going to have a weak whisky-and-soda whilst I speak of Miss Aylmer's trouble."

Bruce-Smith charged the glasses, and Fr. Morat commenced his diagnosis.

Local control of a medium was no unusual thing: Mrs. Piper, the celebrated American medium, had been controlled by three spirits at the same time, one who spoke with her voice and one who controlled each hand. As they had seen, forcible local control was no new thing: in Miss Aylmer's case, she had been surrendering her will to the spirits, she had been exhausting her physical energy, and this very evil spirit had managed to possess her right hand and those nerves of the right hand which led up to the brain-centres. How were they to get rid of it?

Of course, if it had secured complete control of her brain, or even showed signs of controlling her brain, he might suggest drastic remedies ; but, as long as Miss Aylmer continued in her present state of mind, he saw no risk of the danger spreading.

Why ? Because, from all they knew, there could be no control unless the medium surrendered her will to the control. Miss Aylmer had surrendered the free use of her right hand to the spirit, and it had secured complete control of the hand ; but she had not surrendered her will to further control, and, at present, she was determined that she would not do so.

What should he suggest ? That they should strive to build up Miss Aylmer's physical strength, and, with it, her will-power ; that they should encourage her to use her will-power in order to fight against the power of control that had been already established.

No ! He did not approve of the use of morphia, for morphia seemed to affect the will-power ; but he thought that Dr. Morton would be able to help them with the application of external and local anæsthetics. Then Miss Aylmer would be the better able to resist the impulse to write, and there was the possibility that the evil spirit would tire of his unprofitable and wearisome possession.

"Can't you suggest anything else ?" cried the professor.

The priest smiled. "At the risk of arousing the odium theologicum," he answered, "I should most strongly suggest prayer—patience and prayer."

"Even of an agnostic ?" asked the professor.

Fr. Morat smiled and nodded.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A CONSULTATION

I

Fr. Morat sat down on the edge of his bed heavily. "When I see that sweet young girl," he said, "when I see her patience and bravery, when I see her hand twitching as the devil fights for control, I feel that no punishment is too severe for those who have brought her to this pass!"

Bruce-Smith made an inarticulate noise deep in his throat. "The people who used to burn witches have my sincere sympathy!" he grumbled.

Fr. Morat shook his head. "One must not say such things," he replied, "even in fun."

They had been to see Zoe before they went to bed, and, as they had reached Fr. Morat's room on their way back, the poet had asked if he might come in for a few minutes' chat.

Bruce-Smith cleared his throat. "Fr. Morat," he said, "I want to consult you about Tanner."

"Yes?" murmured the Jesuit, wondering what was coming.

"I've a wild theory about Tanner," said Bruce-Smith. "I know it's an impossible theory—at least, Fr. Arbuthnot thought it impossible—but——"

"Did you consult Father Arbuthnot recently?" asked the Jesuit.

"No. It was some months ago."

"After our late experiences," remarked the Jesuit, with a shrug, "it seems as though very little were impossible!"

Bruce-Smith brought out his pipe and, after asking permission, lit it. "When I first came to Tregunden," he began, "the professor was experimenting with the creation of synthetic life, and he had just managed to make a colloid of the same material as that which formed his own body and was waiting for it to evolve a cell."

"How like him!" murmured the Jesuit.

"Then, last September, he got a modification of his formula by automatic writing. The formula was headed, 'Materia Elementorum,' and the quantities were given in old Babylonian weights." And Bruce-Smith went on to tell of the possible formation of a cell, and of his dream, and of the smashing of the colloid-bowl and the killing of the cat, and of the vision of the imp in Tregunden Woods, and of the murder of Major Bewes and the recent arrival of Tanner.

"Can you remember any other particulars?" enquired Fr. Morat.

"For months and months the professor's been trying to vivify the *Materia Elementorum*, but without success. A few days ago he got a fresh recipe by automatic writing, headed 'Materia Pilosi,' and each time he's made a batch of this new colloid it's been attacked by the bacilli of putrefaction in the most unaccountable way."

"Pilosi might mean 'hairy beings' or satyrs," mused the Jesuit. "Isaias tells us that the pilosi danced and shouted to each other amongst the ruins of Babylon."

"So your theory is," suggested the Jesuit, "that Professor Aylmer, having obtained an ancient Babylonian formula, compounded a colloid containing the basic material necessary for the incarnation of an elemental (or demon of the primary elements); that an elemental animated the new colloid; that this demon grew very quickly and murdered your neighbour for his clothes, etc.; that he has now presented himself under the name of 'Tanner'?"

Put into plain words, the theory sounded very improbable. "The formula of the *Materia Elementorum* was signed 'Tanuath,'" said Bruce-Smith doggedly.

"Then, a few days ago," continued Fr. Morat, "some lower demon, possibly the devil that has attacked Miss Aylmer, gave the formula for the making of a satyr—from ancient legends the satyrs were low, lascivious demons!—and the elementals, knowing that the presence of these filthy demons in the form of satyrs would open your eyes and spoil the result of their revelation through Imperator, took prompt steps to destroy the colloid. Is this right?"

"I hadn't thought of that last bit!"

"It's a most ingenious theory!" acknowledged Fr. Morat. "It's a delightful theory! It explains how the satyrs materialised amongst the ruins of ancient Babylon; it explains many legends of materialisation; it explains the material appearance of devils to the old Egyptian anchorites; it explains Pan—he was evidently an elemental who posed as the god of shepherds and drove men mad; it also explains why some satyr, furious at not being allowed to materialise, dared Imperator and seized on the hand of his medium. It's the very gem of a theory!"

"You think," said Bruce-Smith, "that it's all nonsense?"

The Jesuit shook his head. "It's somewhat too dependent on circumstantial evidence, with too many gaps in the evidence. If you could only prove that the cat did not eat up the colloid! If you were only certain that you saw the imp, and that he was no human boy! If you could only show that Mr. Tanner would be unable to produce his birth certificate if asked for it!"

"I suppose there are lacunæ," owned Bruce-Smith.

Fr. Morat shook with laughter. "Lacunæ?" he cried. "Call them chasms—impassable chasms! To start with, we have no proof that the *Materia Elementorum* ever brought forth a cell! To conclude with, although we know that there are principalities and powers amongst the spirits of darkness, we are told nothing of elementals! Let me build up a rival theory!" And, growing grave, he thought deeply for a few moments.

"What do you say to this?" suggested Fr. Morat: "The professor tries automatic writing, and obtains what he believes to be an invaluable formula. This not only awakens his old interest in psychical research, but also rouses a new and keener interest; he talks to his neighbours about spiritualism, and they become equally interested. Then the devils, who are always waiting to start a new campaign in a fresh country, see that there is an ideal opening for the formation of a circle at Tregunden; for, not only is Professor Aylmer a man of repute in the scientific world, but the neighbours are also remarkably influential and level-headed. At the right moment Mr. Tanner, who is an advanced spiritualist, receives instructions by means of his ouija-board to come down here and start a circle. Is not this theory at least as plausible as yours?"

Bruce-Smith smiled and shrugged his shoulders; for, though he was forced to admit the plausibility of Fr. Morat's suggestion, his intuition that his own theory was the right one still remained.

"Mind," continued Fr. Morat, "I do not say that my hypothesis is correct; I do not even say, in spite of its sensational character, that your hypothesis is wrong; but I do say that the evil powers who have been communicating through the Tregunden circle show a subtlety and ingenuity that is quite out of the ordinary, and that, instead of confusing ourselves by the weaving of fanciful theories, we should try to keep our minds clear and balanced so that we may be able to defeat their campaign."

"H'm!" muttered Bruce-Smith. In his anxiety about Zoe, he had been overlooking the work that the circle had actually accomplished.

"Think of the ingenuity of Imperator's communications," continued Fr. Morat; "not only were they made by direct writing so that there might be no suspicion of human fraud; not only were they made in the presence of unimpeachable witnesses; but also they embodied the very essence of those heresies that have proved the most

seductive in the past. If it had not been for the attack on Miss Aylmer, the publication of the new gospel might have done untold harm."

Bruce-Smith whistled softly "Now," said he, "I begin to see why you took so much trouble to prove the real identity of the controls."

"Naturally!" answered the Jesuit.

"And now I begin to see why Tanner was so furious when we showed him Miss Aylmer's automatic writing: it was not that it discredited spiritualism in general, but it also discredited Emperor's revelation in particular."

"Naturally!" answered Fr. Morat, with a smile.

"If you'd seen his fury," said Bruce-Smith, "when he found that he'd torn up a copy of the message and that I had got the original, if you'd seen the look in his eyes, you might be inclined to believe in my Tanuath theory!" He thought a moment. "Fr. Morat," he said, "if my theory should prove right—if Tanner should turn out to be an incarnation of Tanuath—would I be justified in putting a bullet through him?"

Fr. Morat looked at the clock and shook his head. "Do you realise that it is quarter to two?" he asked. Then, as Bruce-Smith opened the door: "If I were you," he said, "I should not allow myself to dwell any more on the Tanuath theory."

Bruce-Smith paused and looked round. "If you realised that he'll probably make an attempt to get hold of that document; and if you'd seen murder looking out of his eyes——"

"Ah!" replied Fr. Morat. "That's quite a different matter! If Mr. Tanner should attempt your life, you would be justified in defending yourself." He smiled. "Good-night, Mr Bruce-Smith; and don't dream of Tanner!"

II

Bruce-Smith closed Fr. Morat's door softly after him and stole down the passage towards Zoe's room. He crept round the corner, and nearly tumbled over Creenia ; for the loyal Creenia had brought up an easy-chair and seated herself outside Zoe's bedroom so that, if anything should be wanted during the night, she might be ready at hand. She placed her finger on her lips, and, picking up a turkey's feather from her lap, thrust it quietly through the keyhole. In a moment the feather was drawn inside, and the nurse opened the door. "Miss Aylmer was hoping that you might look in to see her, Mr. Bruce-Smith," said the nurse, smiling.

As Bruce-Smith crossed the room, he saw Zoe pulling a white shawl over her right arm ; and then, as he knelt down beside her, her left arm went tightly round his neck. "Jack !" she whispered

"How do you think my patient is looking?" asked the nurse brightly.

"Better," answered Bruce-Smith, squinting up at the nurse sideways. "How's the trouble?"

"Quieting down. And what do you think of our turkey-feather signal, Mr. Bruce-Smith?"

"That's Creenia's idea," broke in Zoe. "Now, nurse, can you leave us for just two minutes?"

The nurse looked coy and playful. "Would that be quite proper?" she asked. "Well, then, just two minutes."

As the door closed behind the nurse, Bruce-Smith felt Zoe's clasp tighten. "Jack," she whispered, "will you forgive me?"

"Sweetheart," he answered gently, "there's nothing to forgive. You've been trapped into this like everyone else."

"But," she sighed, "it was your hand, Jack, and I——"

"Hush!" he said. And, releasing himself from her clasp, he placed his arm round her so that she rested against his shoulder. "Zoe," he said, "if you only knew how sorry we were, and how we were loving you and praying for you, you wouldn't talk any of this nonsense."

"You—you—think," she whispered, "that I'll get better?"

"Fr. Morat says," he answered, "that it's only a matter of building up your strength and will-power."

She gave a sigh of relief; then her face grew troubled.

"It—it hasn't made me repulsive to you, Jack?" she whispered.

He drew her gently to him, and his lips met hers. "Zoe," he said softly, "I've never loved you like I love you now."

Then the nurse came back, and presently Bruce-Smith left the room.

III

Bruce-Smith went into his bedroom and locked the door; he went over to his kit-bag, and, feeling at the bottom, drew out a small automatic pistol. It was a sweet little weapon, light, accurate, and hard-hitting; but it was rather too small in the bore for the possible work in hand. Then he took out a box of cartridges, and, since the bullets lacked stopping power, and since he was bound by no Geneva or Hague Conventions when dealing with beings like Tanuath, he nicked the noses of the bullets before he filled the magazine.

He placed the pistol on the table beside his bed, went over to the rug where Smith was sleeping, to be greeted by a half-opened eye and a loving wag of the tail, and then opened the bedroom door so that Smith might be free to investigate any suspicious noises during the night. If Tanner should try to get hold of the paper, he would find more than he had expected.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN TREGUNDEN WOODS

I

THE night had been intensely hot, and, with the approach of morning, a soft air had sprung up from the west and carried the Atlantic sea-fog across Tregunden. Outside on the lawns the mist was wreathing the trees and blotting out all details; inside the house there was the heavy, deadly silence that precedes waking. Smith stirred; he lifted up his head and listened rigidly; then, with a dash, he sprang over to the window and barked furiously.

With the first bark Bruce-Smith was wide awake; with the second bark he had crossed over to the window and was looking out through the slats of the venetian blind. There were two figures near the bottom of the lawn: the mist-wreaths prevented him from seeing who they were, but he could distinguish a tall figure and a shorter figure, and he could hear them talking together angrily. Then the taller figure flung himself on the other, and Bruce-Smith heard the professor's voice shouting for help.

In a second Bruce-Smith was round the bed, had snatched up the automatic pistol, had plunged his feet into a pair of pumps, and, with Smith ahead of him, was running downstairs as fast as he could put foot to ground. When he reached the lawn, the taller man had got the professor down and seemed to be throttling him.

"Get out, you blackguard!" shouted Bruce-Smith, firing a shot in the air.

At the sound of the voice, Tanner sprang to his feet ; at the noise of the pistol-shot, he turned like lightning and vanished into the wood.

Shouting to his dog to keep guard over the professor, Bruce-Smith rushed onwards ; for he knew that the professor could wait a minute for help, whereas if he lost Tanner now, he might lose him altogether. In the dim light of the thicket, the branches dashed into his face and the brambles tore through his pyjamas.

Then, as he passed a clump of hazels, a hand darted out and caught his ankle ; he pitched heavily forward, shouting for Smith as he fell, and, in a second, Tanner's hands were gripping his windpipe. He fought, but those hands seemed made of iron ; he tried to hit the face that was glaring down at him, but his arms seemed too short and he only hit the air. Suddenly, just as his lungs seemed to be bursting and the world was growing black, the hands were snatched away and he was able to fill his lungs with great sobbing gasps.

There was a sound of growling and snarling in the thicket, ending with a howl. Bruce-Smith staggered to his feet, and, as he rose, a stone sang past his head like a bullet. He dropped, dragged himself forward, and peered through the bushes. Tanner was coming towards him, with a stone in his right hand and his left arm filled with pieces of granite. As he looked through the bushes, a second stone whizzed by within an inch of his temples, and he crouched low in the undergrowth.

At last he remembered the automatic pistol. As the hand had gripped his ankle and brought him down, the pistol must have fallen forward ; but he had not been able to run fast through the undergrowth, and the pistol could not have fallen much in advance of his present position. He felt carefully amongst the dead leaves, and crawled another foot forward.

Again Tanner's arm went up, and, as Bruce-Smith grovelled close to the ground, the stone went by exactly where his head had been. One of these large chunks of

granite, hurled with this abnormal force, would certainly do for him if it went home. Then, at last, his hand found the pistol.

He glanced down the barrel, only to find that the muzzle was choked with earth, and, whilst he was searching for a piece of stick to serve as a cleaning-rod, a lump of granite hit him on the left fore-arm and Tanner rushed him.

There was only one chance, and, clenching his teeth, Bruce-Smith threw his weight on the damaged arm, risked the bursting of the barrel, and fired. He heard a choking, strangulated cough, and Tanner fell forward in a limp heap; his arms and legs twitched for a minute, then he lay all huddled up and quite still.

"Got him!" murmured Bruce-Smith. Then, realising that his arm was hurting like fire and his throat choking him, he stumbled over to where he had heard Smith howl, picked up the lifeless body of the dog in his right arm, and stumbled drunkenly out of the wood.

He could just see that there was a figure in black kneeling beside the professor, and, with a murmur that he had shot Tanner, Bruce-Smith collapsed.

II

When Bruce-Smith opened his eyes, he saw Zoe's nurse stooping over him with a medicine-glass in her hand. She put her arm under his head, and, raising him, bade him try to swallow the medicine. Although it hurt his throat like liquid fire, he managed to gulp down the draught, and the nurse laid his head back on the pillow.

"The professor's going on capitally," she said softly, "and Miss Aylmer is still sleeping and much better. She knows nothing about all this, or she'd have been here."

"And—Smith—my—dog?" he whispered. The pain of speaking was almost more than he could stand.

"Dr. Morton has attended to him," she said softly;

"some of his ribs are broken, and he is not to be moved. Now you must keep quite still whilst I put a fresh compress on your throat." And she busied herself with a wet, evil-smelling bandage.

"There!" she said, as she adjusted the bandage and fixed it with a safety-pin. "The lotion that I have just put on will deaden the pain in your throat, and, if you do not talk, you ought not to have much trouble with it."

He glanced down at his bandaged arm and raised his eyebrows.

"It's only a simple fracture," said the nurse, "and we've managed to get it into splints all right; but the arm's both bruised and cut, as well as broken, and I'm afraid it's going to give you some pain. Now I'm going to fetch the Roman Catholic priest. The doctor said that you were to see him as soon as you woke up."

She left the room, and, almost immediately, Fr. Morat came in.

III

"Now, Mr. Bruce-Smith," said the Jesuit, as he sat down on a chair beside the bed, "Dr. Morton has allowed me to see you for a few minutes on condition that you don't speak a single word. If I ask you a question, and the answer is 'yes,' wink; if the answer is in the negative, frown. Do you understand?"

Bruce-Smith winked.

"First, do you remember exactly what happened in the wood?"

Bruce-Smith winked vigorously.

"Then I may tell you that you have saved Professor Aylmer's life, and that you were absolutely justified in what you did. Mr. Tanner was nothing more or less than a dangerous wild beast. Next I have got some real comfort for you: I have been sitting with Miss Aylmer whilst the nurse was attending to you, and she's sleeping like a

child. Her hand is still moving now and then from nervous reaction ; but it's quite left off trying to write."

After the manner of stout men when they have something important to communicate, Fr. Morat drew a deep breath. "Now," said he, "there is bound to be an inquest on the body of Mr. Tanner, and I want to verify the facts before the police take up the case. Remember that if I am right in my suppositions you must wink ; if I am wrong you must frown."

Bruce-Smith winked.

"Now, I've been over the ground, and, from what I can gather, Tanner ran into the wood and you followed him. When you had gone some eighty yards, either you fell or he tripped you up. Did he trip you up?"

Bruce-Smith winked.

"Good!" said the Jesuit. "Then he first attacked you, and tried to throttle you?"

Bruce-Smith winked.

"Next he left you and ran on about forty yards to a heap of granite fragments—I assume that your dog had disturbed him and that he managed to disable your dog with a lump of granite. Then, having disabled the dog, he returned to attack you with lumps of granite ; and you fired two shots, the second of which killed him. Is that right?"

Bruce-Smith frowned, and looked at the writing-pad which lay on the table beside the bed.

The Jesuit picked up the pad and pencil, and, holding the pad so that Bruce-Smith could write easily with his sound hand, gave him the pencil. "*I fired first shot,*" he wrote, "*to scare him from the professor. I fired in the air.*"

"Then that was what woke me," murmured the Jesuit.

"*Tanner attacked me with stones and broke my arm before I fired the second shot,*" he concluded.

"Good! Good!" cried Fr. Morat. "That clears you altogether! You acted purely in self-defence!"

Bruce-Smith winked and nodded.

"Now," said Fr. Morat, "there's another matter I must bring before you," and he felt in his pocket and brought out a small handful of cartridges with the noses of the bullets nicked.

"I learnt something about firearms," he said, "when I was military chaplain in the South African War; so, when I examined your pistol and found these in the magazine, I removed them. As you were under chloroform at the time, I took some fresh cartridges from your room, placed one in the chamber and three in the magazine and dropped the pistol where I had found it. It is conceivable that the bullet which struck Tanner might have hit a bone and mushroomed, but the dum-dum bullets in the magazine would have needed a deal of explanation. We could hardly have told the coroner about your Tanuath theory without the risk of a lunatic asylum. Is that all quite clear? We won't say anything about the nicked bullets!"

Bruce-Smith winked and nodded. Then he motioned for the writing-pad. "*How is my dog?*" he wrote.

The Jesuit hesitated a moment, then he spoke. "I do not approve of dissimulation," he said. "I am sorry to tell you that your dog has given up his life for his master. His death must have been instantaneous. His back was broken."

Bruce-Smith bit his lip, then clenched his teeth together hard.

"I want you to remember," said Fr. Morat gently, "that if your dog had been capable of a free choice between life and death, he would have chosen to die exactly as he died. He has not only saved your life, but most probably also that of the professor. Now you must take this sleeping-draught. Dr. Morton says that you are to let it trickle down with as little effort at swallowing as possible."

IV

It was afternoon when Bruce-Smith awoke. Someone had hung dark green casement-cloth over the open windows, and, instead of having the darkness of the venetian blinds, the room was steeped in a soft, soothing light. As he opened his eyes a sweet, cool hand was laid on his.

"Jack," murmured Zoe, "if you keep quite still, I may stay with you until tea-time."

He lay quite still, longing for what was coming next.

She leant over him, her lips lingering on his as they used to do before the miasma of spiritualism had come between them. "Jack," she said, "they've told me something of what's happened, and they've told me about Smith, and I'd give my life to comfort you."

He gripped her hand that was lying beside his right hand.

"And Jack," said she, "it's your own little girl come back, and she's not a medium or a spiritualist or anything except yours; and, if it would comfort you, you can take her as soon as you're well enough."

He tried to speak, but her lips stopped him.

She drew back her head a little, her eyes soft and shining and her cheeks pink as roses. "And, Jack," she whispered, "it's your own shameless, brazen little girl come back; and she only wants her own home, and to be loved, and to have children, and to carry on the stream of life just as we planned ages ago. I've seen dad, and he says we can get married as soon as we like."

"Zoe!" he muttered huskily.

"Hush!" she said.

"Zoe," he muttered, his voice coming stronger, "I can talk! As long as I only talk softly like this, it doesn't hurt."

"Hush!" she answered. "I'll do the talking!"

"You little bully!" he whispered.

She stooped over him, and her left hand was laid on his right. "Now I want to tell you one thing," she said

softly. "I can never, never thank you enough for all your love and patience when I was crazy after spiritualism! I think I must have been mad with pride and self-conceit and the feeling that I knew more than other people and that I'd been chosen as the medium for a new revelation. And I thank God that I've had my punishment. That's all; and I'm never going to speak about it again!" And she bent down and kissed him.

"You've never asked me about my arm!" said she, chin in air.

His lips moved, and his eyes sought hers enquiringly.

She stood up, so that he might see her arm in its sling with her fingers sticking out still as little mice. "It was all right when I woke up," she said, "only I've got neuralgia in it. Dr. Morton says that I must expect to have it for the next week or two, and that I've got off very cheaply."

"Kiss me again, sweetheart!" he whispered.

As she kissed him, he knew that the real old Zoe had returned.

V

When it was evening they lit a couple of candles in Bruce-Smith's room and allowed Fr. Morat to come up and sit with him. His throat was feeling much better, but his arm was paining him as much as it well could.

"What was the professor doing with Tanner at 5 a.m.?" whispered Bruce-Smith.

"Do you know the Tregunden postal arrangements?" enquired the Jesuit.

Bruce-Smith shook his head.

"By a special arrangement with the postal authorities," explained Fr. Morat, "the early post-cart leaves the letters in a letter-box beside the entrance-gate, and Gibbs fetches them before breakfast. This morning the professor happened to wake early with his thoughts full of Tanner, and he went to fetch the letters before Mr. Tanner could

tamper with the letter-box and get hold of the automatic writing which you had sent through the post. He met Mr. Tanner coming back with a bundle of letters addressed to Professor Aylmer in his hand; they argued, walking across the lawns as they argued, and then Tanner lost his temper."

"Just grew a little heated in the argument," whispered Bruce-Smith huskily.

Fr. Morat chuckled. "How are your nerves?" he asked.

"Like rocks!" whispered Bruce-Smith. He cleared his throat. "How about my theory now?" he asked thickly. "I'll swear that no mortal man could have gripped like he gripped, or have thrown stones like he threw. The stones came like bullets!"

"I confess," owned Fr. Morat, "that my curiosity overcame me and that I persuaded Dr. Morton to let me be with him when he examined the body. The muscular development of arms, legs and chest was altogether super-normal, and there was something strange about the knees. They weren't the wrong way round like a satyr's knees, and I can't quite explain what was wrong with them, but they certainly were not normal. Morton gave it a long Latin name; but he acknowledged that he had never heard of a case exactly like it."

"Then there's something in my theory!" whispered Bruce-Smith.

But Fr. Morat shook his head. "No," he said, "I don't believe it, and I can't believe it! I still believe that Mr. Tanner was an abnormal man who went in for spiritualism with an abnormal energy, that he got into abnormal touch with the spirits of darkness and gave way to an abnormal temper."

Bruce-Smith laughed; for, by now, he was feeling very confident in his theory.

"Well, at any rate," said Fr. Morat, "this spiritualistic circle has been broken up pretty thoroughly; and we'll leave it at that!"

CHAPTER XXX

AN EXTRACT FROM THE PEERAGE

I

ZOE looked at the drawing-room clock anxiously; she looked at her watch; then she looked back at the clock, and, leaning forward over the tea-tray, turned up the spirit-lamp the fraction of an inch. Then, as she heard the sound of voices in the distance, she turned up the lamp to its full extent, and the water in the urn began to boil.

"Well?" she cried, as the door opened, her eyes large with anxiety.

Fr. Morat came in, waving a sheet of notepaper at arm's length, and followed by the professor and Bruce-Smith. "All right!" he said quickly. "Mr. Bruce-Smith is entirely exonerated!"

"Thank God!" murmured Zoe; for, although she knew that her lover had killed Mr. Tanner in self-defence, she did not know how the Cornish jury would bring in its verdict.

"The finding of the coroner's jury is," said Fr. Morat, "'Justifiable Homicide,' with a rider to the effect that Mr. Bruce-Smith acted purely in self-defence after displaying the greatest courage and self-control."

Zoe drew a deep breath. This was better than anybody had dared to expect.

Professor Aylmer cleared his throat. "If it had not been for Jack's courage and heroism," he said huskily, "I should have been the central figure in this afternoon's proceedings!"

Zoe looked at her lover. He was wearing the uncomfortable self-conscious expression that the Englishman puts on when he is accused of heroism. "Come and help me!" she said, glancing at her useless right hand.

"Good!" said he, with a sigh of relief. "If you'll put in the cream and sugar, I'll pour out the tea. How's the neuralgia, sweetheart?"

"It might be worse, and it might be better," she answered. "How's the throat?"

"Might be worse, and might be better," he growled amiably. "At present it's like sawdust: I had to do quite a lot of talking."

"Zoe," said the professor huskily, "I've some news for you. We have discovered Mr. Tanner's identity!"

"Who? What?" cried Zoe, waving the cream-jug uncertainly.

"He turns out to be a homicidal lunatic who escaped from Broadmoor last November."

The cream-jug began to describe a parabola, discharging its contents on the tea-tray.

"What was his name, Jack?" asked the professor.

"Hyde-Brown-Hyde," answered Bruce-Smith.

Zoe shuddered; for this naming of the lunatic seemed to make everything very real and close.

"You're slopping the cream!" grumbled the professor huskily, and Zoe pulled herself together.

"Who are the Hyde-Brown-Hydes?" asked Fr. Morat.

The professor went to a corner table and picked up a peerage. "Here we are," he grumbled huskily. "*Amesbury, Earl of: John Fitzwarren, 9th Earl.—Hum—Issue—Hum—Second Son, Simon Fitzwarren, b. 1889. Educated Harrow, Balliol, Oxon.* See the mental association: Simon Hyde-Brown-Hyde, Simon the Tanner, Simon Tanner. It is most interesting!"

"How did the police identify him?" whispered Bruce-Smith. "Of course I know they brought a warder down from Broadmoor; but how the deuce did they get on the track?"

AN EXTRACT FROM THE PEERAGE 265

Fr. Morat chuckled. "Yesterday," he answered, "when the police could find nothing to identify Mr. Tanner amongst his belongings, I remembered what you had told me about his lack of antecedents and the strange light which came into his eyes when he was angry, and I suggested to the police inspector that he might possibly be an escaped homicidal lunatic. The wires did the rest."

"And you let me go on believing my absurd theory!" whispered Bruce-Smith. "I'll never forgive you, Fr. Morat!"

The Jesuit smiled. "Until this afternoon's inquest proved my theory right," he answered, "your theory sounded plausible. Now let us try if we can discover something more about the Hyde-Brown-Hydes." And, getting up, he left the room.

Zoe gave a gasp. "What is a spiritual revelation?" she asked, and, without a pause: "A spiritual revelation," she answered, "is to act as medium for a homicidal lunatic, and to be controlled by an obscene demon. It's—it's very mortifying!" And she began to laugh hysterically.

"Zoe!" cried the professor, and, with an effort, she again pulled herself together.

Presently Fr. Morat returned with a large volume in tooled calf, and, seating himself, opened the book. "I noticed this in your library," he said, "'Perronne's History of Historic Families,' a most interesting and compromising chronicle." He turned over the pages until he came to Amesbury, and read:

"In 1751, the Honble. Simon Fitzwarren Hyde-Brown-Hyde, Heir to the Earldom, married a Cornish gipsy wench named Eurenia Penfold. The woman is reputed to have been of an extraordinary beauty, fair, tall, slim, and having an abundant vitality. But on account of her moral character, as much as of her Egyptian blood, the Earl refused to acknowledge the marriage or to be

reconciled to his son. The Honble. Eurenia Hyde-Brown-Hyde bore two children to her husband—Eurenia, who married Sir John Prenderghast of Prenderghast, and Simon Fitzwarren, who married Eleonore, daughter of Graf von Arnheim of Possen, and who afterwards succeeded to the title.'

So heredity would account for Mr. Tanner's height, muscular development, skill in stone-throwing, as well as for his natural tendency towards the occult."

"It would!" cried the professor huskily.

"Now," continued the Jesuit, "before the inquest I managed to have a talk with the warder from Broadmoor, and obtained some very interesting information about Mr. Tanner's antecedents. It appears that Mr. Simon Hyde-Brown-Hyde was the head of a large and important circle of spiritualists at Chelsea. He had a quarrel with several members of the circle about something that happened at one of the séances; he lost his temper, killed one member and nearly throttled another before they could secure him; he was convicted of murder, proved to be insane, and confined to Broadmoor in 1914. He escaped early last November, was traced as far as Salisbury, and then all traces of him were lost."

"Did you find out anything more?" asked the professor. "Did he seem mad when he was in Broadmoor?"

"No," answered the Jesuit. "The warder told me that he seemed to be perfectly sane, except for one thing—he used to play for hours and hours with a box of cardboard letters and a nail hung on a piece of string; but, of course, that was an autoscope (or ouija-arrangement) for receiving automatic messages."

"He might have killed poor Bewes," suggested Bruce-Smith.

"So the police think," answered Fr. Morat; "and the fact that they only found three pounds twelve amongst his belongings, and no trace of a bank account, seems to strengthen the idea. They think that he may have

murdered Major Bewes for his money and a change of clothes."

The butler came in to say that the undertaker wished to see the professor about the despatch of the body to Amesbury, and Professor Aylmer, gulping down his tea, left the room.

II

Bruce-Smith turned to the Jesuit. "Shall we tell Zoe about my theory?" he asked.

Fr. Morat hesitated; he looked the very picture of disapproval and shook his head.

"If I can stand the shock of finding that I've been acting as private secretary and medium to a homicidal lunatic," said Zoe, with a shudder, "if I can stand the mortification of finding that I've been converted to spiritualism by the arguments of a madman, I can stand anything! Besides, the more I have to think about the better; it's the idea of automatic writing that haunts me."

Again Fr. Morat shook his head. "It's a ghastly theory!" he protested.

"It can't be half as ghastly as the reality," said she; "and you must remember that it's reality which affects me, not imagination."

"It'll only amuse her," whispered Bruce-Smith thickly. "It won't upset her at all: she'll just howl at me. You tell; my voice has gone in."

Fr. Morat smiled; for he was beginning to understand Zoe, and had already fallen under the spell of that very practical young person. "You remember," he said, "your father's experiment with the formula, *Materia Elementorum*, the reputed development of a cell, the broken bowl, and the loss of the colloid?"

Zoe laughed. "If you only knew of the fuss that he made," said she, "you wouldn't ask that question."

"Well," he began, and proceeded to unwind Bruce-Smith's theory of the incarnation of Tanuath.

"You mean to say," she asked, her eyes wide open, "that he actually imagined all that?"

"Yes," answered the Jesuit. "At least, that's what he told me."

She turned to Bruce-Smith. "If you'd only confided in me, Jack," she said, "I'd have shown you that it was absolutely impossible."

"Er—" he whispered, "you forget our relations at the time—you were wrapped up in Tanner and all that!"

"M-yes!" she answered, looking down thoughtfully.

"What was your objection?" asked Fr. Morat.

"Can't you see?" said she, laughing.

"I confess," replied the Jesuit, "that the only obstacle which I perceived was the objection of inherent improbability—an improbability that amounted to a practical impossibility."

"Suppose my father had evolved a living cell," she laughed, "where would Tanuath have got the entelechy to guide the multiplying cells into the form of a human body?"

"Oh!" murmured Fr. Morat, his face growing blank. He had never thought of that.

"How could a spirit," continued Zoe, "which had never been designed to form a body, develop an entelechy? Where could Tanuath have got the guiding and controlling power that would have directed the multiplication of the cells so that they should grow into the organised form of Simon Tanner?"

The Jesuit laughed at himself ruefully. But, as Fr. Morat became chagrined, so Bruce-Smith grew elated.

"I see!" he cried in a thin, cracked falsetto:

"For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make.

A pure spirit would have had no human soul, with its faculty of bestowing form."

"Yes," said the Jesuit. "Miss Aylmer is absolutely right, and I must congratulate her on a clever piece of logic."

The girl grew flushed and very pretty in her appreciation of the praise.

"You see," said Fr. Morat, turning to Bruce-Smith, "what my oversight implies: it implies a belief in the old Eastern heresy that the devils became partly material after the Fall; it implies that God has given the devils a vegetative faculty, so that, if they can only persuade necromancers to make a suitable colloid, they can materialise in a quasi-human body. Besides, it includes the fundamental logical fallacy that God would give what is, by its very nature, an habitual faculty, for very occasional use." He laughed softly at himself. "This is very good for my intellectual pride," he added.

"What about me?" whispered Bruce-Smith. "I blundered into the trap with my eyes open."

"It is distinctly to your credit," answered Fr. Morat; "for you are a poet, and your duty is to cultivate intuitive perception. A cold and logical reasoning would kill your poetry."

"And," added Zoe, with determination, "if you'd been a logical biologist, I should never have fallen in love with you!"

Bruce-Smith took out his cigarette-case, handed it to Fr. Morat, and helped himself.

III

"Father Morat," said Bruce-Smith, "what is the meaning of the formulæ headed, 'Materia Elementorum' and 'Materia Pilosi,' and of my dream about the materialisation of a satyr, and all that?"

"Mr. Bruce-Smith," replied the Jesuit, waving his cigarette to mark his point, "I have had enough of imaginative speculation to last me many months!"

"Just one suggestion," whispered Bruce-Smith, "without prejudice or theological significance."

"Then, if you will have it," said Fr. Morat deliberately, "it looks to me like a very cunning trap, laid by some

remarkably far-seeing intelligences, to catch a certain illogical and hot-headed poet if he should see fit to interfere with the formation of a spiritualistic circle."

Zoe laughed, delighted. She was beginning to appreciate Fr. Morat as much as he was learning to appreciate her.

"You don't mean——" began Bruce-Smith.

"No!" interrupted Fr. Morat, smiling. "There are too many lacunæ in the evidence to prove a definite trap. My experience is that, whenever you come to examine a case of spiritualism, you find such a number of side-issues that they confuse any definite evidence against the cult. For instance, in this Tregunden case we have the side-issue of Mr. Tanner."

"How do you mean?" asked Zoe

"If things should happen to miscarry in the Tregunden circle, there was Mr. Tanner ready to attract public attention, and the escaped lunatic would get the odium. It is always like this with spiritualism."

The Jesuit placed his hands together and leant forward. "Just as an underhand Secret Service employs agents who may be discredited and repudiated, so the powers behind spiritualism make a practice of employing mediums who are not above suspicion. The moment we think that we have obtained some clear proof of spiritual fraud and personation, at the same moment we discover that the medium has become discredited and the evidence robbed of its value."

"How clever!" murmured Bruce-Smith.

"Clever?" cried Fr. Morat. "It's diabolical! In a case like that of Miss Aylmer, you are met with the argument that the control is some earth-bound spirit; in a case of proved personation, you are met with the excuse of a dishonest medium. It is almost impossible to reach a clear issue, or to unmask the true powers behind spiritualism."

The door opened, and the butler came in to remove tea.

CHAPTER XXXI

ZOE'S SUGGESTION

I

THE shadows had lengthened, a soft breeze had sprung up, and Zoe and Fr. Morat had strolled across to the belvedere and settled themselves in the loggia that overlooked the moor.

The Jesuit filled his pipe carefully, struck a match and lit the tobacco. "I'm glad you persuaded Mr. Bruce-Smith to lie down," he remarked.

"Yes," answered Zoe. "He was looking frightfully tired when he came in from the inquest, and I fancy that his arm's hurting him more than he'll own. Nurse told me that the bruise was terrible."

Fr. Morat pressed down the tobacco to his satisfaction, and settled himself to the full enjoyment of his pipe. "Do you think that he's worrying much about his dog?" he asked.

Zoe shook her head. "You see," she explained, "Smith was a dear old dog, awfully faithful and brave and reliable; but he wasn't what you might call affectionate. He was always thinking of his own affairs and going off on his own business. He wasn't much of a companion."

They sat in silence for some time, enjoying the coolness, and the shadows stretching across the moor, and the sound of the river churning over the boulders; then Zoe turned to the priest. "Fr. Morat," she said, "you spoke of the powers behind spiritualism just now, as though they were all real Bible devils: couldn't they be what Barrett

calls, 'human-like, but not really human, intelligences'—'good or bad daimonia' or 'elementals'?"

The Jesuit smiled. "What is Sir William Barrett going on when he assumes good and bad daimonia?" he asked.

"I suppose," said she, knitting her brows, "that, since some of the controls appear to him to be 'human-like, but not really human,' he is forced to assume that they may be 'daimonia' or 'elementals.'"

"In other words," chuckled Fr. Morat, "the modern scientist, being compelled to acknowledge a possibility of the existence of what revelation and tradition have always called 'angels' and 'devils,' prefers to term them 'good or bad daimonia.' Such fancy nomenclature must be very gratifying to his scientific erudition."

The girl laughed; for she could appreciate Fr. Morat's direct methods, and he had certainly scored a point.

"The science of those beings who live beyond the realms of matter," continued the Jesuit, "is a very deep one; and when we find such gifted amateurs as Lodge and Barrett—experts in the realm of matter, but amateurs in the world of spirits—indulging in psychological speculation, we do not find them at their best. For example, Sir William Barrett's idea of 'good daimonia' (or angels) personating departed souls and encouraging men to take part in that God has expressly forbidden is a *reductio ad absurdum*."

"And you think," said she, "that it is absolutely impossible for discarnate souls to communicate through spiritualism?"

"I think," he answered, "that a living man, with all the physical energy of his body behind him, may be able to transmit his thoughts by means of telepathy; I believe that a dying man, concentrating the last of his physical energy, may be able to convey his image to the mind of some dear one; but to imagine that a disembodied soul, stripped of all physical energy, can produce the phenomena of spiritualism, is to imagine a scientific impossibility."

"But," she protested, "you are making the discarnate soul less powerful than a soul that is bound to matter."

"So it is," he answered. "People seem to have forgotten all about the resurrection. It is only when the departed soul shall be reunited to its glorious spiritual body that the holy dead shall enter into the perfection of their power and happiness."

"Oh!" she murmured, for she had never thought of the resurrection as more than a form of words; and, as she sat there, she began to wonder. "Fr. Morat," she said, "if I ask you a question that has always puzzled me, you won't think me carping or captious?"

"My dear Miss Aylmer," he answered, "no honest question can be either carping or captious."

Zoe hesitated a moment, then spoke incisively. "If the intelligences behind spiritualism are devils," said she, "doesn't this make it very hard to believe in God?"

"Why?" he asked, astonished.

"How could an all-wise, all-good God have created angels who were foredoomed to fall and bring such trouble upon human beings?"

"Because," he answered, "God is all-just."

"Oh!" she cried; "I'm sick of that answer!"

"I don't think you understand me," he said gently. "Perfect justice demands that every intelligent created being should have absolute free-will. To rob an intelligent being of his free-will is to reduce him to the state of a slave or of an automaton."

"Please go on," she cried.

"To rob an angel of the power of disobeying God and doing evil is to rob him of the power of willing obedience and active virtue."

"But surely," she urged, "when God created the angels He might have given them such a vision of the happiness of heaven and the misery of sin that they would have chosen virtue?"

Fr. Morat smiled. "Don't you see what you are suggesting?" he asked. "For coercion of will you are

substituting bribery and terrorism. No! Every intelligent being must have free-will and the chance of exercising free-will. Almighty God will give help to those who ask for it, but He does not interfere with free choice."

"Yes," she murmured. "That is just!"

II

"Fr. Morat," asked Zoe, "are my questions worrying you?"

The Jesuit shook his head. "No," he answered. "I sometimes think that the only reason why I have been placed in the world is that I may try and answer questions."

"Then," said she, "how did that devil manage to get control of me?"

"Because, having been forewarned, you deliberately ran into danger."

"But how was I forewarned, and when?"

"Doesn't the very foundation of your religion," he asked, "assume an open Bible and a study of that Bible? The Bible tells you: 'Neither let there be found among you anyone that consulteth pythonic spirits, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things!' You couldn't have had a plainer warning."

Zoe leant back in her chair and sniffed. "But that," said she, "is an old command, given to the half-savage Israelites years and years ago."

"So were the other commandments: 'Thou shalt not kill;' 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' I have never heard that the commandment against necromancy is less binding than the others, nor that it has ever been loosed."

"But——" she began.

"No!" he interrupted. "Spiritualism is a deliberate and daring disobedience against God's command; it is a cult that He abhors; and you can't get away from that."

"But," she cried, "I had never realised the command!"

"Consequently," he answered, "you were not guilty of deliberate disobedience; but that does not make the sin of necromancy in itself less hateful. Other sins may have the excuse of physical temptation, but necromancy has no such excuse; it is an assumption of a mental superiority to God's instructions, and therefore a deadly sin of pride; it is a cold-blooded disobedience to God's express command, and therefore a mortal sin that cuts off the individual from God's grace and protection."

The girl's cheeks were flaming, for Fr. Morat had not minced matters and his words had stung like a lash.

He looked at her cheeks and smiled. "I am not going to risk leaving you in ignorance," he said. "You have been playing with fire and have been let off lightly."

He leant over and touched her sling. "Because God knew that your sin was not deliberate," he said gently, "you have recovered your hand."

She looked up at him and smiled, for she felt as though he had been giving her disobedient hand its absolution.

Fr. Morat shook his head. "There's another serious aspect of spiritualism," he added gravely, "the psychological aspect. In spiritualism, the medium takes the most precious possession that God has given her, her free-will, and hands her will over to the control of some spirit about whom she knows nothing. Cut off from God's grace and protection, the will handed over to the control of an evil spirit, is it strange that mediumship leads to demoniacal possession?"

"No," she cried. "It is the logical result!"

III

The light was beginning to fade, and it was nearly time for dinner; but Zoe still lingered on in the loggia, enthralled by the conversation.

"Fr. Morat," she said, "how do you account for the difference in the controls? Imperator and the demon

that controlled my hand seemed to belong to different orders of intelligences."

"It is probable that they did," he answered. "We gather that there are many different orders of spiritual beings in heaven, and, consequently, amongst the fallen angels also."

Zoe leant forward, her chin resting on her left hand, deep in thought. "It is difficult to believe that God ever made spiritual intelligences who were so stupid and tricky and frivolous as some of the controls," she said.

"God gives to each created being," replied Fr. Morat, "the faculties which it requires for its particular vocation. Thus we may assume that He made beings of brilliant intelligence to carry out intellectual tasks, and also simple beings whose glory lies in the beauty of their love and worship. Picture these beings to have fallen from the service of love and worship, and what remains?"

"I see," she cried: "the brilliant Imperator becomes a brilliant enemy of God; whilst the other spirit, having lost all that once made him beautiful, has become just a mass of malignant hatred. Yes, the idea's quite logical."

"So, in your controls," said the Jesuit, "I seem to detect three grades of intelligence: the brilliant Imperator, who invented a most dangerous false religion; the spirit who achieved a not very clever impersonation of your cousin; and the simple spirit who, its love having changed into hatred and its worship to blind enmity, thought that it had scored a triumph when it seized your hand and made one of God's creatures write down a degrading message."

"I should have imagined," said Zoe thoughtfully, "that the foolish spirits and the vile spirits would have undone the work of intelligences like Imperator."

Fr. Morat shook his head. "I used to think so too," he answered; "but, since I have seen the way in which people are receiving the stupid, frivolous messages that are coming through Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr. Vale Owen, I have changed my mind. I

am inclined to believe that these apparently stupid messages conceal the perfection of craft."

Zoe raised her eyebrows. "How?" she asked.

"If people believe, as they do believe, that these are really messages from departed souls, they must believe that only the most paltry and puerile side of the soul survives death. If people believe in the ghastly, meaningless idea of the future state that is taught through these so-called revelations—spiritual cigars, polytechnic displays, elementary science classes—they must lose their faith in an all-wise God. These revelations, whether they be the brilliant heresies of Imperator or Mr. Owen's pictures of the life in heaven, come from the enemies of God and His revelation."

IV

The dressing-gong sounded, but Zoe refused to move. "I'm not going to change," she said. "They must put up with me as I am!" She drew a deep breath. "Fr. Morat," she said, "why doesn't the Catholic Church take up the fight against spiritualism? Yours is the only body that knows what is behind it."

"We are fighting against it," he answered. "There's never a week passes in which we do not argue against it and lecture against it and preach against it."

Zoe shrugged her shoulders. "I've read some of the sermons," she said, "and your preachers are so afraid of being thought too credulous that half their sermons are taken up with proving that there is a deal of fraud amongst professional mediums. Then they argue that there is often auto-suggestion and thought-transfer mixed up with the communications, and, by the time that they come to their real attack, their people have lost all sense of reality."

Fr. Morat sighed, for he knew that there was some truth underlying her accusation.

"Besides," she went on, "what spiritualist attends

your lectures or reads your sermons? Believe me, I have heard heaps of really clever people discussing spiritualism, and trying to discuss it fairly and from all sides, and they don't even know of the Catholic arguments against necromancy!

"Besides," she cried, "what is the good of your priests arguing against it? We know that your Church condemns spiritualism, we know that your priests are bound to hold a brief against it, and, consequently, their arguments are discounted as they are uttered. What is wanted is a society of Catholic laymen—men who are as famous in the scientific world as Lodge or Barrett."

The Jesuit drew his breath sharply. He had already heard one sample of this girl's logic, but the rightness of her present reasoning fairly staggered him.

"Why can't your Cardinal Archbishop," she cried, "and the Catholic Bishops abroad, call on Catholic men of science to form a Catholic Society for Psychical Research? Let them sift their evidence as the S.P.R. sifts its evidence. Let them issue their reports and prove that the powers behind spiritualism are not discarnate souls. Let them show that the controls are malignant spirits who are personating the dead. Let them bring forward their evidence of personation and fraud and conflicting doctrines and demoniacal possession. Believe me, if this were done in the proper way, calmly and scientifically, the real people that matter—Barrett and Wallace and my father—would accept and endorse the evidence."

"I shall make a point of bringing your suggestion before the Cardinal," said Fr. Morat.

"Oh!" cried Zoe, aghast.

v

When Zoe and Fr. Morat came into the drawing-room, they found both the professor and Bruce-Smith waiting for them.

"What on earth have you people been up to?" asked Bruce-Smith, laughing.

"Miss Aylmer," replied the Jesuit, "has been suggesting that we should found a Catholic Society for Psychical Research, which is to include the leading Catholic men of science. Its object is to prove the true nature of the powers behind spiritualism, and I am going to bring the matter before the Cardinal Archbishop."

"Gracious!" muttered Bruce-Smith. He turned to Zoe. "Now you've done it!" said he.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN THE LOGGIA

I

THANKS to his bruised and broken arm, Bruce-Smith slept badly, very badly; and, as soon as it began to get light, he got out of bed, made a rudimentary toilet, and set out for the garden. He went along the passage very quietly so that he should not disturb Zoe; but unfortunately, as he turned the dark corner by her bedroom, he ran into the hot-water can that she had placed outside her door, and it fell over with a clatter. In a moment the door opened and Zoe peeped out.

With a pig-tail hanging down on either side of her face, with her cheeks flushed from sleep and her eyes wide open through curiosity, she looked like a delectable elf. "Oh! It's you!" she whispered. "How are you feeling?"

"Throat's better," he whispered; "but my arm's a bit tiresome. I'm going to cool down in the garden."

"Go into the belvedere," she whispered. "I'll tell Creenia to bring us some tea, and I'll be with you in five minutes."

"Poor Creenia!" he chuckled.

"Oh, she's all right! She goes to bed at nine and wakes with the sun. Now run away, Jack; this is most unconventional."

"One minute," he whispered, for the little face, peeping out of the door, was sweeter than anything he had ever seen. "How's your hand?"

"Better! Much better! Now scoot!" She saw the longing in his eyes, and her nose wrinkled as she made a tiny face at him. "If you bend right forward," she whispered. "One!"

He bent right forward; he got a touch of something warm and fresh and sweet; and the door was shut quickly and silently.

He stumbled on, along the passage and down the stairs. So this divine thing, a thing that woke as fresh as dew and as sweet as a rose-leaf, a thing that seemed half fairy, half girl, was to be his wife! He hugged himself, and his thoughts went back to Spenser's Hymn in Honour of Beautie:—

"For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make."

Spenser's natural conclusion followed, that, when one meets a form,

"with beautie fair endued;
Know this for certain, that the same doth holde
A beauteous soule, with fair conditions thewed."

His thoughts went further back, right back to the evening when he first met her. If Zoe's soul could fashion such a matchless body out of the *Materia Aylmeri*, what an incomparably dainty little soul it must be!

He reached the belvedere, went up into the loggia that faced the sun-rise, and settled himself to wait.

II

Bruce-Smith had gulped down one cup of gloriously refreshing China tea, and was absorbing his second cup luxuriously and with extreme enjoyment. As he drank, Zoe gave him a resumé of Fr. Morat's argument about the resurrection—the argument that, until the resurrection, the discarnate human soul was separated from the body

through which it had exercised all physical functions, and that, consequently, we had no right to assume that a departed soul had the physical energy needed to perform the phenomena of spiritualism.

"Jack," she ended, "did you know all this?"

"Of course," he answered, "ever since I was a kid. Every Catholic knows it."

She leant back, wrinkling her forehead. "What do you really believe," she asked, "I mean about the life-history of a soul?"

"It's as clear as a pikestaff!" he answered. "God made my soul—I mean the thinking, conscious me—and united it to the living matter drawn from my parents. My soul formed the multiplying cells into my body, through which I live and feel and exercise my free-will. I am living my life here, with enough knowledge to know the right, with enough grace to help me to follow the right, and with an absolutely free choice between right and wrong. When I die my body will decay, and, if I've tried to do right, my soul will be cleansed from its earth-stains and prepared for eternity. In the end my body will rise glorious and spiritual; my soul will be re-united to my body with its perfected faculties; and, like the angels, I shall have an eternity of perfect happiness before me."

"Do all Catholics believe this?" she asked.

"Of course!" he answered. "Everyone believed it until German thought came along and upset everything." He sniffed. "The swilling, guzzling Germans," he added, "have always been materialists in thought, from the time of Luther onwards."

"But the Catholic idea of the soul is scientific!" she cried. "It's sound from the latest biological standpoint! Do you mean that everyone used to hold it?"

"The couplet which I quoted yesterday," he answered, "the couplet about the soul being the form of the body, shows what the sixteenth-century Englishman thought. Dante puts it even better; for, after explaining how the

soul forms and actuates the body, he says that it doth show itself in those parts where it most fulfils its functions ; for it looks out of the window of the eyes, and reveals itself in the mouth 'like colour behind glass.' 'For what is a smile,' he says, 'except a sparkling of the soul's delight, a light shot outwardly from that which shines within?' Even that old doubter, da Vinci, says that the soul clings to the body, because, 'without the members of the body, it can neither act nor feel.' "

"Wouldn't it make a lovely poem," she said, thoughtfully, "the soul expressing itself through the body?"

III

Bruce-Smith felt in his right-hand coat-pocket and brought out a letter. "This came last night," he said, "just before dinner, and I put it in my pocket and forgot all about it until I went to bed." And he handed the communication to Zoe.

She read through the letter carefully. "It sounds all right," said she; "but what does it exactly mean?"

"That my new book of poems is selling like hot cakes"—he paused, emphasising each word—"especially—in—the—garden-cities. Remarkably sound and artistic folk, the garden-city people!"

Her eyes glistened and her mouth began to tremble. "Oh!" she murmured.

"Those garden-city people," said Bruce-Smith, "are the soul of England. They are thoughtful, appreciative, and the only persons who have freed themselves from academic convention."

She gurgled with delight. "You old humbug!" she cried.

"You forget," he answered stiffly, "that last time I spoke of the garden-city people, they had not had the chance of seeing my real poetry."

"But what does it actually mean?" she asked. "What does it mean in £ s. d.?"

"Until I receive the actual statement of account," he replied, "which, as you notice, will be forwarded in due course, the deficiency in my early education prevents me from calculating the exact amount of the royalty; but it will be enough to give us quite a nice honeymoon."

IV

Zoe was sitting on his sound side, and now she nestled tightly up to him, putting her arm round his neck. "Jack," she said, "I want to know exactly how your arm is. I've a reason for asking, and I want to know the real truth."

"Well," he answered, "it's pretty rotten. It hurts a good deal, and I can't sleep."

She jumped off into another topic. "Jack," she said, "when I looked out of my bedroom door this morning, how did you like me?"

She felt him edge closer to her. "You—you were delectable!" he said softly. "I didn't dream that anyone could be half so—so delectable. And your kiss was like a rose-leaf with the dew on it."

"You—you didn't think me a skinny little girl with two absurd pig-tails?"

"Zoe," he cried, "your dear, sweet face, and your dear, sweet kiss made me just crazy to marry you. I never thought I could be half so crazy!"

She smiled happily. "And my soul?" she asked.

He chuckled, thankful that he could remember his exact thoughts. "That's funny!" he said. "I was thinking of your soul as I went downstairs: I thought what an incomparably dainty little soul it must be to fashion such a matchless body out of the living cells inherited from the professor."

Her arm went tighter round his neck, and her hand smoothed his cheek. "Would you like to marry me now, you poor dear?" she whispered.

"Zoe!" he cried.

"I mean now," she said softly; "as soon as we can get a licence."

He wouldn't have it; he couldn't allow it; it wouldn't be fair! They must wait until his arm was better!

She cooed over him. Didn't he know what love was? Couldn't he see that no girl, who loved as she loved, would wish for a greater happiness? For a girl who loved her husband to be able to nurse him, and pet him, and comfort him when his poor arm kept him awake—"Oh, Jack," she said, "you have to learn the A B C of love!"

Finally he surrendered, flushed, grateful and humble.

"You haven't asked me to name the day!" said she.

He looked awkward and uncomfortable. "I'll have to get a dispensation for a mixed marriage," he grumbled; "and you quite understand about the children—you're ready to promise to have them brought up Catholics?"

It was Zoe's turn to flush and look a little awkward. "Couldn't I be married as a Catholic?" she murmured.

"What!" he cried.

"Couldn't I be received?" she murmured.

He became incoherent: he was the happiest man in the world, and so on. "But," he cried, "what convinced you?"

"Fr. Morat," she answered. "It wasn't that he tried to; because he didn't! But everything he said was so true and logical and scientific."

He shook his head. "It'll take time to be received," he explained; "because you've got to be properly instructed and convinced and see everything clearly; but,"—and his voice became vastly cheerful—"there'll be no difficulty about getting a dispensation now!"

"Are you pleased?" she whispered.

His right arm went very tight round her, and his cheek went against hers; but, though he tried, he could not manage to speak.

POSTSCRIPT

If arguments are to have any value, the premises on which they are founded must be beyond dispute ; consequently, it is necessary to give the authorities for the various spiritualistic phenomena that are described in this novel :

Chapter XX.—Rector's transcription of the poetry is taken from *Proceedings Soc. Psych. Research*, vol. xi., p. 106.

Chapter XXI.—The communications from Rector and Imperator are actual spirit-communications given by these two controls to Mr. Stainton-Moses. See *Spirit Teaching and Spirit-Identity*.

The actual details of the direct writing are taken from Raupert's *Modern Spiritism*, p. 40 *et seq.*

Chapter XXIII.—The details of the materialisation are taken from the account of a séance held in the presence of Dr. Baraduc, Dr. Maxwell, the avocat-général, and many men of science. *Nash's Magazine*, September, 1910.

Chapter XXIV.—The automatic communications are taken from *After-Death Communications*, by L. M. Bazett.

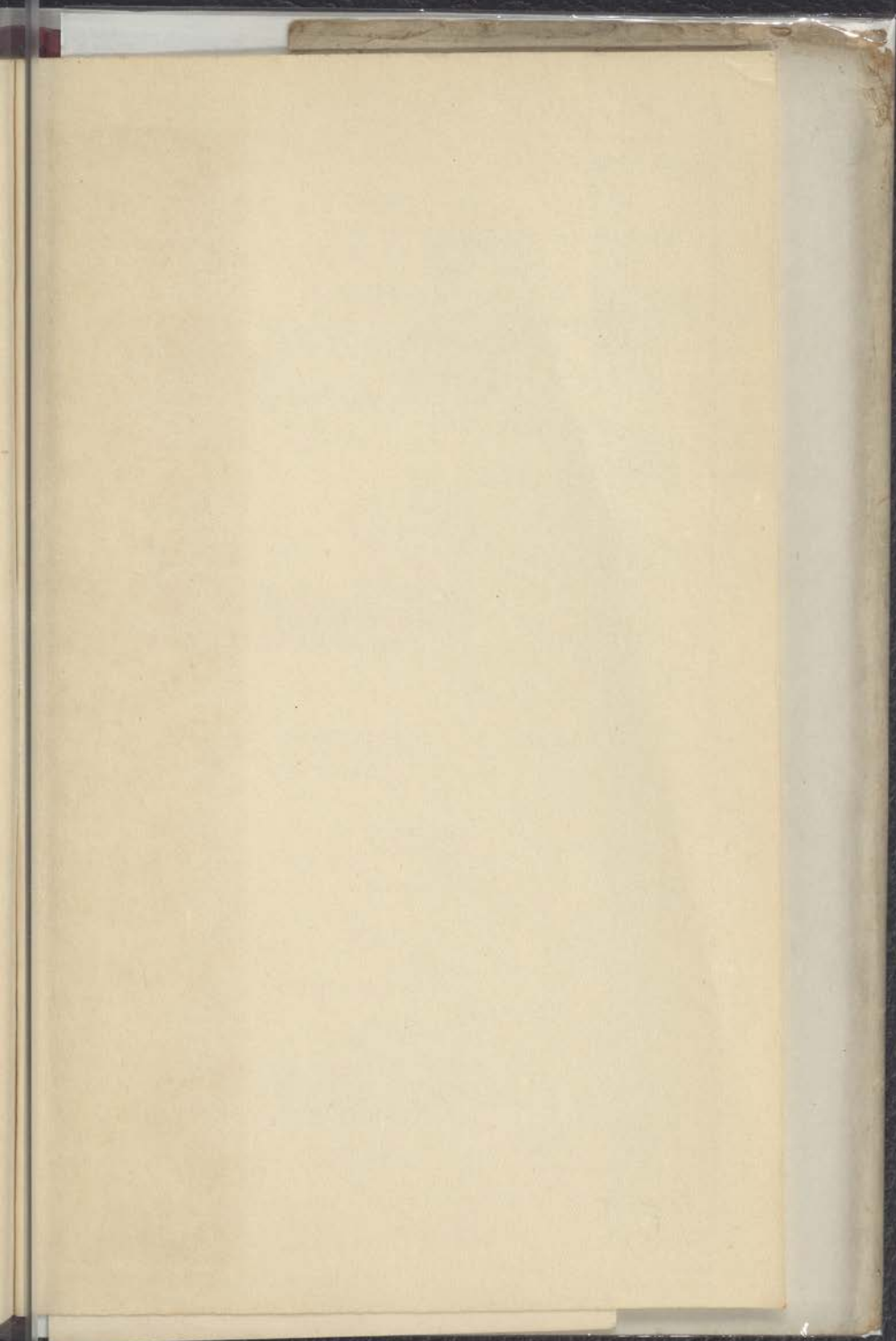
Chapter XXIV.—The case of local possession given by Fr. Morat is really given, and vouched for, by Mr. Godfrey Raupert. He says : " The case has been placed in my hands by a well-known man of science, who stands in the very front rank of psychical research. . . . Both this gentleman and his wife are intimately known to me, and I have been given every opportunity of studying the documentary evidence and all the details of the case. Other

similar cases, in many respects identical with this one, are constantly coming to my knowledge." *Supreme Problem*, page 198 *et seq.* People may disagree with Mr. Raupert's arguments and conclusions, but no one will venture to deny any actual fact for which he vouches.

Chapter XXVII.—The case of Blanche Abercromby is taken from Sir William Barrett's *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, page 211.

A. J. ANDERSON.

THE END



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